It is interesting to note that of the three republics of the River Plate, Paraguay had been the slowest growing until the middle of the 20th century. However during the last two decades, Paraguay has reached higher percentages of growth than the other two countries of the River Plate Basin. There could be various reasons for this change. One of them was an important immigration of Brazilians to the eastern region of Paraguay. Various Adventist families formed part of this massive move, which facilitated the organization of new congregations in this sector of the country. Also, the volunteer lay missionary work done by these Adventist families primarily among their Brazilian neighbors, multiplied the membership in the region.

Other homogeneous groups of population among whom the Church has grown are the Koreans and Japanese. Among the latter group, the Adventists have established various congregations, and even educational institutions on the primary and secondary levels, which are providing stability and solidity to the attained growth.

But the membership growth and multiplication of congregations, also has occurred among the national population of Paraguay. And in this area, one of the factors that most influenced the growth was the preparation of national pastors, who speak the most popular language of the people: Guaraní. Actually in the last two decades several Paraguayan youths prepared for the ministry, crossing the borders of their country and going to study at universities of Adventist theology in nearby countries, since none exist in their country. These pastors returned to their country and are an important factor in the growth of the Church among the national people.
This fact again underlies the importance of the homogeneous units as strategy for the growth of the Church. Once again we can test the principle that "men understand the gospel better when expounded by their own kind of people" (McGavran 1980:227). The contextualization of the gospel, and its adaptation to the specific needs of a people, are also missiologic factors which have had their influence in the growth of the Adventist Church in Paraguay. The importance of these themes requires the dedication of a complete chapter.

The Adventist Church in Uruguay

The beginnings of Adventist mission in Uruguay can be traced to the year 1890, when Mrs. Rivoir, a French-speaking Swiss woman arrived to the Uruguayan shores, originating from Europe. This woman had heard Ellen White, the recognized leader of the Church, preaching in the valleys of the Piedmont in Europe. After accepting the Adventist faith, Mrs. Rivoir went as an immigrant to Uruguay with her family in 1890. A year later the first missionaries arrived, self-supporting colporteurs, sent by the Foreign Missions Board to work in the republics of the River Plate. But worried about the high cost of living in Montevideo, and the high customs taxes that were charged for imported books, they decided to continue the trip to Buenos Aires where they settled. From there they returned in 1893, and dedicated themselves to work among the colonies of French- and German-speaking Swiss immigrants, and among the English-speaking people in the capital of the country. The first resident missionary was a woman, Lucy Post,
a Bible worker from the United States, who worked among her resident relatives who had arrived several years before to Uruguay, and organized the first Adventist congregation in this country in 1895: a Sabbath school with 12 members.

Jean Vuillemin, a pastor of Swiss origin who spoke French and German, awoke considerable interest among the colonies of immigrants, especially in the Swiss colony of Nueva Helvecia (New Switzerland), and there 18 converts were baptized forming the first organized church in Uruguay in 1896 (Neufeld 1976:1545).

The following decade did not produce a large growth of members; by the year 1906, when the Uruguay Mission was organized there were 48 baptized members. However, with the establishment of the mission in the territory itself, the growth of the Church stabilized. The first 1000 members were reached around the year 1940, and 20 years later they reached the figure of 2000 church members.

The Growth in Recent Decades

The percentage of growth in members and congregations have not been very notable in Uruguay, in spite of varied and repeated efforts to evangelize the people of this country. David Martin, in his book about the growth of the Church in Latin America (1990), considered that Uruguay and Venezuela are the two most secularized Latin American countries, and in truth the Adventist statistics coincide in showing the results of work among a secularized population.
FIGURE 55
URUGUAY: ACTIVE MEMBERSHIP GROWTH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACTIVE MEMBERS:</td>
<td>2,119</td>
<td>3,184</td>
<td>4,939</td>
<td>6,439</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FIGURE 56

URUGUAY: DECADAL GROWTH RATES FOR ACTIVE MEMBERS ( ), CHURCHES ( ), AND PASTORS ( ).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DECADE</th>
<th>1960</th>
<th>1970 (DGR)</th>
<th>1980 (DGR)</th>
<th>1990 (DGR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MEMBERS:</td>
<td>2,119</td>
<td>3,184 (50%)</td>
<td>4,939 (55%)</td>
<td>6,439 (30%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHURCHES:</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20 (17%)</td>
<td>29 (45%)</td>
<td>36 (24%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PASTORS:</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11 (-8%)</td>
<td>16 (45%)</td>
<td>18 (12%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We have already referred to the immense challenge that a secularized people presents to the Church, when we analyzed the growth of Adventists in Argentina. However in that country, in spite of a large mass of secularized people, there is maintained to a large degree the religious traditions, and the Church has functions that can be considered important in the general affairs of the country, of the people and the governing class. In Uruguay, on the other hand, a large part of the people boast of being irreligious, and the government and its institutions do not have an official religion. And in spite of the Uruguayan people being easily approachable because of their friendly and familiar spirit, their secular formation has made them little receptive to the gospel.

Conclusions

Within the territory integrated by the republics of the River Plate, there are regions that can clearly be distinguished from a religious perspective. The northern region, integrated by northern Argentina and all of Paraguay, is a sector where religious traditions remain active, and where the people have a religious mentality and sensibility. The central region, integrated by the central provinces of Argentina and all of Uruguay, is formed by a more secularized population, and in general with a higher standard of living, which makes them less receptive to the gospel. And the southern region, the Argentine Patagonia, has immense distances with scattered settlements and inhabitants. Every one of these regions require different missionary and evangelizing strategies to reach them.
CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSIONS OF SECTION TWO: ADVENTIST CHURCH GROWTH
IN THE SOUTH AMERICAN DIVISION TERRITORY

With the statistical analysis of the Andean countries, Brazil and
the countries of the River Plate Basin, we have concluded our circuit
of the South American Division territory. As we have done with the
Inter-American Division (see pp. 93-102), we wish to integrate all of
the regional statistics into one, to analyze the growth of the Church
in the South American Division.

The Growth of the Church in South America

When the South American Division was organized in the year 1916,
there were almost 5000 baptized members, meeting in 88 organized
churches. A half century later, the membership had grown to around
160,000 and the number of churches to a little over 700. This
signifies that during fifty years, the percentages of membership
growth has remained around 100% DGR, and the multiplication of
congregations at about 50% DGR.

During the last three decades, the percentages of membership
growth has remained between 80% and 150% per decade, which permitted
the Church to reach 1,000,000 active members by the end of 1990. Let
us look at the statistics for the South American Division:
FIGURE 57

SOUTH AMERICAN DIVISION: ACTIVE MEMBERSHIP GROWTH

ACTIVE MEMBERS: 110,351   273,855   496,954   1,009,293

FIGURE 58

SOUTH AMERICAN DIVISION: DECADAL GROWTH RATES
FOR ACTIVE MEMBERS (■■■■), AND PASTORS (■■■■)

MEMBERS: 110,351  273,855 (148%)  496,954 (81%)  1,009,293 (103%)
PASTORS: 529  782 (47%)  1,101 (40%)  1,759 (59%)

Tendencies in Church Leadership

In analyzing the statistics on the previous page, we can readily see that the number of ministers does not accompany the membership growth. While in 1960 there was a pastor for every 208 members in the South American Division, 30 years later this ratio has decreased to a pastor for every 573 church members. Here again we find an aspect already mentioned in reference to the Inter-American Division: there is a trend toward a greater lay participation in the leadership of the Church. In general terms, the pastors have a district formed by two or more organized churches, and various smaller congregations, which makes it necessary for the pastor to select lay leaders to help him with the duty of caring for the congregations under his leadership. This tendency in its own way, has facilitated the multiplication of congregations, since it is an easily reproducible pattern of leadership.

The Multiplication of Congregations

An important aspect to emphasize in the South American Division, are the results reached in the multiplication of congregations, particularly in the last decade. During this period, the percentage of membership growth reached 103%, but, the percentage of multiplication of organized churches superseded the membership growth having reached 115%. These percentages were reached due to the fact that specifically during this period the South American Division encouraged the formation of new congregations in the whole territory.
FIGURE 59

SOUTH AMERICAN DIVISION: GROWTH IN THE NUMBER OF ORGANIZED CHURCHES (---), AND SABBATH SCHOOLS (--).
FIGURE 60

SOUTH AMERICAN DIVISION: DECADAL GROWTH RATES FOR ORGANIZED CHURCHES (■■■), AND SABBATH SCHOOLS (■■■).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CHURCHES:</td>
<td>551</td>
<td>1,042 (89%)</td>
<td>1,550 (49%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SABBATH SCHOOLS:</td>
<td>2,007</td>
<td>3,981 (98%)</td>
<td>6,018 (51%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Between the years 1982 and 1985 the General Conference promoted a program titled "1000 Days of Reaping", that was designed to reach on a worldwide scale, 1000 new baptisms every day for 1000 days. Taking advantage of this opportunity, the South American Division organized a parallel program, promoting the organization of 1000 new congregations, one a day during those 1000 days, throughout the territory of the Division. The program offered financial help for the construction of new chapels, and produced a high level of enthusiasm among the congregations. Not only was the proposed goal reached for this period, but a tendency toward the multiplication of congregations was greatly encouraged, resulting in the statistics seen from this decade.

A Strategy for the Multiplication of Congregations

The program previously mentioned suggested that churches of 200 members or more, should make plans to begin a new congregation, inviting a certain number of members to leave the mother congregation and transform itself into the initial nucleus of a new group of believers.

During the last decade, some South American countries, like Brazil and Chile, which accepted this challenge with enthusiasm, reached a growth in the number of new churches that exceeded the percentages of growth of the number of members. Other countries, like Peru, Bolivia and Paraguay, also reached excellent results in the multiplication of congregations.

With these evident results, it seemed logical that the Church in all of Latin America should encourage missionary programs of this
"centrifugal" type, that is, to encourage the congregations to divide themselves and extend the faith by way of smaller congregations disseminated in the whole area of influence of the central congregation.

In a previous analysis by the author, reference is made to various related aspects with a growth strategy that uses the multiplication of congregations as a key element (Viera 1988:102-116).

**Conclusion**

The growth of the Adventist Church in South America has been the result of various combined factors. In the early years, the activity accomplished in homogeneous units of population, principally among the colonies of immigrants, permitted the organization and the establishment of the Church in various regions of the South American territory, principally in the southern section of the continent, that is, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay and southern Brazil. In the second step, the work for the poor and oppressed of the population, especially in the countries of the Andean highlands, and in the northern part of Brazil in the Amazon Basin, opened the doors for the reception of the gospel in these communities, and awakened respect and admiration of the authorities and the population in general for the work of the Church. In a third step, a lay movement of great proportions, and the multiplication of congregations promoted by the ecclesiastic administration, have been the prevailing factors of Church growth in the South American territory.
PART TWO:

STRUCTURES AND STRATEGIES FOR GROWTH
CHAPTER 10
THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ADVENTIST MISSIONARY STRUCTURE:
HISTORICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Christian church has been analyzed by modern missiology as an organization with two missionary structures clearly distinguishable through the different historical periods, both dedicated to accomplishing the mission of the Church: 1) the local congregation, responsible for the worship service, communion among the believers, and the extension of the gospel in their vicinity through personal witnessing of the members, and 2) the evangelistic team, integrated by itinerant missionaries dedicated to spreading the gospel beyond the limits of a city or the border of a nation.

These two missionary structures have been diversely labeled by different scholars of missiology. For our analysis, we have considered opportune the use of the terms "congregational structure", and "mission structure".

In the apostolic church, these two structures can be easily distinguished by reading from the book of Acts. The churches of Jerusalem and Antioch could be excellent prototypes of local congregations that share the gospel with their neighbors (Ac. 2:47; 8:1-4; 11:19-26) and formed part of the congregational structure, meanwhile the evangelistic team of Paul and his helpers, who crossed
the borders to take the gospel to distant peoples, could be an unmatched illustration of mission structure.

In the later history of the Christian Church, the monastic orders and later the mission societies, were precisely the mission structures that accomplished the most in reaching the diverse peoples of the earth, meanwhile the congregational structure dedicated itself to nourishing and strengthening of those that already were part of the Church.

Of course, it is not our intention to make an analysis of the missionary structure of the Church in a general sense, because that is beyond the limits of our study. What we wish to analyze is the type of missionary structure that the Adventist Church has developed from its beginning of its organization until the present.

First Organization of the Adventist Structure

When the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists was organized in 1863, it had a membership of approximately 3500. All of its members were North Americans. Not one Adventist missionary had left American ports to share the Adventist message in another nation. However, during the twenty years following the initiation of the movement, substantial changes in mission concept had taken place, and a certain consciousness of the world mission of the Church began to appear. Coinciding with the year of the organization of the Church, James White utilized, perhaps for the first time, the term "world-wide" to refer to the mission of the Church:
Ours is a world-wide message. Its very nature, and its destined growing influence, will bring us into notice, to fill important and critical positions before the world. It is a grand mistake to suppose that the message we teach is to test the world and thus ripen the harvest of the earth, while those who bear it are shut up in a corner, so excluded from the world, or so singular in their general deportment, as to have no influence in the world (1863:165).

In this stage, however, the Church did not perceive its mission in global terms. In 1863, the great missionary challenges were the distant western North America, and the immigrants that represented the different races of the earth. The organization of the Church that year adapted, then, to a missionary vision that prevailed among it leaders.

