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**Dissertation Abstract**
A Study of the Pokot Cultural Worldview: Missiological Implications for Seventh-day Adventist Witness Among the Pastoral Nomads of Kenya ........................................................................... 159
Haron Nyamweya Matwetwe
This issue of the *Journal of Adventist Mission Studies* focuses on missiological research and is unique and does not contain the usual content for the journal. Over the last 144 years of Adventist mission history the church has had many able and exceptional missionaries; however, very few of them wrote of their experience, strategies, lessons learned, or failures. So instead of each generation building on what had been accomplished by prior missionaries, too often Adventist missionaries in various parts of the world were going through the same learning curve and repeating the same mistakes that previous missionaries had made.

One of the original purposes of this journal was to provide a forum for missionary and cross-cultural research and to help build a body of literature dealing with Adventist mission theory and practice. Therefore, this issue is focused on mission research with the hope that as readers around the world read the articles that illustrate the many ways of doing missiological research that they will also be encouraged to conduct research and write for future issues of the journal.

Petr Činčala’s article outlines some of the differences between social science research and missiological research—important differences that students of missiology need to be aware of lest their research neglects the importance of leading to better and more contextual gospel presentations.

Gregory Whitsett’s article describes his research dealing with Buddhist Background Believers and seeks to better understand how they come to faith, how they witness to others, and their distribution in the various churches in Southeast Asia.

Gustavo Portes presents an additional research method that has been little utilized by Adventist missiologists—Ethnographic Action Research. This hybrid method offers several unique features that should produce positive results for Adventist field practitioners seeking to not only understand what is taking place in a community, but also in developing interventions that will encourage the people in that community to become committed followers of Jesus Christ.

Bruce L. Bauer, editor
After presenting a workshop at a European Adventist Youth Congress one young man said, “Petr, you just used the word missiology. Is that a word that exists or did you just make it up?” That question took me by surprise and helped me realize again that missiology is a fairly young discipline and is often shrouded in ignorance or misunderstanding not just by lay people, but even by pastors, missionaries, and faculty in many seminary departments.

Recently a new Doctor of Missiology program started at Andrews University as well as at the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies in the Philippines. For the students coming from various parts of the world to study in this program and the teachers it has been both an exciting and challenging experience. We are glad to present in this issue of the *Journal of Adventist Mission Studies* several articles by the DMiss students to demonstrate what missiological research is and the benefits it can bring. I have found after working with many students that there is a need to clarify several issues that generate most of the confusion as to what actually missiological research is and what it is not.

**Missiology Springing from Theology**

In some theological schools missiology is just one of the courses in the area of practical theology; however, in a growing number of seminaries missiology is viewed as a discipline with its own programs and department. Although there is still an ongoing discussion concerning exactly how to define missiology, it is more and more recognized as a discipline in its own right (Scherer 1987). Alan Neely defines missiology as “the conscious, intentional, ongoing reflection on the doing of mission” (2000:632). Missiology has grown out of the theology of mission area. Theology
has always played a primary role in missiology and one would like to say that missiology has also impacted theology. But for a long time missiology has been a somewhat marginalized discipline and “missions have often been regarded as a by-product” (Blauw 1962:10). Yet, it is missiology that provides theology with its reason to exist.

This has resulted in a somewhat ambiguous relationship between the two disciplines, for not all theology is mission driven nor is all missiology based on good theology. At times the two disciplines function as sisters, at other times like mother and daughter or daughter and mother. In any case, theology and missiology go hand in hand and are inextricably linked (Kirk 1997:50).

Missiology is fueled by the realization that God is a “missionary God” (Bosch 1992:390-92). The deepest source of mission is God himself and his love. While God’s mission should be at the core of theology, God’s mission is the heartbeat of missiology. If mission is the result of God’s initiative, rooted in his divine purposes to restore and heal creation (Guder and Barrett 1998:4), then missiology is like a dynamic, expanding river fostering God’s mission (Nehrbass 2015).