The form of structure that was adopted in 1863 was based on a careful study prepared by nine leaders of the Church, and published in the Review and Herald June 11, 1861. In the study reference in made to the first years of the movement when:

Our views of the work before us were then mostly vague and indefinite, some still retaining the idea adopted by the body of Adventist believers in 1844, with William Miller at their head, that our work for "the world" was finished, and that the message was confined to those of the original Advent faith. . . .

And according to our views of the work we had to do, was our method of labor. . . .

We are now placed in different circumstances; the number of believers is much increased . . .

The leaders, then, passed a proposal that organized three levels of authority: 1) the local churches, which took record of their members and extended letters of transfer to those members who moved, 2) the conferences or associations, that integrated the local churches of a region or a state, and 3) the General Conference, that would be integrated by the whole body of believers, and would have the responsibility of analyzing matters in its general sessions that related to the Church as whole.
In the following months, seven conferences or associations were organized, and in May 1863 the General Conference was organized. Undoubtedly this simple ecclesiastical structure fit the basic organizational necessities of the new church. However, from the missionary structural point of view, we can say that it was a typical congregational structure. Very soon other administrative and missionary needs appeared that required a more complex organization. These entities were adding themselves to the basic structure that was already organized, even though with different levels of authority and independence.

The Establishment of Autonomous Adventist Organizations

The first legal organization established by the group of believers was the editorial, which had been organized even before the General Conference, in May 1861. When the Adventists, motivated by Ellen White, began activities related to health, the "Health Reform Institute" was organized as a legal institution administratively separate from the General Conference. This occurred in 1867.

During the following two decades, the Adventists continued organizing new entities in the measure in which they felt the necessity of them. Those which today are known as "departments" were originally organized as legal autonomous associations. In this manner the Sabbath School was organized as a legal association in 1878: the Association of Health and Temperance in 1879, and the National Association of Religious Liberty in 1889.
Organization of the First Mission Structure

The first intentions of forming a mission structure can be found in the last part of the decade of 1860. In 1868 a group of women started to meet in the home of the Haskell family, for the purpose of praying for their neighbors and friends. Very soon this group started to visit the neighborhood and distribute Adventist publications. Stephen Haskell, the owner of the house and one of the leaders of the Church with greater missionary vision, was the instrument for channeling this first missionary endeavor into a formal organization.

R. W. Schwarz, an Adventist historian declares that:

Haskell’s enthusiastic vision of the work to be done had by 1869 brought him to the position of preeminent leader among New England Seventh-day Adventists. He never forgot that it had been a tract which first focused his attention on the Sabbath. . . . He sensed that, with a little direction, the group of ladies meeting in his home might be encouraged to expand their activities. On June 8, 1869, Elder Haskell helped these women establish a formal organization, the Vigilant Missionary Society (1979:152).

When elected president of the New England Conference in 1870, Haskell immediately took upon himself the organizing of the Tract and Missionary Society at that level, and at the request of the leaders of the General Conference visited the other already organized conferences to establish similar missionary societies. Finally in 1874, the same year in which the first North American missionary left for foreign service, the Tract and Missionary Society was organized at the General Conference level.

We can conclude, then, that the first Adventist missionary society was motivated by lay people, and especially women. This laity orientation continued exercising its influence in this work, under the auspices of Stephen Haskell and Maria Huntley, who as leaders of the
missionary society of the General Conference, initiated the creation of missionary societies in all the local congregations, encouraging each lay member to participate in it. The report from the mission society in 1884, indicated that the members had made 83,000 missionary visits, having written more than 35,000 letters, many of them in foreign languages, and having distributed 1,750,000 magazine pamphlets (Schwarz 1979:154).

The Organization of the Adventist Structure for the Fulfilling of A World Mission

In the same year that the first missionary society was organized by the laity in New England, the first organization for sending missionaries outside the limits of the United States also was established. This entity, even though technically a legal organization separate from the General Conference, was in practice an integral part of the same, being simply the missionary arm of the Adventist structure.

With the passing of years, notwithstanding, the requirements of the overseas activities became more complex and numerous until at the end of the 1880s, the Church felt the necessity of giving greater independence to the overseas missionary society. The first step was taken in 1887 with the naming of a secretary for foreign missions, and finally in 1889 The Foreign Mission Board was organized.

As Erich Baumgartner well stated (1987:36), it was not easy for the General Conference to concede a certain level of independence to The Foreign Mission Board. In the first draft of the constitution of the new organization it was established that:
The Mission Board shall take the general oversight of all foreign work, and suggest ways and means for the expeditious propagation of that work; but no plan or suggestion of the Mission Board shall become operative until it has the sanction of the General Conference Committee (General Conference 1889:45).

In the corrections made to the constitution of the Church in that session of the General Conference, however, there was conceded greater independence and autonomy to the Foreign Mission Board and to the secretary:

It shall be the duty of the Foreign Mission Secretary to maintain a regular correspondence with superintendents of missions, and with the supervising committees of the foreign mission enterprises under the management of the Foreign Mission Board; to make regular reports of the condition and wants of the missions, to the Board, or to such standing committees as may be created for this purpose by the Board; to communicate the decisions of the Board to its agents in foreign countries; and to report to the Conference at its sessions, the workings of the Board, and the condition, progress, and wants of its foreign missions (General Conference 1889:141).

The establishment of this internal organization of the General Conference with a greater level of autonomy brought about undoubtedly, a more rapid expansion of the Adventist mission in foreign countries. And, it was precisely in this period when the Adventist activity was initiated in Latin America. But this growth was not free from problems, that made themselves manifest towards the end of the 19th century.

As a first effort in facing the growing demands of the World Church, the General Conference began to change the name of the various organizations of the Church to fit them—at least in name—to an international church. In this manner the "General Tract and Missionary Society" became the International Tract and Missionary Society"; the "National Religious Liberty Association" became the "International
Religious Liberty Association". Other entities, such as the one grouping the health institutions, also acquired through this method on an international level. However, the change in name did not solve the growing problems in relation to the organization of the Church and the establishment of institutions outside of the United States. Even within this country, the relation among the diverse legal entities of the Church, especially the disproportionate growth of the medical work, began to produce problems that made evident the necessity of a total reorganization of the Adventist administrative and missionary structure. This reorganization came in 1901, and affected in various ways the worldwide mission of the Church.

The Context For An Administrative And Missionary Reorganization of the Seventh-day Adventists

Even though the circumstances and problems that led to the reorganization of the Church were of varied nature, due to the limits of this analysis we will only study those aspects that directly or indirectly affected the missionary structure of the Church. In this sense we can divide our study into two major aspects related to centralization and decentralization: 1) the limited capacity of decision in the missionary fields due to the excessive centralization of authority of the General Conference, and 2) the unlimited distribution of responsibilities due to an excessive decentralization of activities.

1) An excessive centralization of authority. In the first administrative organization of the Church, conferences and associations were established that were directly linked to the General Conference.
With the passing of years and growth of the membership and with the multiplication of the organized conferences and associations, the General Conference Board was enlarged numerically with the purpose of including the presidents of all the conferences. From five members in 1883, it grew to seven members in 1886, and to thirteen in 1897. Even so, all the important decisions should be taken by the General Conference Board, with its consequent slowness and delay in decision making.

This problem became extremely serious when decision making started to include overseas work. The letters carrying requests and recommendations took weeks to arrive at the central offices, and another so many weeks were necessary to receive the answer. This affected the general advance of missions, and filled the more active leaders with anxiety.

The first decisions to reverse this situation were taken by the delegates of the General Conference in 1893, when the organization of six districts of the General Conference in North America and two in the world fields were decided. These districts could act as supervisory agents of the work in the conferences or associations that were included in their district.

However, the executive board of the General Conference was not ready to delegate its authority easily. In one decision of the Board in relation to the recently organized districts it was established that:

... the object of the District Conferences be to counsel concerning the interests of the cause in the territory of the Conference, and for planning for the extension of the work in all the various lines, no action being taken on matters which have not
been considered in principle, at least, by the General Conference . . . (General Conference 1894:85).

It is doubtless with this decision that the reason for the organization of the districts of the General Conference would be reversed and once again the authority would be centralized.

It was however with the overseas missions—surely where they suffered the most from the centralization of authority—that the initiative was taken to change the recently organized districts of the General Conference, into an administrative and missionary entity with authority of decision. It was in Australia, where Ellen White resided at this time and where her son W. C. White and A. G. Daniells were well-known, respected and accepted leaders. In 1894 an administrative program designed and presented to the district congress with the General Conference president present, and with the approval of the delegates the first Union Conference was organized: an intermediate entity between the General Conference and the local conferences. This pilot plan of administrative restructuring would, finally become the model followed for the world Church in 1901.

2) An excessive distribution of activities. The other aspect that especially worried the world field missions, was an excessive number of legal entities—conferences, societies, institutions—that had under their care diverse activities of the Church, and that wanted to organize their own representation in every overseas mission. This resulted in all cases excessively expensive for the conferences and local missions, producing in many cases an overlapping of activities, and in other cases an excessive abundance of programs, plans and projects.
So it was also in the world field, in this case South Africa, where they took the initiative to find a solution to the problem of an excessive decentralization of activities. B. D. Oliver describes the experience of South Africa like this:

When A. T. Robinson arrived in South Africa in 1891, he quickly realized that an organization which comprised a number of autonomous, self-governing auxiliary organizations was impractical in the missionary situation in which he now found himself. To involve the available personnel in the administration of auxiliary societies and associations would mean that too few would be available for direct ministerial contact with the people to whom they were commissioned to minister. He proposed, therefore, that the auxiliary societies and associations be concentrated under the executive control of the South African Conference which he hoped would be organized in the near future (1989:73-74).

The counsel of Robinson came to the president of the General Conference who in turn consulted with W. C. White in Australia. Meanwhile, the Foreign Mission Board also analyzed the proposal. There were varied opinions, from hearty support to strong rejection of the proposal. When, after a number of months the answer came back to South Africa, Robinson had already organized the plan, and the different auxiliary entities had been transformed into departments of the local conference.

A few years later, this pilot plan experimented in South America also would result in being part of the basic program of reorganization of the General Conference in 1901.

The Reorganization of the Adventist Structure in 1901
And its Impact on the Mission Structure of the Church

The 1901 session of the General Conference produced several radical changes in the structure of the Church. The problem of the excessive diversification of autonomous entities was solved by means
of the unification of associations and societies—with the exception of the medical work which was done later—under the jurisdiction of the General Conference. The diverse activities that were carried out by these entities were transformed into departments of the General Conference. The departments of Sabbath School, Lay Activities, Temperance, Education, Publishing, etc. assumed responsibility for the promotion of their respective activities, but the administrative decisions which until then had been made by the various boards of the legal associations and societies, were now in the hands of the General Conference Board.

The other problem which had been motive for much concern, namely, the centralization of authority in a single administrative center, was resolved by the forming of Union conferences, with complete authority to make decisions within their respective administrative regions. Some years later, the establishment of the World Divisions of the General Conference in the different regions of the world, completed this distribution of delegated authority by the leadership of the Church.

Erich Baumgartner referred to the reorganization of 1901 as "The Triumph of World Mission" (1987:58). Truly, in many ways the administrative reorganization of the Church positively affected the expansion of the Adventist missions.

1) Administrative authority was delegated. One of the most outstanding positive aspects was the delegation of authority to the regional administrative entities, the Unions and later the Divisions, those that could facilitate the expansion of the work of the Church, and above all make decisions locally according to the circumstances.
In this way the fulfilling of the counsel given by Ellen White in 1887 was facilitated when she declared:

In foreign fields especially, the work cannot be accomplished, except by well-considered plans. While you should endeavor to labor in harmony with the instructions of those at the head of the work, many unseen circumstances will arise for which they could make no provision. There must be something ventured, some risks run, by those on the field of battle. There will be crises in which prompt action is necessary. The workers should not in every movement feel that they should wait to receive directions from head-quarters, but after counseling together, with earnest prayer, they should do the best they can under the circumstances (1893:305-306).

2) The "contextualization of the gospel facilitated. The capacity of adaption of the gospel to the diverse cultures and circumstances in which it should be proclaimed, has been called "contextualization" in some missiological circles. Long before the modern science of missiology, the Adventists had received counsel in how to adapt their message to the people and the circumstances. In the same document that we have quoted previously, Ellen White, taking the example of Paul and his capacity for adaptation, declared: "We also must learn to adapt our labors to the condition of the people, to meet men where they are" (1893:301).

In another similar declaration, the Adventist religious leader considered the capacity of adaptation to the people as a key to the proclamation of the gospel:

Some who engage in the work of saving souls, fail to secure the best results because they do not carry out with thoroughness the work that they began with much enthusiasm. Others cling tenaciously to preconceived notions, making these prominent, and thereby fail to conform their teaching to the actual needs of the people. Many do not realize the necessity of adapting themselves to circumstances, and meeting the people where they are. They do not identify themselves with those whom they wish to help to reach the Bible standard of Christianity (1915:381).
Without a doubt the administrative reorganization of 1901 facilitated the adaptation of the plans and methods of the different cultures and the diverse circumstances, opening the way for greater "indigenization" or nationalization of the Church in the varied regions of the world.

How the Reorganization Affected the Mission Structure

Various Adventist missiologists have arrived at the conclusion that the 1901 reorganization, even though it facilitated the work of the Adventist missions by placing the administration at these regional levels, and even though it opened the way for contextualization, it had a negative effect however in the missionary structure itself. Actually, the reorganization that began at the 1901 session and was finished some years later, touched one of the key elements of the mission structure by dissolving the Foreign Mission Board and asking that the General Conference itself assume the functions that had been exercised by this entity.

Bruce Bauer made an important analysis concerning the mission structure of the Adventist Church. In his doctoral dissertation (1982), this Adventist missionary who actually serves on the faculty of World Mission at Andrews University, considers that the Church has had three well defined and different stages in relation to its organization for carrying out the mission of the Church.

1) The Foreign Mission Board. This organization of the Church acted in a separate form even though interdependent of the General Conference between 1889, the year of its organization, and 1903 when it
was assimilated to the General Conference Board. Bauer considers that the only years the Adventist Church had a mission-type structure, were those almost fifteen years in which the Foreign Mission Board was in charge of the expansion of the new Adventist regions and territories.

2) The 1901 General Conference Session. Bauer considers that the second stage of Adventist missions began between 1901 and 1903, when the General Conference assimilated, among other semi-autonomous organizations, the Foreign Mission Board. Some of the other organizations, such as the medical work and the publishing work, were immediately organized as departments of the General Conference, and even though now they were dependents of the administration of the Church, they were, however, responsible for their respective activities. As strange as it may seem, the activity of the mission of the Church was not organized as a department, but stayed directly under the care of administration, and consequently of the General Conference Board.

Bauer considers that for some years—until 1930—while the General Conference was presided over by Daniells and Spicer successively, the administration continued accomplishing in practice the objectives of the Foreign Mission Board which had disappeared. The dedication of these two presidents to the expansion of the Church was such that, in practice, the absence of the organization dedicated exclusively to missions was not noted. Bauer says:

As one compares the minutes from the FMB with the minutes from the GC Committee for the early years of the twentieth century one can readily see the same type of items being considered by both boards. The only difference being that the FMB was totally concerned with missions whereas the GC Committee concerned itself with many other denominational matters.
3) From 1930 to the present. The difference of working without a so-called proper mission structure was accentuated more in the measure of the growing complexity and dimension of the Church. The General Conference Board and its world divisions had to dedicate more and more time to other affairs that were not directly related to evangelism.

The conclusions of Bauer's theses are related with the necessity of a restructuring that includes the establishment of an organization responsible for mission extension of the Church. Other Adventist missiologists share the concern of recuperating this type of mission structure. Russell Staples, also of Andrews University declares:

In earlier years the Adventist Church supported a great corps of missionaries working for the unreached, but this is hardly the case today. Again it is easy to see how this shift has taken place. The responsibility for evangelizing the unreached peoples of earth is delegated to divisions, unions and conferences/fields. But in many places these organizations are so busy working for their own people and stabilizing the inrush of new members that they do not have the strength to evangelize the many unreached peoples in their territories.

A solution might lie in the establishment of an international missionary society with the specific responsibility of evangelizing the unreached... To bring this about will take some reorganization, a willingness to make some structural changes, and perhaps also a willingness to open up new ways of financing missions. But surely this is a major part of the business of the church (1986:10).

The Challenge of Global Mission: A New Step in the Adventist Mission Structure

In the last few years, the challenge of a global mission has turned into a serious concern among Adventist leaders. In the world council of the Church held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1986, the president of the General Conference declared:
We talk about reaching the unreached, but permit me to tell you what this means. They tell us that 2500 million persons have never even heard Jesus’ name. There have been approximately 25,000 groups identified. Of them, 15,000 have not been reached yet. If you ask me about our strategy to reach those groups, I would not know how to answer . . . I am thankful for the initiative of the churches. But this is not a global strategy (Wilson 1987a:7).

The Church at the world level had already taken an important initiative when it implemented the quinquennial evangelistic plan called "Harvest ’90: Reach the Unreached" in the 1985 world congress. However, it does not seem many of the leaders and members of the Church evaluated the unreached in terms of peoples and ethnic groups, rather than in terms of nations or countries as was the traditional way. The implementation of the plan "Harvest 90" brought with it a reshaping of the task. In May of 1987 the General Conference Board nominated a coordinating committee of Global Mission. Referring to its related expectations with this committee, the president of the Church declared:

Short-term, I hope to see an awakening, a redefinition of our mission . . .
Long-term, I see an emphasis again upon entering areas that we have not worked in before. Not just unentered countries, but language and cultural groups within countries that perhaps have been neglected because we felt they were more difficult than others (Wilson 1987b:11).

The report of the Global Mission Coordinating Committee brought as a result the approval of a program called "Global Mission" which was accepted by the last General Conference session in July of 1990. This program not only shows the concern of the Church toward meeting the challenge of world mission, but also the intention to design a strategy that would permit the fulfillment in the entire world. In a message directed to the world Church, the new president declared:
I am happy to state that the church has enlarged its vision once again. In the Global Strategy program recently adopted, the church has announced that it is no longer satisfied with simply being represented in most of the more than 200 political entities of the world. Rather, it is now our goal to penetrate every one of the 5,000 or so ethnic-linguistic and demographic groupings of the world ... (Polkenberg 1990:32).

On this same date in which this message was sent to the world Church, the General Conference Board organized the Global Mission office and named an executive secretary. The world divisions of the Church were invited to discover and evaluate the unreached population groups in their territories, and at the same time the divisions recommended to the unions and local conferences to make the same evaluation in their respective regions.

The first results of this analysis were published in the 1990 Annual Statistical Report (General Conference 1990:43-46), and showed approximately 2000 population segments, of at least 1,000,000 inhabitants, where there is no Adventist presence as yet. Of course, these results jolted the mission conscience of the Church probably as never before, and are helping the membership and their leaders to focus the priorities of the Church in their correct order. The General Conference and its world divisions, as well as the unions, associations and local churches, have a new missionary perspective.

The Mission Structure for the Year 2000

This new missionary vision of the Church, that is, to evangelize the world by segments or homogeneous groups of population who are differentiated from the rest by their culture, race or language, is producing a re-accommodation not only of the mission structure of the
Church, but also of its strategies and evangelization programs.

With reference to the mission structure, even though the General Conference continues with the inter-division program of sending missionaries, the greater share of these are destined to institutions and administrative organizations of the Church. The greatest load for the evangelization of unreached groups of population is being placed upon the regional divisions, the unions and the local conferences. This means that the new mission structure of the Adventist Church is based on the national Church rather than the international Church. Now each region is concerned in identifying the national men and women who, by their knowledge of the language or the culture of a certain unreached segment of population, are in the best conditions to evangelize that particular segment of population. Of course, this coincides with the studies of various contemporary missiologists, who see a greater future in missions based in the national churches and of the third world, instead of continuing dependance on the international ecclesiastic organizations or the first world to evangelize the unreached regions or peoples (Pierson 1985).

With reference to the evangelizing strategies, the new mission perspective emphasizes the importance of the homogeneous units of population as a key element to reach the unreached groups. In fact, each segment of population identified by the diverse ecclesiastic organizations of the Adventist Church as an unreached group or segment, is, by its characteristics, a homogeneous unit, and can be reached advantageously following this principle and strategy, considered so important by the modern missiologist. The importance of the theme
leads us to dedicate a chapter to the analysis of the homogeneous units of population from an Adventist perspective.

**Conclusion**

The Adventist mission structure passed, then, through diverse stages of development. In its beginnings, the Church organized as a congregational structure, concerned itself more with the nutrition and the strengthening of its members. The mission arm of this congregational structure was formed almost spontaneously as a result of the witnessing work of the laity, and finally reached all of the strata of the congregational structure, from the local congregation to the General Conference, as the Lay Activities or Missionary Department. During the last few years this activity has formed part of the so-called "Church Ministries Department".

The mission structure of the Adventists was initially organized as a mission society dependent of the General Conference. From 1889 until 1901, the Foreign Mission Board was a semi-autonomous mission society that, in the thought of some Adventist missiologists, fulfilled the characteristics of a valid mission structure. This structure, however, was dissolved in the administrative reorganization which took place during the years 1901-1903, and the responsibility for the Adventist missions passed again to the congregational structure.

Since 1985 and onward, a new mission perspective of the Church in regard to its global mission, is permitting a reaccommodating of the Adventist mission structure, to adapt itself not only to a new vision, but also to the immense challenges of the mission of the Church as it approaches the year 2000.
CHAPTER 11

THE LAITY IN THE ADVENTIST MISSION STRUCTURE

As we have expressed in the previous chapter, even though the Adventist Church maintains an important program for sending missionaries overseas, the missionaries are utilized basically for institutions and church administration, and not for opening new missionary frontiers. In the Latin American countries, the number of foreign missionaries is relatively small in comparison to the number of pastors and national leaders, and practically all of them are connected with the educational, medical, or philanthropic institutions of the Church. This leaves all the responsibility to open new missionary frontiers upon the congregational structure, that is, the divisions, unions, conferences and missions, and the local congregations with their pastors.

As we have seen in the first part of our study, the most important missionary arm of the Adventist congregational structure in Latin America, has been a growing lay movement, which not only has a greater participation in the leadership of the local congregations, but has also been a major factor in the expansion of the Church and in the extension of the faith. This aspect of the Adventist mission structure, that is the participation of the laity, will be analyzed in greater depths in the present chapter.
The Laity in the Adventist Movement

The Adventist Church throughout its history has encouraged its volunteer workers to take an active part in the task of witnessing. Almost without exception the ecclesiastical analysts that have studied Adventists, coincide in demonstrating this participation of voluntary workers, as a key for explaining its growth. Arno Enns, after having analyzed Adventist growth in a South American country stated:

The Adventists have, from the very beginning, provided a place for active lay participation. This involves the day-to-day witness of every church member, but has also led to more extensive activity such as colportage and preaching. There seems to be a degree of commitment and active dedication on the part of the average Adventist not paralleled in other Protestant Churches, with the possible exception of the Pentecostals (1971:164).

Prudencio Damboriena, a Catholic analyst of evangelical growth in Latin America had the same impression:

The lay element plays an important role in transmitting the Adventist message, however it is not by arbitrary criteria but rather under quite precise conditions. All are encouraged to work, each adapting to his personal qualities and level of education (1962:130).

Indeed, the participation of the voluntary workers in the tasks of witnessing is important within the Adventist Church. A large part of this lay mobilization should be accredited to the counsel and orientation given by Ellen White, pioneer of the movement and its most important mission strategist. To analyze the thought of the writer, we have divided the study in four aspects: 1) the laity's place in the evangelization and expansion of the Church, 2) the relation of the pastor to his laity, 3) the lay people in ministerial duties and, 4) lay families as self-supporting missionaries.
The Place of the Laity in Evangelization

In a chapter titled "Let's Join Laymen's Lib!", C. Peter Wagner synthesized his belief with reference to the participation of lay people in the following declaration:

If the first vital sign of a growing church is a pastor who is using his gifts to lead his church into growth, the second is a well-mobilized laity. One cannot function apart from the other any more than blood circulation and respiration can function apart from each other in the human body (1976:69).

With more than a century of anticipation, Ellen White had expressed a similar thought:

That church only is strong that is a working church, whose members feel an individual responsibility to act their part in strengthening, encouraging, and building up the church by their personal efforts. These workers will extend their influence and labors in doing all that they can in every branch of the work. The truth spreads when living, active workers commend it by personal effort, characterized by piety and the beauty of true holiness (1878:186).

The outstanding aspect of this declaration is the identification of the members of the Church as "workers" in the duties of evangelism. This idea, which comes from the Biblical concept of universal priesthood of the believers (1 Pe. 2:9), grew to preeminence in the thoughts of the authoress, as the key to success in the growth of the Church. "No church can flourish unless its members are workers." That is how an article started that was titled "A Working Church" (1881:129). Two weeks later she expanded the same concept in the following declaration:

When Christ ascended, he left the church and all its interests as a sacred trust to his followers, bidding them see that it was kept in a flourishing condition. This work cannot be left to the ministers alone, or to a few leading men. Every member should feel that he has entered into a solemn covenant with the Lord to work for the best interests of his cause at all times and under all circumstances. . . .
The real character of the church is measured, not by the high profession she makes, not by the names enrolled upon the church book, but by what she is actually doing for the Master, by the number of her persevering, faithful workers (1887:161).

The Newly Converted in Tasks of Witnessing

In the author's thinking, an important aspect of maintaining the spirituality of the Church healthy as well as her growth and expansion, is to teach the new converts to immediately enter into the witnessing tasks:

When souls are converted, set them to work at once. And as they labor according to their ability, they will grow stronger. It is by meeting opposing influences that we become confirmed in the faith. As the light shines into their hearts, let them diffuse its rays. Teach the newly converted that they are to enter into fellowship with Christ, to be His witnesses, and to make Him known unto the world (1895b:401).

This concept may seem a surprising one and may even be counter-productive for some. It would seem that newly converted do not possess, generally, the capacity, the knowledge and the skill to assume the position of an efficient witness. On the other hand, experience indicates that the newly converted have the fervor, the aggressiveness and the confidence which in many cases one loses with the passing of years. In the author’s opinion, the advantages of giving all newly converted an opportunity to share their faith immediately, seems to be important. Let us analyze some of them:

1) It channels that "first love". Normally, the newly converted show an uncontainable desire to share and communicate about their personal experience. If this "first love" can be channeled correctly, it will produce effective results for the growth of the Church:
He who is truly converted will work to save others who are in darkness. One truly converted soul will reach out in faith to save another and still another. Those who do this are God’s agencies, His sons and daughters, they are a part of his great firm (1900a:29).