The Interdisciplinary Nature of Missiology

In the 1970s and 1980s Alan Tippet (1987:xiii) considered missiology a science standing on the three legs of anthropology, theology, and history; however, missiology has recently moved way beyond only standing on those three disciplines (Nehrbass 2015).

The pivotal goal of missiology has been to further the Missio Dei—God’s mission in various contexts, circumstances of resistance, people groups, etc. For that reason it has become necessary for missiology to be informed by a growing number of disciplines other than theology. Missiology has become interdisciplinary in its nature, embracing the social sciences and any other discipline that may help to fulfill the Great Commission of Jesus Christ.

Missiology as an academic discipline was born and shaped through an “interdisciplinary fusion” (Krohn 2010:31; Nehrbass 2015) in order to respond to several new types of research problems that practical theology alone was unable to solve. Missiology has not just arbitrarily collaborated with other disciplines but adopted and utilized other disciplines with the sole intention to be more effective in fulfilling its God-given purpose.

Embracing other disciplines has made missiology as a discipline stronger, not weaker. One could easily get the impression that missiology depends on other “more established” disciplines and therefore does not have its own identity and should follow the already established assumptions of
those disciplines. On the contrary, that has proven to be disruptive since missiological research is driven by very distinct assumptions that differ from secular disciplines.

**Missiological Research and Social Science**

Ten years ago I had an opportunity to teach pastors from the Bohemian Conference a course in missiology and cultural anthropology. I remember one pastor came to me the second day of class and said, “Petr, my wife has a degree in cultural anthropology and when I shared with her what you taught us, she was very upset about you having it all wrong.” Back then I did not know how to address this issue but today I can clearly see the difference between secular and missiological cultural anthropology.

Thus, it is important to explore how missiology relates to the social sciences and how interdisciplinary borrowing of methodology works in a way that missiology is well equipped to do what it is supposed to do without being compromised by many of the secular social science assumptions. How can boundaries of missiological research be set while still using elements of social science research?

The answer is not a mystery; it is surprisingly simple. At first glance, missiological research using social science research methods may look the same as social science research. Quantitative methods attempt to objectively measure and statistically or numerically analyze data collected via questionnaires or surveys in order to make general statements found in various groups of people. This method may also serve to explain a particular phenomenon (Babbie 2010). While quantitative studies emphasize measuring and analyzing causal relationships between variables, qualitative studies focus on processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or quantitatively measured. The qualitative approach serves also to describe a particular phenomenon and provide insights that can help in pioneering new ways of understanding the situation being researched.

Social science research procedures and missiological research procedures are similar. It is also true that missiologists strive for rigorous research in terms of validity, reliability, or significance of research just as social scientists do; however, the expected outcomes are different, the research design is different, and the interpretation of data may also be different. Why?

Social scientists claim that interpreting social research requires at least a basic understanding of the philosophy and assumptions of any given discipline as they are “embedded in the design of social research.” Scientists of other disciplines “who engage in social science but are unfamil-
iar with these principles and assumptions can misinterpret their results” (Moon and Blackman 2014). The implications are very clear—if one does social science research, that person needs to take seriously the philosophical principles and theoretical assumptions behind the given discipline. In other words, researchers need to stick with the whole package.

**Setting Boundaries for Missiological Research**

Over the last couple of years I have been involved in teaching a Research Methods in Mission and Ministry course where the students are provided with social science research resources and asked to work through them in small groups and make a presentation for the rest of the class. It has been helpful for the students to learn about the various types of research including quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Interestingly, when it came time for those same students to write and defend their doctoral proposal, it became very clear that there is a subtle yet very striking difference between social science research philosophy and missiological research philosophy.

I began to ask if it was not just as important for the philosophy and assumptions of missiology to be followed as carefully as social scientists follow the philosophy and assumptions of their discipline. If students are doing missiological research, they need to take seriously the philosophical and theological principles and theoretical assumptions behind the discipline of missiology. Also, if that is the case, they need to make a clear distinction between using social science approaches or methods in missiological research and the way social science researchers do their research. Social science research as a whole process may not even be compatible with missiological research in some ways.