2) Spirituality is strengthened. The newly converted, almost without exception, confronts crisis of spiritual, intellectual and social nature. It is during this first stage of their new walk with Christ, when they seem to find themselves with reason to get discouraged. In Ellen White’s opinion, the best medicine to avoid the initial crises was missionary work:

The best medicine you can give the church is not preaching or sermonizing, but planning work for them. If set to work, the despondent would soon forget their despondency, the weak would become strong, the ignorant intelligent, and all would be prepared to present the truth as it is in Jesus (1895b:401).

Those who are most actively employed in doing with interested fidelity their work to win souls to Jesus Christ, are the best developed in spirituality and devotion. Their very active working formed the means of their spirituality. There is danger of religion losing in depth that which it gains in breadth. This need not be, if, in the place of long sermons, there is wise education given to those newly come to the faith. Teach them by giving them something to do, in some line of spiritual work, that their first love will not die but increase in fervor (1892:44).

The Relation of the Pastor with the Laity

This last quote introduces us to the following section of this chapter: the functions of the pastor as leader of his congregation guiding it to a fulfillment of its mission. Two of the various functions of a good ecclesiastical administration are outlined in that quotation: planning and instruction. In comparing the homiletic function of the minister with his responsibilities of teaching and planning, the author concludes that, in relation to church growth, the latter are more essential than the first. Better than "preaching and
sermonizing" is "planning work for them [his members]". And better than "long sermons is to provide "a wise education given to those newly come to the faith".

**A Fatal Error of the Pastor:**
**To Try to Do the Work Alone**

The emphasis used by Ellen White to advocate for an active lay participation, can be seen clearly in the statements in which she defines as a fatal error, the idea that the pastor is the only one responsible for evangelization. In other words, if there is something that can kill church growth it is this attitude.

It is a fatal mistake to suppose that the work of soul-saving depends alone upon the ministry. The humble, consecrated believer upon whom the Master of the vineyard places a burden for souls is to be given encouragement by the men upon whom the Lord has laid larger responsibilities. Those who stand as leaders in the church of God are to realize that the Saviour’s commission is given to all who believe in His name (1911:110).

A working church is a living church. We are built up as living stones, and every stone is to emit light. Every Christian is compared to a precious stone that catches the glory of God and reflects it.

The idea that the minister must carry all the burdens and do all the work is a great mistake (1900:435).

From the contents of the preceding statements we can note that the error can arise from both parts. Enthusiastic lay people could lose interest, if the pastors or others leaders in the church do not show a conviction of the necessity of a participation of the membership in the duties of evangelism, nor encouraged to do it. On the other hand, if the congregation considers the minister the only one responsible, the members will remain inactive and "indifferent, as though they are not interested in the matter" (1915:206). All of this clearly indicates the necessity of instruction; instruction of the pastors and the
members of the churches, so that everyone understands his function in
the completion of the mission.

The Pastor as Instructor

The church's Pauline theology is found as the basis for an
organization of the Christian forces. Among other things, Paul
established the place and purpose of the pastorate and other special
ministries. The pastors, together with the evangelists, teachers,
apostles and prophets are ordained by the Lord "for the perfecting of
the saints, for the work of the ministry" (Eph. 4:11-12). Clearly the
apostle is defining two important aspects: the first, that "the
saints" or the members that make up the congregation, have a
ministerial work to accomplish, and second, that the pastors have a
well-defined work of instruction in relation with the members, that is,
to fit them for accomplishing the ministerial function.

Ellen White follows Paul's line of thought when speaking of the
pastoral function of the congregation. Essentially, this function is
educational, and is directed toward the two great aspects of the life
of the congregation, this is, the internal edification and expansion of
the faith.

Many would be willing to work if they were taught how to begin.
They need to be instructed and encouraged.

Every church should be a training school for Christian
workers (1905c:149).

In every church the members should be so trained that they
will devote time to the winning of souls to Christ (1900:436).

Let ministers teach church-members that in order to grow in
spirituality, they must carry the burden that the Lord has laid
upon them,—the burden of leading souls into the truth. . . . Do
not lead people to depend upon you as ministers; teach them rather
that they are to use their talents in giving the truth to those around them (1915:200).

These declarations are, of course, a brief selection of the many found in various publications by the author, about the need for ministers to understand their mission as instructors and leaders of the congregation in the activities of evangelism. We can say, without the fear of being mistaken that for Ellen White one of the keys to success in the growth and expansion of the Church, is the active and total participation of the laity in evangelization.

The Lay People in Ministerial Duties

Another important aspect of mission strategy planned for by this Adventist leader, has to do with the participation of the laity in the leadership of the congregations, with the objective that the ministers may dedicate more time themselves to the duty of evangelizing, and not have to be constantly "hovering" over the same congregations already established:

The world is to be warned. Ministers should work earnestly and devotedly, opening new fields and engaging in personal labor for souls, instead of hovering over the churches that already have great light and many advantages (1902a:255).

We feel pained beyond measure to see some of our ministers hovering about the churches, apparently putting forth some little effort, but having next to nothing to show for their labors. The field is the world. Let them go out into the unbelieving world and labor to convert souls to the truth (1875:406).

In this aspect, the lay people also play a major role in carrying on the activities of the congregation, thus leaving the hands of the pastor free so he can dedicate himself to evangelism. Ellen White counsels the members to take the initiative to offer their services to
the pastor, to tend to the activities of the church so that he may dedicate himself to the work of evangelization:

Instead of keeping the ministers at work for the churches that already know the truth, let the members of the churches say to these laborers: "Go work for souls that are perishing in darkness. We ourselves will carry forward the services of the church. We will keep up the meetings, and, by abiding in Christ, will maintain spiritual life (1900:30).

Before a question regarding the possibilities of a major lay participation in the ministry of the Church, the former president of the General Conference responded:

We have received much counsel in this sense. When a church is well established, it should be able to carry forward its functions on its own, without having to depend upon salaried and professionally prepared ministers . . .

I believe there are many new forms of ministerial activity that could include persons that are self-employed, who have blocks of time that they can dedicate to the work of the Lord. Some of these persons included could occupy pastoral responsibilities (Wilson 1986:6).

In this statement, an administrative authority backs up the counsel given to the Church regarding the participation of the laity in the Adventist ministry. From his words can be extracted some defined orientation. In the first place, the churches, with their local leaders, should conduct themselves in a manner that does not require the constant presence of a professional minister, "freeing those that have been trained in public evangelism and other types of activity, so they may extend the Kingdom of God, rather than concentrate it" (Wilson 1986:6).

Secondly, in the Adventist ministry, there could be laypersons who, maintaining their independent professions, could contribute with their spiritual gifts to the ministry of the Church.
In the first part of our analysis, we also made reference to a growing tendency of the Church in Latin America regarding lay leadership. The fact that the percentages of growth in the number of pastors is substantially less than are the percentages of growth in members and churches, has spontaneously caused the Church to select lay people and prepare them to assume leadership roles at the local congregation level. We have also seen that this tendency is favored by the majority of the modern missiologists. Now we can agree that in the Adventist mission structure, there is a definite place for the laity in ministerial duties.

Then, in the Adventist concept, the mission of evangelization can be accomplished by the combined forces of the ministers and members of the churches. The first edifying, instructing and encouraging the second, not only to fulfill the duties of evangelization, but also to assume the pastoral duties in the church, so that the minister can, at the same time, dedicate his time to the mission of seeking unconverted souls.

Lay People as Self-Supporting Missionaries

By the quantity of statements that are found in the writings of Ellen White, motivating families to move as self-supporting missionaries to areas and countries where the Church was not yet established, we can conclude that it was one of the methods which was supported with most enthusiasm by this co-founder of the Church. Here are some of her statements:
The lay members of our churches can accomplish a work which, as yet, they have scarcely begun. None should move into new places merely for the sake of worldly advantage; but where there is an opening to obtain a livelihood, let families that are well grounded in the truth enter, one or two families in a place, to work as missionaries. They should feel a love for souls, a burden of labor for them, and should make it a study how to bring them into the truth (1904:245).

God calls for Christian families to go into communities that are in darkness and error, and work wisely and perseveringly for the Master. To answer this call requires self-sacrifice (1909a:33).

If families would locate in the dark places of the earth, places where the people are enshrouded in spiritual gloom, and let the light of Christ’s life shine out through them, a great work might be accomplished (1900:442).

The migratory movement which came about at the end of the past century and the beginning of this century in some regions of the world, permitted, in a natural and spontaneous way, the accomplishment of this program. In our own analysis of Latin America we indicated more than once, the participation of the lay members as self-supporting missionaries, and the migration of Adventist families to regions where the Church was not established, with the aim of giving testimony to their faith. Surely we can credit the counsel by the Adventist leaders for a good share of these missionary movements made by lay people.

However, unusual as it may seem, the Church on a world level never implemented a program to put into practice this counseled mission strategy. The congregational and administrative structure of the Church has as excellent program for motivating youth to offer their volunteer missionary services for short periods, and actually a large number of the recruited youth in this program are opening new missionary frontiers, especially through the Christian schools which teach the English language. Also the Church has a program for retired
missionaries who can offer their services. However, a program has never been implemented for families of lay people who would be willing to open new frontiers for evangelism.

It is possible that, with the great challenge represented by the un reached peoples of the earth, and with the new mission vision of the Church in what is known as "Global Mission", the time has come in which a program could be implemented which puts into practice the strategic mission concept given many years ago, to invite the Adventist families to settle down among population groups yet un reached by the gospel, becoming self-supporting missionaries, and highly valued instruments for the extension of the faith.

**Conclusion**

We can conclude, then, that in the Adventist mission structure, the participation of the laity in tasks of evangelism not only is important but is essential for accomplishing the Christian mission. To fail in giving this participation to the members, or neglect the instruction of the same to capacitate them for witnessing, is a grave error that could produce a great set-back, or even detain the expansion of the Church.

Within the Adventist mission structure there are, however, two elements that have been considered for a long time as valued mission strategies which have not been fully developed yet. The first has to do with the active participation of the laity in ministerial duties, as leaders and pastors of local congregations. Certainly Latin America is one of these regions of the world where there exist ideal conditions
to implement this strategy, due to the active participation that the lay members already have in the evangelistic and ecclesiastic activities.

The second mission strategy which has not been implemented yet, is the participation of lay families who establish themselves as self-supporting missionaries, in unreached regions and populations of the world. And surely the Holy Spirit will guide the Church in the implementation of this program within its mission structure in the near future.
CHAPTER 12

THE HOMOGENEOUS UNITS OF POPULATION IN
THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH: AN ADVENTIST PERSPECTIVE

As we have expressed in a previous chapter, the Adventists adopted a new vision of the global mission of the Church, which comes as a new missionary challenge: to reach every population segment, whose linguistic, racial or cultural characteristics, identify it as a population group separated from the rest of the community. In missiological terms, these segments of population have been characterized as "homogeneous units".

In reality, as we have seen in our statistical analysis, this mission strategy was used by the pioneers of Latin American Adventism, whom on many occasions made the first contacts through homogeneous population segments, such as the colonies of immigrants. Motivated by the necessity of presenting the gospel in the language that they were able to utilize, the first self-supporting missionaries went to the regions where the people spoke their own language, or embraced their culture. From there, with the passing of years, the Church expanded to the native population.

Modern missiology considers essential to the advancement to the Church mission, the utilization of the homogeneous units of population, as a valuable and successful mission strategy in varied circumstances. Adventists also have received from their pioneers and founders,
missiological principles which, in many aspects, anticipated the modern principle of homogeneous people groups. This chapter will make an analysis of such missiological principles.

Definition of the Homogeneous Units

"Men like to become Christians without crossing racial, linguistic, or class barriers" (McGavran 1980:223). That is how this missiological concept was expressed some years back, in what has become an important element in the discussions about the way to accomplish the mission of the Church. Another description of the same principle establishes that:

... when marked differences of color, stature, income, cleanliness, and education are present, men understand the Gospel better when expounded by their own kind of people. They prefer to join churches whose members look, talk, and act like themselves (McGavran 1980:227).

Evangelistic work of the Church in population groups whose homogeneousness is perceived through color, race, income bracket or other elements in common, has been labeled as work in homogeneous units.

This concept has, of course, its great defenders and its great detractors. Among the latter, the argument most utilized against it is that it functions as a divisive element, and is directly against the desire and the prayer of Christ for the unity of the Church (John 17). Those that defend the concept, in general express that, even though unity is highly desired and appreciated among Christians and should be sought after, promoted and attained by all means available within our reach, when evangelizing unbelievers is the issue, the differences
among the diverse groups of population are important, because they have a direct impact on the results of evangelization, and for that reason should be taken into consideration. McGavran, in his classic work regarding ecclesiastical growth, presents various examples of positive results when homogeneous units are used as a basic element of evangelization (1980:223-224).

**Homogeneous Units in Adventist Writings**

As we have mentioned previously, within the Adventist writings about the mission of the Church, the writings of Ellen White, one of the founders of the movement and its most famous writer, are those which contain the most material about strategic mission. Of course, Ellen White lived and wrote long before the concept of homogeneous units was expressed in its modern form. However in her writings are found not only references, but also a definite tendency to value and promote different strategies to work for different groups of population. The authoress found the biblical foundation for her position in Paul’s example who said "unto the Jews I became a Jew, that I might gain the Jews . . . to them that are without law, as without law, . . . to the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak" (1 Co. 9:19-23). After citing Paul’s texts, Ellen White expresses:

We know that the apostle did not sacrifice one jot of principle. He did not allow himself to be led away by the sophistry and maxims of men . . . but at the same time some features of our faith, if expressed, would by the elements with which you have to deal, arouse the prejudice at once.

. . . This was the manner of his working—adapting his methods to win souls. Had he been abrupt and unskilful in handling the Word, he would not have reached either Jew or Gentile (1895:76-77).
She felt that, like Paul, the contemporary Church should adapt itself, and adapt the gospel while presenting it to different population groups. Her position was made very strong and clear in the 1890s, when she made fervent appeals for a serious work to be initiated among the Afro-Americans in the southern part of the United States. However there is also to be found in her appeals to work for other minorities and special classes of people. Our analysis will be divided into four areas: 1) the racial minorities in the United States, 2) the evangelization among the Afro-Americans, 3) the work for the Jews, and 4) the activity among the upper class of the population.

Evangelization of Minorities

When Ellen White began to travel for prolonged periods outside her country, she herself sensed the need of a greater number of missionaries that could preach to their own people, in their own language and within the context of their own culture. In a personal letter written from Switzerland, she describes the work accomplished by the ministers in the valleys of the Piedmont in northern Italy who used cattle barns as meeting places, and then declares:

In such places is where our laborers in Torre Pellice and adjoining valleys hold their meetings. . . .

. . . Brother A. C. Bourdeau occasionally attends these meetings but the principle workers are Italians. The Americans are not inured to the atmosphere of the stables, and their throats and lungs become inflamed and diseased. Italians can stand this atmosphere much better, so we are seeking to educate the Italians to go into the stables, and when once the people are interested then halls are hired (1886:44).

Ellen White, then, began to insist in the idea of working among the racial minorities in the United States with the objective that many
of the new converts could prepare themselves as missionaries to return to their lands.

Many of these foreigners are here in the providence of God, that they may have opportunity to hear the truth for this time, and receive a preparation that will fit them to return to their own lands as bearers of precious light shining direct from the throne of God (1910:1).

Great benefits would come to the cause of God in the regions beyond if faithful effort were put forth in behalf of the foreigners in the cities of our homeland. Among these men and women are some who, upon accepting the truth, could soon be fitted to labor for their own people in this country and in other countries. Many might return to the places from which they came, in hope in winning their friends to the truth (1914:3).

In the preceding statements, we clearly see the principle of the homogeneous units in action. "Men understand the gospel better when expounded by their own kind of people" (McGavran 1980:227). Ellen White saw as very beneficial extending the mission to other countries, the idea of working among the racial minorities, and that from the new converts some would prepare to return to their country, to work among their own people.

In 1905 the authoress accompanied the words with action, in visiting the headquarters for the work among a racial minority: the Swedish in Chicago. After the visit, she took advantage of the occasion to underscore the necessity of working for other minorities:

We drove out to see the newly established Swedish Mission on Oak Street. There we were shown a building which our Swedish brethren, under the leadership of Elder S. Mortenson, have recently purchased for the headquarters of their work in Chicago.

... In every large city in America there are people of different nationalities, who must hear the message for this time. I long to see evidence that the lines of work which the Lord has marked out are being disinterestedly taken up. A work similar to that which is being done in Chicago for the Swedish people should be done in many places (1905a:8).

Certainly, those evidences that the founder of the Church yearned
to see, came with the passing of years, and she had the opportunity to see them before her death. The General Conference organized a department in charge of minorities and the evangelization of them that even today continues.

In 1914, a year before her death, the authoress manifested satisfaction for the labor that had been accomplished among the minorities, and again took advantage of the opportunity to put emphasis in that work:

Recently we were favored with a visit from Elder O. A. Olsen, who has been appointed by the General Conference to have the general oversight of the work among foreigners in America. We were greatly cheered by the encouraging report he brought concerning the progress that has been made in a few places. He told us of the continued prosperity of the cause of present truth among the Scandinavians and the Germans in America, and of the plans for continuing the work among the French.

... As I have testified for years, if we were quick in discerning the opening providences of God, we should be able to see in the multiplying opportunities to reach many foreigners in America a divinely appointed means of rapidly extending the third angel's message into all the nations of earth (1914:3-4).

And so, after almost a quarter of a century since Ellen White started insisting on the necessity to organize the work for minorities in the country, the Church organized a department to care for this work. From these racial minorities many missionaries went out to work in their own country, and among the people of their own race and culture, thus accomplishing the dream of one of the founders of the Church.

The Evangelization Among the Afro-Americans

Between the years 1890 and 1900, which coincided with a lengthy period in which the writer lived in Australia, Ellen White manifested a
great interest and wrote fervorous appeals concerning the work among
the Afro-Americans, especially in the southern part of the United
States. These appeals sincerely motivated many Adventists to work for
the Afro-American race. One member of her family—her son, Edson—felt
such a burden for this race, that he dedicated himself with total
enthusiasm to this task and even launched a missionary boat that
attracted the interest and the means of many members of the Church.
This boat navigated for many years for mission purposes, along the
waters of the Mississippi River.

The theme of the relation among the races and work among the Afro-
Americans, should be understood in the social context of the end of the
past century. Slavery had been abolished, but the Afro-American race
had not yet had the opportunities to advance, culturally and socially,
as occurred in subsequent decades. Neither had the relation between
the White and Afro-American races reached the levels of co-existence
that can be seen today. Within this context, the appeals and
commentaries of the writer could be considered ahead of her time.
Within her writings three basic principles clearly stand out: 1) that
all races are equal before God, 2) that in the process of conversion,
the Holy Spirit helps the new creature in Christ have a different
perspective of other races, and 3) that in the work to evangelize the
Afro-Americans, it is more effective when the work is done by those of
their own race in the context of their own culture.

All Races Are Equal Before God

From an analysis of the first formal presentation of the theme
before the General Conference on March 21, 1891, we can infer from the conclusion that the leaders of this time did not consider as urgent or important the evangelization of Afro-Americans, compared to the work among the Whites. In harmony with the problem, the argument generally presented by Ellen White was the necessity to remember that, before God, the two races have equal importance:

The Lord Jesus came to our world to save men and women of all nationalities. He died just as much for the colored people as for the white race. . . . The Lord’s eye is upon all His creatures: He loves them all, and makes no difference between white and black, except that He has a special, tender pity for those who are called to bear a greater burden than others. . . . Whoever of the human family give themselves to Christ, whoever hear the truth and obey it, become children of one family. The ignorant and the wise, the rich and the poor, the heathen and the slave, white or black—Jesus paid the purchase money for their souls. If they believe on Him, His cleansing blood is applied to them. The black man’s name is written in the book of life beside the white man’s. All are one in Christ. . . .

Men may have both hereditary and cultivated prejudices, but when the love of Jesus fills the heart, and they become one with Christ, they will have the same spirit that He had. If a colored brother sits by their side, they will not be offended or despise him. They are journeying to the same heaven, and will be seated at the same table to eat bread in the kingdom of God. If Jesus is abiding in our hearts we cannot despise the colored man who has the same Saviour abiding in his heart (1891:9-18).

In all of this presentation before the leaders of the General Conference, as also in various articles published during 1895 in the Review and Herald the tone was the same. The motivating element for work among the Afro-Americans consisted in showing that they had just as much right to hear the gospel and accept the offered redemption as the members of other races. Without entering into great socio-anthropological considerations we can, notwithstanding, recognize that in that final decade of the 19th century, even the Christians—and among them religious leaders—had serious difficulties in seeing, as
their own brothers, the members of a race that, until a few years
before, had been slaves.

With Conversion the Differences Disappear

The second basic principle that we can extract from the writings
of Ellen White with reference to the work among the Afro-Americans is
that, once conversion takes place, and the Holy Spirit has performed a
transformation of the soul, the barriers of separation and division
among the races does not have a reason to exist, but are rather the
residues of the old sinful nature. The authoress states:

When the Holy Spirit is poured out, there will be a triumph of
humanity over prejudice in seeking the salvation of the souls of
human beings. God will control minds. Human hearts will love as
Christ loved. And the color line will be regarded by many very
differently from the way in which it is now regarded. To love as
Christ loves, lifts the mind into a pure, heavenly, unselfish
atmosphere (1909:209).

In our worship of God there will be no distinction between rich
and poor, white and black. All prejudice will be melted away.
When we approach God, it will be as one brotherhood. We are
pilgrims and strangers, bound for a better country, even a
heavenly (1899:677).

From her first statement in 1891 we can infer that the converts
among the Afro-Americans that were received into the Church until then,
had difficulties in participating in worship, including maintaining
their membership in churches where the majority came from the white
race. Guiding the leaders of the Church, the authoress sharply
reprimanded them with this strong declaration:

You have no license from God to exclude the colored people from
your places of worship. Treat them as Christ’s property, which
they are, just as much as yourselves. They should have membership
in the church with the white brethren (1891:15).
Clearly, in the writer's thoughts, conversion breaks the barriers of separation. Among those who have accepted Christ as their Saviour, are the ties of union—and not separation—that which is conspicuous. However, by the good of saving of souls, and by an effective possibility of reaching them, Ellen White takes a different position on the strategies of evangelization of the Afro-Americans.

Maintain Separation in Evangelization

Again we find ourselves with the homogeneous units in action. The authoress suggests two basic strategies to reach the Afro-Americans. First, maintain separate reunions, with the goal to not go against the interest that could be awakened on both accounts, and with the good to avoid the prejudices that could arise in both groups:

In regard to white and colored people worshiping in the same building, this cannot be followed as a general custom with profit to either party—especially in the South. The best thing will be to provide the colored people who accept the truth, with places of worship of their own, in which they can carry on their services by themselves. This is particularly necessary in the South in order that the work for the white people may be carried on without serious hindrance.

Let the colored believers be provided with neat, tasteful houses of worship. Let them be shown that this is done not to exclude them from worshiping with white people, because they are black, but in order that the progress of the truth may be advanced. Let them understand that this plan is to be followed until the Lord shows us a better way (1909:206–207).

A second strategy again had to do with the principle that "men understand the gospel better when expounded by their own kind of people" (McGavran 1980:227). Ellen White constantly advocated for Afro-American ministers working among their own people, with the objective of facilitating interest, and to avoiding prejudices.
We should educate colored men to be missionaries among their own people. We should recognize talent where it exists among the people, and those who have ability should be placed where they may receive an education.

There are able colored ministers who have embraced the truth. Some of these feel unwilling to devote themselves to work for their own race; they wish to preach to the white people. These men are making a great mistake. They should seek most earnestly to save their own race, and they will not by any means be excluded from the gatherings of the white people (1891:15-16).

The colored members of ability and experience should be encouraged to lead the services of their own people; . . . Colored men are to be thoroughly educated and trained to give Bible readings and hold tent meetings among their own people. There are many having capability, who should be prepared for this work (1909:207).

The principles and strategies that are included in the modern principle of the homogeneous units were, therefore, considered essential elements by the author, to treat the theme of the evangelization of Afro-Americans, in the southern part of the United States. However, this type of missionary strategy in the writings of Ellen White was not limited to racial minorities; it also can be found in references to religious minorities and the manner of working for them. An example of this is the strategy for evangelizing among the Jewish people.

How To Reach the Jews With the Gospel

The basic reason for which Ellen White saw is necessary to accomplish an evangelization work specifically geared to the Jewish people, differs from the reasons and motivations presented in relation with the racial minorities. In this case the reason has to do with the form of presentation of the Bible truths. The Hebrew people in the
concept of the writer, needs a unique approximation to the gospel: through the use of the Old Testament.

In the closing proclamation of the gospel, when special work is to be done for classes of people hitherto neglected God expects His messengers to take particular interest in the Jewish people whom they find in all parts of the earth. As the Old Testament Scriptures are blended with the New in an explanation of Jehovah's eternal purpose, this will be to many of the Jews as the dawn of a new creation, the resurrection of the soul. As they see the Christ of the gospel dispensation portrayed in the pages of the Old Testament Scriptures, and perceive how clearly the New Testament explains the Old, their slumbering faculties will be aroused, and they will recognize Christ as the Saviour of the world (1911:381).

It has been a strange thing to me that there were so few who felt a burden to labor for the Jewish people, who are scattered throughout so many lands. Christ will be with you as you strive to strengthen your perceptive faculties, that you may more clearly behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world... Memory will be awakened as Christ is seen portrayed in the pages of the Old Testament. Souls will be saved, from the Jewish nation, as the doors of the New Testament are unlocked with the key of the Old Testament (1903:578-579).

A second aspect that stands out in the various references of the writer to the work for the Jews, is again the idea that "people understand the gospel better when expounded by their own kind of people". There is a defined appeal to the converted Jews to work for their own people. In this sense we can again find Ellen White early supporting the modern principle of the homogeneous units.

The time has come when the Jews are to be given light. The Lord wants us to encourage and sustain men who shall labor in right lines for this people: for there are to be a multitude convinced of the truth, who will take their position for God. The time is coming when there will be as many converted in a day as there were on the day of Pentecost, after the disciples had received the Holy Spirit.

The Jews are to be a power to labor for the Jews: and we are to see the salvation of God (1905b:8).
A year after this appeal and motivation orally presented at the session of the Church, this Adventist leader had the opportunity to know that some Jews were evangelizing the members of their own community, which produced joy, and in this opportunity she wrote:

In this our day, we see the Gentiles beginning to rejoice with the Jews. There are converted Jews who are now laboring in _____ and in various other cities, in behalf of their own people. The Jews are coming into the ranks of God's chosen followers, and are being numbered with the Israel of God in these closing days. Thus some of the Jews will once more be reinstated with the people of God (1906:577-578).