There are similarities between anthropology and sociology. Paul Mercier in the *Britannica Encyclopedia* 2017 claims the two disciplines are almost twin sisters. “The two are presumably differentiated by their field of study (modern societies versus traditional societies). But the contrast is forced. These two social sciences often meet.” Another important difference may be that sociology deals more with a society while anthropology tends to focus more on culture (Ifie 2017).

However, we cannot say this about missiology and social science. Social scientists may give a valuable presentation about research methods but when it comes to important missiological issues such as worldview change, form and meaning, and dynamic equivalents, cultural anthropologists may not even know what the discussion is all about. It is also true that worldview is not much elaborated on in secular cultural anthropology or sociology. The word is not even used when both disciplines are
introduced in the respected *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Some anthropologists consider worldview as a dead issue in their discipline (Beine 2010). While anthropologists position themselves as “objective observers” (Nehring 2017), it is their ultimate goal to only observe and describe what they observe in a particular setting. The main emphasis of social science research then is to describe in detail not only what has been observed but also how it has been observed. This is then reflected in the report of the research.

Missiologists also want to accurately observe, however, the purpose of their observation is to seek a redemptive analogy, to empathize, to become engaged in the lives of the people group, to encourage that people group to follow the footsteps of their Savior, and to share the transforming power of God’s love. Qualitative research in particular is “the most appropriate social science approach to develop an understanding” for missionary work (Elliston 2011:111). However, a qualitative method, such as observation (findings in the field), is not the end of missiological research; it is a means for a missiological product or outcome. A desired outcome of missiological research may be a blueprint for facilitating a worldview, belief, or behavioral change. Thus, missiological anthropological perspectives seem foreign, strange, and a denial of the principles and philosophy of the secular anthropologist.

If pure scientific research is trying to understand and explain matters “without any greater purpose of research than the explanation itself” (Shuttleworth 2008), missiological research clearly belongs to the category of applied research. However, missiologist do need to do “pure” research as well and must do such research before they can work at an application.

I have come to the conclusion that Doctor of Missiology students in developing their research design often become bogged down with too many complexities when they try to meet the expectations of both social science research and missiological research. I have further concluded that it is almost impossible to adopt a social science research design into a missiological study program without becoming distracted from and staying true to the purpose of missiological research.

**Example of Missiological Research**

For example, let us suppose that Mark is involved in a DMiss program and is working on his proposal. He took social science research classes during his MA course work and sees an opportunity to use his knowledge for missiological research. In his DMiss proposal he proposes to address issues related to a membership decline in his local conference. He is particularly interested in developing a discipleship training program to
increase the retention of members and to mobilize them for mission work. Because such training has been partially implemented, he wants to evaluate its impact.

Following the social science design he would like to use an explanatory sequential mixed method design (Creswell 2012) to examine the impact of the institutional discipleship training in that conference. He hopes to use a survey to test the following hypothesis: “There is no significant difference between a discipleship-training church and a non-discipleship-training church in the development of urban mission.” In his missiological research he wants to find more than just whether his hypothesis is confirmed or not. So he adds a qualitative study, which seeks to provide additional insights into the differences between a discipleship-training church and a non-discipleship-training church.

Creswell knows his conference does not have growing churches. He knows something needs to happen to revitalize the mission, but if he relies solely on social science research, he will conduct a two-phased multiple methods research to (1) verify his hypothesis through a quantitative methodology, and (2) provide insights related to the differences between churches with and without discipleship training by using a qualitative methodology.

He will be busy collecting surveys to find out whether his hypothesis is confirmed or not. He will need to obtain proper samples from two groups in order to survey them. After he collects the data he will use ANOVA statistical analysis to compare the significant differences between the two groups to be able to ask informed questions during his second stage of the explanatory sequential mixed method design. In the process he will need to carefully describe each step of his quasi-experimental study to objectively state whether his hypothesis is confirmed or not.

His next step then would be to conduct focus groups to gain a deeper understanding of what difference discipleship training makes or if it makes any difference. He needs to carefully describe each step of his phenomenology study in order to document that his findings are valid, reliable, and statistically significant.