The following year, 1907, Ellen White decided to write more completely on the theme. That manuscript was titled: "Our Duty Toward the Jews". In it, the author again made a special fervorant appeal to work for the Jewish people. The biblical base of her appeal, is the Pauline theological principle based on Romans 11. After dedicating several pages of the manuscript to comment on this chapter, the authoress asked: "Isn't it strange that there are so few among the Seventh-day Adventists that feel the burden to work for the Jewish nation?" She saw so clearly the biblical call to work for the salvation of Israel, that the lack of interest for this manifested work in the members and the leaders of their Church seemed strange.

It is also interesting to note that the last part of this manuscript is dedicated to make a defense for the homogeneous units principle, of course, without specifically mentioning it. After commenting about the fact that God in his wisdom permitted that there be more than one gospel to tell the same story, the authoress declared the reason is "because the minds of men do not comprehend things in exactly the same way. Some truths appeal much more strongly to the
minds of one class of persons than to others" (1907:424). The defense of the homogeneous units is completed with the following statement, which, of course, also is a defense of her thesis to work for the Jews as a special class:

In every age God works through His servants in various ways. He brings the honest hearted into connection with those of His people who can best reach the individual needs of the case. Some of His children, having special knowledge in certain lines, are adapted to give the greatest help to one class of inquirers; others, trained in a different way, are best fitted to help another class (1907:87).

Evangelization of the Upper Class

As we mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, there are those who consider that working through the homogeneous units of population, is a negation of the gospel, principally in that related to the unity of the believers for which Christ prayed. This diversity of opinions becomes more evident when the theme is treated from the perspective of the diverse social classes represented in a community. Should Christians think of evangelizing the different social stratas separately? Should the classes be preferentially treated above the rest of the population? Of course, it is not our intention to extensive dedication for an answer to these questions from a personal point of view, but, we will limit the theme, by finding the Adventist perspective expressed by the most representative author, with reference to these affairs. With this issue, two principles are clearly visible in her writings: 1) All of the social classes are equal before God, and because of that everyone should be given the same consideration. 2) The rich and famous are also a class forgotten by the Church, and
this social class requires certain habitabilities and special characteristics to bring them to the Church.

All Social Classes Need Redemption

In any compilation of statements by an author, there exists the danger of being subjective and presenting a partial vision of their thoughts. In the theme we are on—evangelization of the upper class—we do not wish to leave an erroneous impression, in the sense that Ellen White may have advocated preferentiality to this social class. If there is a social class which the authoress dedicated more time, energy and appeals to the Church, it was for the poor and forsaken class. Whatever intent to give preference to the upper class above the lower class, would be twisting the thought of the author. And in truth she was very concerned that her position be made clear:

The gospel invitation is to be given to the rich and the poor, the high and the low, and we must devise means for carrying the truth into new places, and to all classes of people (1899:552).

... let none receive the idea that the poor and unlearned are to be neglected. Right methods of labor will not in any sense exclude these. It was one of the evidences of Christ’s messiahship that the poor had the gospel preached to them. We should study to give all classes an opportunity to understand the special truths for this time (1890:721).

However, the authoress also put emphasis in the fact that in general they were working only for the lower classes, and consequently, should also consider the upper class as a class neglected by the Church:

We talk and write much of the neglected poor; should not some attention be given also to the neglected rich? Many look upon this class as hopeless, and they do little to open
the eyes of those who, blinded and dazed by the power of Satan, have lost eternity out of their reckoning (1900:78).

But it has been the case that the plans and the efforts have been so shaped in many fields that the lower classes only are the ones who can be reached. But methods may be devised to reach the higher classes who need the light of truth as well as the lower classes. These see the truth, but they are, as it were, in the slavery of poverty, and see starvation before them should they accept the truth. Plan to reach the best classes, and you will not fail to reach the lower classes (1887:553).

This thought led Ellen White to suggest on several occasions a strategy to reach the upper class, that basically consisted of preparing ministers with special abilities, to specifically work for the upper classes of society.

The Upper Class Requires Special Qualifications

In a chapter titled "The Ministry Among the Rich", the authoress suggests identifying persons properly suited to work for the upper class, and make them responsible for this special ministry:

It is by no casual, accidental touch that wealthy, world-loving, world-worshiping souls can be drawn to Christ. These persons are often the most difficult of access. Personal effort must be put forth for them by men and women imbued with the missionary spirit, those who will not fail or be discouraged.

Some are especially fitted to work for the higher classes. These should seek wisdom from God to know how to reach these persons. . . . (1905c:213).

Another strategy suggested by the writer is to have the new converts from the upper class work for those that are in their own social class, thus suggesting a strategy which is included in the principle of the homogeneous units:

When converted to Christ, many will become agencies in the hand of God to work for others of their own class. They will feel that a dispensation of the gospel is committed to them for those who have made this world their all. Time and money will be
Consecrated to God, talent and influence will be devoted to the work of winning souls to Christ (1905:216).

Conclusion

The Adventist perspective on the use of homogeneous units of population, has been founded in the missiologic writings of her best known author: Ellen G. White. The following conclusions then can be established from her writings:

1) In relation to diverse groups of population identified by having elements in common such as language, race, social class or religion, methods or strategies of evangelization should be used that are specifically oriented to that group.

2) The work will be accomplished more effectively when members of the same race or social class as those which they are trying to reach are involved.

3) Even though all races and social classes are equal before God, for the good of evangelization and for the people themselves intended to be reached, strategies, programs and human resources should be specifically oriented to each segment of population.
CHAPTER 13

THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH TO A SECULAR WORLD

The problem of secularization in the modern world has reached proportions difficult to imagine. David Barrett in the World Christian Encyclopedia, considers that fifty-four percent of the world population to be classified within the category of secular or atheist (1982:777). This signifies that more than two and a half billion persons can be included in what we define as the secular mentality.

In Latin America, the territory which is the object of our study, large masses of urban population are secularized. We have already made reference to the fact that some countries, such as Venezuela and Uruguay, are considered by some analysts as the most secularized of Latin America (Martin 1990). However, other countries, including those with strong religious traditions, are moving toward a process of secularization by giant steps. The challenge to reach the millions of secularized individuals in Latin America, is, a real challenge that confronts the Church, and for which it should develop an adequate strategy. This chapter has, as its objective, to introduce the theme and to stir up ideas for discussion.

Toward a Definition of Secular Mentality

This mental attitude or philosophy of life that excludes God and that which is sacred from the important aspects of being, can take
diverse forms or manifestations. Gottfried Oosterwal sees two currents of thought or attitudes that are defined as "external" and "internal." In the external form, "the churches are empty, and many of the traditional religious forms and symbols, organizations and institutions have disappeared." By comparison, in the internal form, the dominant values of society "such as individualism, personal achievement, material success . . . and the pursuit of happiness are clearly nonreligious" (1987:43-44). As an illustration of his proposal, Oosterwal associates the external attitude with European society and the internal attitude with American society.

Of course, the process of secularization is not limited to the Western world, neither has it exclusively affected the philosophy of life of individuals. It is a process that has permeated all of the strata of humankind. As a philosophy, it has affected the academic teaching of the centers of higher education, and at the other extreme it could manifest itself in the most humble classes of population by way of an absolute and exclusive preoccupation in the temporal and material. It seems absolutely necessary, then, for the accomplishment of the Christian mission, to have a clear concept of the challenge made by secularization to the work of evangelism.

We share with Oosterwal the idea that "the complexity and ambiguity of the term defy simple definitions" (1987:42). In a first phase of the study it seems more prudent to describe it than define it. Langdon Wilkey (1969), describes the secularization by focusing on four characteristics that are considered essential: contingency, autonomy, relativity and temporality. Anthony Campolo in his book, A Reasonable
Faith: Responding to Secularism, (1983), builds upon these four characteristics outlined by Wilkey, his answer to the challenge of secularization:

1) Contingency. The characteristic defined as contingency has to do with the existence of the universe and the human being. In counterposition to the creation thesis, the secular mentality accepts the contingency, the eventuality, an accident, or even happenstance as a basic reason for the origin of the universe and the human existence.

2) Autonomy. Birth to this second characteristic comes as a result of the above philosophic concept. If creation is the result of contingency, man is not responsible before a superior being. In the words of Campolo:

    . . . secular man believes that he is free to determine his own destiny. There is no divine providence governing his life or the universe in which he lives. His future is his own to mold and there are no goals established by God toward which he should strive. His is an uncharted adventure into the future and the ends and purposes it may have are none other than those which man himself creates for it (1983:44).

3) Relativity. This characteristic also is the result of the previous presuppositions. If the person determines his own goals and purposes in life, it is easy to conclude that a scale of unified values is totally inadequate for a secular mentality. All action and decision depends on the circumstances and the purposes that a person has in mind. Many times society and the community in which a person lives, model or influence their answer or their conduct, but these answers vary from culture to culture, therefore are also relative.

4) Temporality. It is the characteristic related with the dimensions of time and space. This life and this world, plus the
portions of the universe that could be discovered or proven by science, are the only dimensions of time and space that a secular mentality can accept. Life after death, or even the existence of supernatural beings that cannot be scientifically proven, fall under the suspicion of the secular mentality. In this sense, an existential and empirical concept of life could be the best description of the characteristic defined as the secular mentality.

The Process of Secularization

The process of secularization can be seen in a double perspective: from the point of view of the individual, and from the point of view of society in general. In reference to the first, Oosterwal declared that the process through which an individual finally becomes secularized includes the following aspects:

(a) the decline of religion as a factor shaping human life and thought and behavior; (b) the desacralization of life; (c) the loss of faith; (d) the change from a community-oriented way of life to one which is based on a societal system, with its pluralism and privatism, its specialization and differentiation, its impersonal technical order, its rational planning and institutionalism; (e) the development of a particular way of thinking, of a new mood and mentality, characterized by rationalism and relativism, pragmatism and positivism, empiricism and existentialism; and (f) conformity with the world, expressed in religious people's and organizations' acceptance of and adaptation to contemporary social and cultural values (1987:42).

The process of secularization in society is related, rather, to the ongoing historical changes that occurred in the social structure of humanity. Harvey Cox in his classic work, The Secular City (1965), develops this idea around three stages of social development: the tribe, the people, and the "tecnopolis".

In the period of the tribe, religion is basic and central to
community business. Every aspect of life is related to the gods and the response of the group toward them. The conduct, the discipline, life in society, everything is subjected to the spirits, because of that, religion assumes a central place in the life of the tribe and of the individuals that form it.

In the second stage, that of the people, the social structure varies in the sense that the individual enjoys the greatest liberty to decide his profession, his social relation and his religious life. However, religion still occupies an important place in the life of individuals. The religious function is institutionalized by means of the diverse churches and temples, and in many cases still occupies a central part in the social life of the community, and in the conduct and discipline of the individuals.

In the third stage, the industrialization and urbanization of the modern and contemporary eras, bring transcendental changes in the social structure of humanity: the metropolis or tecnopolis. In it the individual is depersonalized and falls into anonymity. Their social life revolves around more or less a limited sphere of influence and their moral conduct, their beliefs and their responses are not controlled by a religious institution. The laws of government exercise a controlling function, but are strictly social and not religious. In the tecnopolis the individual finds the way free for a secularized mentality and conduct.

Even though these stages of social development can be found chronologically in different periods of human history and, for example, the Old Testament period can be placed in the period of the tribe, they
also exist simultaneously in contemporary history. According to Oosterwal, who analyzes Cox's theory, five percent of the world population, that is about 250,000,000 inhabitants, can be actually classified in the tribal stage; between thirty-five to forty percent in the people period, and fifty-five to sixty percent in the tecnopolis era.

Oosterwal's conclusions agree with Barrett, who we cited previously: between two and one half to three billion inhabitants live in this tecnopolis stage, and therefore have easy access to the secular mentality.

The Secularization Process in Human Thought

That which we previously analyzed in relation to the social development of humankind, can be considered the external context of secularization. But there is another internal aspect that has to do with certain processes of human thought. Some years ago Van Peursen developed the hypothesis that the human thought passed through three stages in the secularization process: mythology, ontology and functionalism (1963:13).

In the first stage, that of myth, human thought revolves around the supernatural powers. These are located at the center of human life and every aspect of existence is integrated into the total by means of supernatural powers.

In the second stage, that of ontology, the human being develops a metaphysical concept of man and of the universe which produces a differentiation between the world of the spirits and the natural world.
However, both worlds maintain a coherent relation, and this relation is the basis for the answers for the existence of the universe, of man, and of the relation between them. For Van Peursen, the explanations and answers traditionally given by the Church about the human existence and the universe, can be classified under this stage.

In the final stage, functionalism breaks the coherent relation between the spiritual world and the natural world, and departmentalize human life in its different functions. Religion is displaced not only from the center of life, but also as the basis of questions and answers about existence. The result is that human beings lose their sense of coherence in the world in which they live or the universe that surrounds them.

In this stage of functionalism, the individual pragmatizes his answers and functionalizes his actions. The "why" and "how" are questions of the ontologic or metaphysic stage. The "what for" are questions of functional mentality. What purpose does religion serve? would be a natural question of the secularized individual. If religion serves to satisfy necessities of the people, if it "functions" as a practical element for resolving the problems of daily life, then the secularized individual can again take notice of what religion has to say.

An Adventist Perspective On Secular Mentality

In the final report of the commission for secularism named by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (Rasi, 1987:179-194), there are at least seven varieties or typologies of the secularized
individual identified. These can be summarized in the following manner:

1) The Religious Dropout. This person grew up in a Christian environment or comes to be a believer later in his life, but lost his faith and abandoned his formal religious association for some of the following reasons: a) a gradual loss of interest and participation in the life of the Church; b) a conscious rejection of the Church as a human institution, out of style and useless; c) a sudden desertion due to an important disillusion or a severe disagreement with the Church, the leaders or its practices; d) abandonment of the Church due to his love of the world and its attractions.

2) The Relativist. This is the type of person for whom no absolute norms exist that can be applied to all people at all times. Each individual decides what is good or bad, superior or inferior. No one—according to him—should impose their points of view on others. Although he does not oppose religion as such, and he can even come to admit that it is valuable for others, he does oppose proselytism. This type of secularist generally is found among the intellectuals.

3) The Materialist. Possessions, power and personal goals are the conducting force of the individual. Whatever else—including family, health, and sometimes morality—is secondary. Happiness for this individual consists of having whatever he desires, and controlling things and people.

4) The Pragmatist. For this person, the basic question in all affairs of life would be: what can I gain with this? It is the typical citizen of the technopolis with its functional mentality. This
typical citizen of the tecnopolis with its functional mentality. This type of personality does not necessarily oppose religion, and may even support it if that serves his purposes.

5) **The Indifferent.** This type of secular person is not interested, not concerned with questions about life, death, destiny, or the purpose of human existence; religion is not appealing, to his reasoning or to his sentiments. He lives as though there is no God or future destiny.

6) **The Humanist.** He is the person who anticipates only good in society created through human initiative. He tends to be an idealist who firmly believes in his responsibility for the well-being of everyone else, and frequently becomes involved in activities that promote liberty, justice, peace, tolerance, equality and health.

7) **The Atheist.** He negates the existence of God and has a vision of the universe without reference to a supreme being. As a result, he rejects all forms of religion. As his philosophy, the modern atheist can be best understood as a reaction to the diverse notions of God that are communicated by traditional religions. The atheist rejects any idea of a God who can predetermine the destiny of individuals, or who can eternally punish in a hell for sins committed in the lapse of a lifetime.

The Gospel and Secular Mentality

As we have seen previously, an individual with a secular mentality is also an individual with a functional mentality, whose presuppositions are based in the necessities that should be satisfied.
the people? Ellen White declared:

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" (1905c:143).

Does the gospel have something to offer to the needs of the secular mentality? In his book Christianity the True Humanism (1985), Packer and Howard consider that Christianity can offer true and "human" solutions to the needs of identity, self-esteem, dignity, health, hope and liberty. Mark Finley, develops his concept around the three primary aspects of human life, physical, mental and spiritual, and considers that the Church can offer in each one of them a solution to the real needs of secularized peoples (1987).

Preparing the Agenda of Evangelism

It would seem that, in general, Christians have assumed the responsibility of forming our agenda with themes that we have considered most important, and which, of course, are the most important from our point of view. We see the world lost and in need of salvation; the sinner condemned and in need of pardon, people oppressed because of sin and in need of liberation, and we recognize that the essential themes of the gospel—salvation, pardon and liberation in Christ—fit perfectly as solutions for the essential needs of humanity. However, on the agenda of the secularized individual there are other priorities that, unless the Church considers them and sees in what aspects there can be points of common interest, it will be difficult to open a door of relation with the secularized person. If the needs
open a door of relation with the secularized person. If the needs perceived by the Church are really essential for the person’s salvation, those perceived by the person himself, are essential to achieving positive contacts, and to awaken a real interest.

However, for many Christians, to dedicate time attending to the "human" needs of individuals, is really to divert time that should be dedicated exclusively to spiritual aspects. In his years as an evangelist, the author was accustomed to doing an opinion survey among the possible audience, with reference to themes that most interested the community. Normally the survey included religious themes, health, about the family and the education of the children, themes related to the community, and themes about Bible prophecies. Almost without exception the surveys always had similar results: a high percentage of interest in themes related to health and family, and a very low percentage of interest ... in spiritual and religious themes!

The evangelistic campaign would then include themes about family, health and community, that were seen by the membership, in the best of the cases as "introductory" themes and in the worst, as "bait" or "lures" to attract the public. For most of the believers the true "evangelizing" themes began when the Scriptures were opened to study the Bible prophecies. With the passing of years, and with more wholist approximation, the author together with many other evangelists and ministers, have understood more clearly that the gospel has a secular or temporal dimension, that is not at all "worldly" in the negative sense that we so often use, but completely contrary: the "good news" is destined not only to assure the eternal salvation, but also a better
lifestyle here and now. The gospel can and should touch our families and transform us into better parents and better children; it should touch our bodies and help us enjoy better physical health; the gospel can and should touch our communities through our influence and transform them into better societies for living in peace, equality and happiness.

In trying to work out an evangelistic agenda for reaching the secularized, we can try to put into practice those theological aspects of the gospel that have to do with human life in this world. Looking back at the diverse types of secularized persons, we can easily understand that an evangelistic agenda which exclusively includes the theological aspects of salvation, does not attract the attention of the indifferent, the relativist or the atheist. However, these mentalities have in common with the humanist and even with the materialist—although the degree of involvement and participation can be different—a certain level of interest and preoccupation for themselves, their family, their health and their community. If our evangelistic agenda could include these themes without a feeling of guilt for diverting from time that should be exclusively dedicated to spiritual themes, and if those aspects of human life can be seriously considered as a real part of the gospel, and not only as "lures" and "bait", then the possibilities of capturing the interest or the attention of the secularized people would be considerably improved.

The thought of wasting time that should be dedicated to evangelism when one dedicates time to social and community affairs, occupies one extreme in the opinions about Church participation in social action.
This theme scares a majority of conservative, fundamentalist, or evangelical Christians, basically because of two aspects. The first, because the theme has to do with the liberal wing of the Church. In these times when Liberation theology and other special theologies have practically equated the expression "social action" with "social justice" or "social revolution", many Christians avoid participation in social activities for fear of being confused with liberals. This attitude hinders the Church from freely accomplishing an important part of the evangelizing action, that is, try to better the world and the standard of living for its fellow beings. Secondly, social action in the broad spectrum that the gospel allows, could be jeopardized by an artificial separation between good works and salvation. In fear of being confused with legalists, Christians can avoid an active participation in good works. It is true that works do not have anything to do with salvation, that which comes to us exclusively by grace through faith. But there is not a better way to demonstrate the results of received salvation, than a continuously active participation in the well-being of the human family. Jesus already told us: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven (Mt. 5:16).

The participation of Christians in the aspects of health, family, environmental, and community matters, are points of common interest for them as well as for the secularized persons, and could be the starting point for a positive relationship for the Church with "half the world" integrated by secularized people.
Conclusion

The great commission given by our Lord has, without a doubt, an expressed geographic dimension in the phrase: "Go ye into all the world". However, there is a human and personal dimension expressed in the phrase: "Preach the gospel to every creature" (Mk. 16:15). If we are to accomplish this command, we should develop methods and organize plans that permit us to reach those secularized that make up such a large segment of the modern world population. The search of common interests and needs among Christians and the secularized could be one of those methods with possibilities of success.

It could be stated that a Church that "diverts" time for such a diversity of activities, would not find time for preaching the gospel per-se. However, Christ found time to attend the needs of the people, and he considered it as a part of his messianic mission. The Church could, imitating the Model, dedicate time to attend to the needs of the secularized people, needs of identity, self-esteem, dignity, health, hope and liberty, to repeat the classification by Packer and Howard. After all,

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" (White 1905c:143).
PART THREE:

THE SOCIAL CHALLENGE IN LATIN AMERICA:
AN ADVENTIST PERSPECTIVE
CHAPTER 14

THE CONTEXT SURROUNDING THE RISE OF THE SOCIO-POLITICAL THEOLOGY IN LATIN AMERICA

In this second half of the 20th century we Christians in Latin America have found ourselves confronted with the rise—or should we say the "bursting in", to use an expression by Arthur Glasser—of new theological interpretations, especially the Liberation theology, which has produced both positive and negative reactions in all the theological circles of the world.

Even though it is not our intention to dedicate this study to an in-depth analysis of this new theological interpretation, we believe, that for the good of the research related to the mission of the Church in Latin America, we should dedicate some space to the reasons for the appearing of these new interpretations, and especially to the circumstances or the context which surrounded their appearance.

Reality: The Starting Point of a New Theology

If ever the contextual circumstances played a crucial part in the appearing of new theological interpretations, at this occasion context seems to have had the highest importance. In the very presupposition of some of the new Liberation theology authors, the contextual situation acquires particular preponderance. Hugo Assmann begins his book *Oposición - Liberación: Desafío a los Cristianos* with the
following concepts: "The words of this book would rather like to be
words of action than acting words. It is why they speak of our
situation as dominated peoples and of faith as the historic praxis of
liberation" (1971:7). Later the same author declares:

The starting point for a theology of liberation is the
historical situation of dependence and submission in which the
peoples of the Third World are living.

. . . The text, we repeat, is our situation. This is the

If the situation can occupy a place of privilege and become a
point of reference for theology, then, the identification and analysis
of the contextual conditions are of prime importance to help explain
the appearance and reason for being of this particular theological
interpretation of the Church and the society.

For practical reasons we have divided the analysis into three
areas: 1) the social conditions, 2) the political conditions, and 3)
the religious conditions.

Social Conditions

We cannot say that society in general and the Church in particular
have just "awakened" to the Latin American social reality in the second
half of the 20th century. The problems of the forgotten minorities,
the poverty and misery, and the other social injustices were known by
society and the Church, at least from certain points of view. Some
Christian missionaries, Catholic as well as Protestant, were dedicated
to a certain degree to alleviate or to mitigate the results of poverty,
hunger and misery, by means of philanthropic agencies that received
greater or lesser aid from governments and from their own respective
religious bodies to the extent of which there were persons interested in the topic. However, the generalized theological interpretation of the social reality seemed to be: Evil and injustice are generic results of sin; "For ye have the poor always with you . . ." (Mt. 26:11). Therefore, social action seemed to be destined to co-exist with social injustice, and only mitigate its results through philanthropy.

Social Conscience

What really "awakens" around the middle of our century is what Liberation theologians have called "social conscience". Gustavo Gutiérrez declares:

In the present situation there is a remarkable fact: the adult character of the social praxis in the thinking of the contemporary man. It is the behavior of a man more conscious of being an active subject of the history; more aware of the social injustice . . . The contemporary man is becoming free from the naivety with which he was looking on the economic and socio-cultural conditionings, and he is becoming more and more aware of the deep causes of his situation (1972:77).

For Rubén Alves the attitude and reaction in facing up to an "awakened conscience" was that which was producing internal crisis within the various denominations. Alves declared:

What produced the fractures? The answer seems obvious. In the first place we see that they were brought about parallelly the awakening of the conscience during the crisis situation across Latin America. This critical situation obligated the Christian groups to reinterpret, in one way or another, their ties with our world (1971:5).

The social reality, then begins to see itself in a new perspective by means of social conscience. This new perspective acquires new
dimensions, in extension as well as in the depths of the social problem, and consequently searches for new answers.

The Dimension of the Social Problem

If we could define succinctly the two perspectives of social reality, we would say that previously it focused on the problem of minorities. Before, social action was centered in minority communities: aborigines in paths of extinction; the forgotten racial minorities. The idea that these minorities were living in subhuman conditions—even though they were not conscious of it themselves not having a point of reference with other more "civilized" communities—was that which motivated compassion. The new perspective "discovers" the majorities—the masses of population that live in subhuman conditions in the suburbs of large cities and that are conscious of themselves, since they can see minorities living in luxury and opulence—placed within full sight of all, showing off as the true social reality in all of its range.

For Gustavo Gutiérrez, even though in Christian circles the social problem or the "social question" had been discussed for a long time, "Only in the last few years Society has taken clear conscience of the extent of misery, oppression and alienation in which the immense majority of Humanity live" (1972:95).

This "sense of conscience" of the social reality does not arise only from the expounders of the Liberation theology. The counciliar documents, those of the Catholics as well as those of the Protestants, demonstrate this new social perspective. The document from the Latin
American Episcopal Conference (CELAM), meeting in Medellín, Colombia, in 1968, opens with the following words: "The misery that besets large masses of human beings in all of our countries . . . as a collective fact, expresses itself as injustice which cries to the heavens" (1968:1). Further on the document makes direct reference to the social conscience when it declares: "We wish to affirm that it is indispensable to form a social conscience and a realistic perception of the problems of the community and of the social structures" (1968:17).

At the same time the World Council of Churches was expressing in the document drawn up at Uppsala:

We belong to a Humanity that cries passionately and articulately for a fully human life. Yet the very humanity of man and of his societies is threatened by a greater variety of destructive forces than ever . . . We have been charged with a message and a ministry that have to do with more than material needs, but we can never be content to treat our concern for physical and social needs as merely secondary to our responsibility for the needs of the spirit (1968:1).

This new social conscience, then, presents itself as a new perspective that amplifies the dimensions of the social reality and shows it to the world with its monstrous characteristics. Without a doubt, this social reality is the conditioning factor par excellence for explaining the appearance of socio-political theology. However, social reality was not isolated from other conditional factors, political and religious that we will now proceed to analyze.

The Political Conditions

Coinciding with the new social conscience of that which we spoke of in the previous paragraphs, there is produced a "climax" in the Latin American political context that can be labeled as the second
conditional factor for the appearance of the socio-political theology: the accumulation of forceful, dictatorial governments. The sociological analysis of the sentiments, or rather the resentments among peoples that are produced by a regime of force, is beyond the projection of this study. Suffice to say, however, that the cries of a people for political liberties always seem to include the desire of liberation from all the oppression and injustices that they are suffering. In this sense, the social injustices are charged to the governing leaders, and the popular political movements add a socio-economic dimension. The clamor for freedom is accompanied by the clamor for "bread and work".

From blaming local government, to blaming the international economic empires for the injustices and oppression is only one step and this is given rapidly. The political colonialism, and the economical neo-colonialism are blamed for the monstrous social reality of Latin America. The clamor is not only for freedom, but also for the "change of structures" of oppression and injustice. Various theologians and scholars enter into political discussion and the study of political science transforms—for the Church—into political theology, the companion and the complement of social theology.

This whole scene fits into the conditional factors for the appearance of the socio-political theology in Latin America. This popular political awakening is denominated by the Liberation theologians, as the "political conscience".
The Political Conscience

For Gustavo Gutiérrez, the political conscience is the knowledge or discovery of reality and its causes; that which we can call contextual conditions. Gutiérrez declares:

Christians as individuals, in small communities, and inclusive the Church as a whole have been developing a political conscience and getting a better knowledge of the present Latin American reality and its deep causes. The Christian community, in fact, is starting to read "politically" the signs of the times in Latin America (Gutiérrez 1972:135-136).

However, other authors see in the political conscience something more than a knowledge and objective interpretation of reality. For them the political conscience moves to political action, because it is understood that "politics" is an all human activity. For that reason if the Christian who understands the signs of the times wants to transform reality, he will have to do so politically, that is to say, acting to produce the transformation. For Hugo Assmann, for example, political conscience is that "every human action has a political dimension which concretely analyzed through a given historical situation brings out the ethical responsibility of man" (1971:16). Segundo Galilea says that "In the present Latin American situation the pastoral action has necessarily to pass through the political action lest the Gospel be left out of history". And Juan Luis Segundo adds: "There exists a political theology, simply because there exists a real theology and the political reality is its most decisive field of action" (Quoted by Assman, 1971:23,25).

The political reality, then, is seen is its double perspective, as a situation that, when known and valued will cause a critical reflex, or as a dimension of human activity in which the Christian should enter
or else be left outside the historical reality. But in both cases the conclusion is the same: the political conscience takes political action, either to try to transform the reality that is perceived, or because it is part of the reality that is lived. From the point of view of our analysis, both are forms of an answer to a Latin American political reality that served as a conditional factor for the appearance of a socio-political theology.

Religious Conditions

The cross had accompanied the conquest of new territories on behalf of the crowns of Spain and Portugal since the first trips to the New World. The establishment of the viceroyals and the establishment of the Christian faith had been one and the same thing. When battles for independence came in the 19th century, the Church remained united to the temporal powers in almost all of the new nations. This situation generally remained unchanged until the middle of the 20th century.

The cry for "structural change" especially that which sustained power, also reached the Church. "The political weight of the church," says Assmann, "is a global reality in Latin America. Whatever escape from the Church toward supposed apolitical condition is denied by the sociological reality: it is something impossible" (1971:134). The cry for change in the religious structures and its separation from temporal power, acquires a religious language and speaks of a "new ecclesiology".
A New Ecclesiology

For Gustavo Gutiérrez "A radical review of what the Church has been and presently is becomes necessary, (1972:322). This signifies that the traditional concepts of the Church are questioned and challenged by other ecclesiological concepts. The concept of the Church as "ark of salvation" or "city of refuge", or even as the community of believers is seen as defective or insufficient, because these do not include humanity in general. The concept of the Church as the storehouse of the revealed truths also is not sufficient, because it does not include, as point of reference the situation that is outside of the Church. Now is spoken, rather, of a "People’s Church", that is amplified to include all humanity as the people of God; they speak of a "poor Church", which identifies with suffering humanity, and of a "prophetic Church" that lifts its voice to denounce social injustice.

A People’s Church

"Who are the people of God?" asks Assmann; and he responds:

Once it is understood that the Church is "in the World", and not "against the World", then, the concept of the Church cannot be narrowed to the point of thinking only in the Sunday assembly of worshipers. . . . People as a totality, specially people marginalized from active participation in decisions, people who are the "objective accumulators" of conflicts and contradictions of society . . . if we can define who are the "condenser" of the popular conscience, then, we have a fundamental element to answer the question: Who are the people of God? (1971:136).

Without a doubt those who question the traditional ecclesiology, see the Church as being in a "glass case", separate from the world and transformed into a kind of ark of salvation. The cry is for a Church
that reaches down, that stoops to the level of the masses and identifies itself with them; and even more than that: it should return to the place where it has always belonged:

The Church is not constituted by an homogeneous community differentiated from the rest of society . . . The Church or the Christian community is an indissoluble part of the society as a whole. Any transformation within the secular society, any historical change, also brings about the transformation and change of the Church (Conteris 1971:262-263).

A Poor Church

"The focal point of a new ecclesiology in Latin America appears more and more clearly as the 'kenosis' of Christ", declares Raul Vidales (1984:152). Without a doubt the image of riches and majesty of the Church and its cathedrals, monuments, and relics, contrasted with the poverty and misery disseminated in all of Latin America. If the great masses of population, primarily Christians, were conscious of this contrast and were religiously and psychologically affected, we cannot determine. But what we can show is that this "consciousness of riches and lavishness" awakened in critical theology, and also appears in the conciliar documents. The CELAM declared in Medellín:

Many causes have contributed to create the impression of a rich hierarchical Church. The great buildings, the rectories and religious houses that are better than those of the neighbors, the often luxurious vehicles, . . .

. . . The present situation, then, demands from bishops, priests, religious and laymen the spirit of poverty which 'breaking the bonds of egoistical possession of temporal goods, stimulates the Christian to order organically the power and the finances in favor of the common good'. The poverty of the Church and of its members in Latin America ought to be a sign and a commitment--a sign of the inestimable value of the poor in the eyes of God, and an obligation of solidarity with those who suffer (1968:I-II).

The cry for the poor Church not only includes the return to
modesty of its members and leaders; the most important was the cry that it be changed to a Church of the poor. Raúl Vidales completes his thought saying:

... the oppressed, the poor, actually live—with neither power nor prestige, neither voice, nor a hearing. And yet it is this "powerless" church that manifests the "force of the Spirit". ... A critical church can arise only from a poor church (Vidales 1984:152).

A Prophetic Church

The Church, identified with the structures of power, was not seen as carrying out its prophetic mission, denouncing social injustice as contrary to the will of God. Because of this, the cry began to arise for a prophetic Church, less compromised with power and more committed to the cause of the poor and oppressed. Gustavo Gutiérrez declared:

The Church in Latin America must prophetically denounce each dehumanizing situation contrary to fraternity, justice and liberty. At the same time it must criticize the sacralization of the structures of oppression to which the Church itself has, in the past, contributed. In this critical confrontation between the Faith and the historical reality the Church must analyze the deep causes of this situation instead of being satisfied assisting its consequences (Gutiérrez 1972:345).

The new ecclesiology, then, requires a better identification, with the poor and the oppressed, becoming part of the "people", and from that position it needs to complete its prophetic role of identification and denouncement, not only of injustice and oppression, but also of the structures that produce them or that do not avoid them.

A New Christology

It is Hugo Assmann who makes the direct question: "What is the significance of Christ in the liberation process of Latin America?"
The answer he gives to his own question is a good synthesis of the new Christology that propels the Latin American socio-political theologies:

Between a vague and indifferent Christology of a supersituational mold and "ad usum omnium" and a Christology ideologically functional, exclusively for a determined situation, there is a legitimate demand for a historically mediative Christology, that would be significant for the fundamental questions of a historical situation (1971:139).

Criticisms of Traditional Christology

José Míguez Bonino and other authors deal with the theme of Christology in Latin America in a broad manner, in a book edited by Míguez Bonino (1984). The criticism of traditional Christology could be synthesized into the words utilized in the original title of the book in Spanish: Jesus: Neither Defeated, Nor Heavenly Monarch.

The Defeated Christ is the suffering Christ of Gethsemane, of the Tribunal or of the Cross. Other authors call Him the "Liturical Christ". This Christ is not seen as the model of liberation, even though his death could have connotations of spiritual liberation, but rather identifies him as a model of defeat and submission. George Casalis, making reference to the psychological reaction the believer could have from worshipping a "defeated Christ" declared:

When the faithful people pray before these images or venerate them, when their spirit is seared all through life by a pedagogy of submission and passivity, evidently it is their own destiny that they encounter here—and worship, and accept with masochistic resignation. Indeed this abject Jesus is nothing but the image of the conquered Amerindian, the poorest of the poor, for whom nothing has changed since Cortes, the miserable denizen of the immense barriers that fringe the great cities, where subhuman conditions defy words of concept (1984:72-73).
Christ, The Conqueror, is the other criticized image in traditional Christology. Casalis sees it represented as "the Heavenly Ferdinand", the king of Spain in times of the Conquest, he asks:

Why do we think of the glorified Christ as a heavenly monarch and transfer to eternity the traits of earthly kings? Is this how we justify the earthly anguish of our peoples? Is this not the very image of all the crushing oppression carried out by paternalistic powers, so sacred and implacable? (1984:75).

The New Christological Options

It is clear from the political language used that the new theologies search for a Christ less distant, less suffering, less arrogant; a Christ of the people and for the people! The New Christological images appeared from one extreme to the other of the political picture; from a guerrilla Christ, to a pacifistic Christ. A probable mid-way position is presented by Segundo Galilea with the historical image of Christ and His generative action of transformations. Galilea presents five theses of study for a New Christology:

Thesis 1: In virtue of the incarnation, and of the historical nature of His mission, Jesus was a part of the society of Israel with its political tensions and its power conflicts. His trial and death are political events.

Thesis 2: On the other hand, Jesus neither claimed to be nor behaved as a revolutionary or as a political leader. His message contains neither a program nor a strategy for political liberation. Jesus essentially proclaimed the kingdom of God as a religious and pastoral message.

Thesis 3: Nevertheless, in His religious and pastoral message, Jesus generated a dynamism of socio-political change, for His time and for all history to come.

Thesis 4: The political consequences of Jesus’ message in the society of His time are due to the fact that that message
relativized Roman totalitarianism and called the poor to the kingdom, to the universal consciousness that it created in the disciples, and to the proclamation of the specific values of the beatitudes.

Thesis 5: In His conflicts with the established powers of His time, Jesus assumed a pastoral and prophetic stance. This led Him to renounce all use of temporal power and every form of violence (1984:94-99).

The New Christology seeks, then, to extract from the historical praxis elements that could be a model for the followers of Christ in their transforming action of the socio-political situation. The hypothesis of Galilea of course has not been accepted by the more aggressive socio-political theologies. Nevertheless they reflect the moderate attitude within the cry for a new Christology.

**A New Hermeneutics**

Hugo Assmann speaks of two important gaps in fundamental theology. One of them is the "Christological gap" to which we have already made reference in previous paragraphs. The other is the "hermeneutic gap". For Assmann "the exegetical perspectives of those 'who work on the sacred text' is not enough, because today we want to 'work on today's reality' . . . the basic 'text' is our reality and the result is our praxis" (1971:140).

The basic criticism by the new socio-political theologies of the traditional hermeneutics can be synthesized by saying that the Scriptures had been interpreted in a transcendental manner, separated from the historical praxis, from the everyday reality. The cry is raised for an interpretation of the Biblical message that takes as a
first point of reference the current historical reality. Leonardo Boff declared:

The sacred scriptures of the Old and the New Testament have to be situated with the vaster horizon of God’s permanent, or ongoing, revelation. In themselves these Scriptures are but testimonials to God’s revelation. In themselves they do not constitute revelation. They constitute the human response to the divine proposal . . . The task of the faith does not reside primarily and basically in interpreting the scriptures, but in interpreting life, in which revelation is given (1984:12).

The new hermeneutics, says Raul Vidales, has to be "more critical than dogmatic, more globalizing and procedural than formal, more social than personal, more popular than elite, more defined and concrete, that looks more to the future than to the past, and finally gives priority to ‘orthopraxis’ over ‘orthodoxy’" (1977:222–223). In this manner, then, they sought to place the message of the Scriptures on the level of today’s man and of today’s historical reality.

**Conclusion**

We can conclude our analysis, then, of the contextual conditions that surrounded the rise of socio-political theologies in Latin America, emphasizing and synthesizing the main conditioning factors.

First, an awakened "social conscience" showed a new and monstrous social reality to its full extent and depth, by diverting the point of focus from the forgotten minorities toward the oppressed majorities.

Second, an awakened "political conscience" placed all the weight of a domineering social condition on structures of national and international power, that acted as instruments of oppression and injustice, transforming the great masses of population into "recipient
objects" accumulating all the conflicts of society.

Third, an awakened "religious conscience" saw the Church as powerful, and, because of that allied with the structures of power; it was viewed as being rich, and therefore opposite and distant from the misery of the poor, it was seen as silent, without raising its voice to denounce injustice and oppression. This same "religious conscience" discovered that a conqueror Christ has the same image as colonialism and oppression, and a defeated Christ mirrors the displaced aborigine or the poor who live in subhuman conditions, incapable of escaping the vortex of misery and anguish. Finally, this same "religious conscience" perceives, as though out of a distant past, a transcendent message, separated from the present reality, and, to put it in the words of Juan Luis Segundo, that remained "outside of history".

The Latin American socio-political theologies were "answers" to this reality that its theologians and representatives perceived. We can debate its solutions, or even more, discuss the validity of the situation that they perceive. Or we can, for a change, reflect on its perceptions and learn some lessons for the mission of the Church in Latin America. To that we dedicate the following part of this study.