In contrast to the above method, in a doctoral degree in missiology he would be expected to analyze the context in order to find ways to make a difference. Social science may help him with the first part but that is where social science research ends. His primary task in missiological research is to deal with the “so what” question, therefore a social science research design with its emphasis would distract him from the main missiological goal. Literature in missiological anthropology provides tools and theories about how the situation described in his problem statement can be addressed. His missiological task is to analyze the context and suggest culturally sensitive solutions to the problem.
A doctor of missiology student needs to realize that when social science research methods are used and social science research designs are followed there is an undesired twist to the missiological study as it would weaken the outcome and purpose of missiological research. Should such a student seek advice only from a social scientist, his dissertation would hardly be missiological because social science research requires a different research design, uses different terminology, and produces very different outcomes.

Through studying missiology Mark becomes aware of the nature of missiology and realizes that he needs to adapt typical social science approaches so as not to get stuck with the complicated statistical procedure of quoting hypothesis to meet the statistical logic. Rather he needs to move beyond to show how to meet the missiological task more effectively. In cases like Mark’s, missiologists typically seek ways to accomplish a particular mission through a variety of means.

**Conclusion**

In this article I addressed the nature of missiology and missiological research. Missiology is like a dynamic river that can “flow” with any academic discipline examining human behavior “to expand missiological theory and applications and to extend the mission Dei” (Elliston 2011:112). Theological research as a stand-alone research method may or may not serve missiological purposes; however, missiology and theology are related disciplines. This same rational does not apply to the social sciences and missiology. Missiology can benefit enormously from a social science approach to research but may be paralyzed by utilizing social science research as a whole package.

**Works Cited**


Petr Cincala, MDiv, MSW, PhD, is married, has four children, and served as a freelance missionary among Czech atheists for 10 years. Presently Petr works at Andrews University as Director of the Institute of Church Ministry, assistant Professor of World Mission, Director of NCDAmerica, and Managing Editor of the *Journal of Applied Christian Leadership*. 
Before starting my theological studies in an undergraduate seminary, I did a BA in business with qualifications in foreign trade and then completed a Master of Social Sciences. During the first BA in business, research was not emphasized very much. Most of the program focused on practical knowledge and theories in the area of management, international economy, international law, and skills in trade and negotiation. After finishing that degree I started working as an office staff member for the administration of a postgraduate program in the same university. Even though I worked in administration and was not teaching or researching, I was placed in contact with the world of research and had an opportunity to learn a lot from that experience.

After graduation I applied for both a MA in Social Science and a MA in Political Science. I was approved for both degrees and chose to take the Social Science one. In that program I was deeply involved in research, especially in classes dealing with epistemology and because of the many presentations that my colleagues and I had to make. Two methods caught my attention—Ethnography and Action Research. My advisor at that time had been involved in extensive ethnographic research during his PhD studies and my co-advisor had utilized action research in her PhD from the University of London (UK). Therefore, I had quite an interesting exposure to both these methods and spent quite a bit of time grappling with how to better apply these methods to mission. My MA research was about a certain social group and I opted for ethnographic research since it fit what I hoped to achieve.

One year later I entered a theological seminary in Brazil, taking a BA in theology and the next year started taking simultaneously a graduate degree in missiology. During that period, I started to develop a mission
research project employing ethnography in the nearby city of Campinas (Sao Paulo). Likewise, during my missiological studies, I started to realize the practical aspects of missiology and how social sciences research could be adjusted in order to make it more effective by bringing positive change to people even during the research procedures. Reviewing that period, I can now conclude that an adapted ethnography with certain elements and the aims of action research could be one of the most positive and useful methods for certain types of missiological research.

After joining the faculty and beginning to teach in the MBA program at the Adventist University Center of Sao Paulo (UNASP) in Brazil, I continued to work on how the contributions of both ethnographic and action research methods could be combined for positive benefits. Then in 2015, I was called to an Asian country to serve as a missionary where I have spent the last two years doing ethnographic research in a more flexible and informal way. I am again convinced that combining action research with ethnographic research, particularly in the villages and countryside areas, produce very positive results.

This article will explore some of the assumptions and suggestions I have discovered in using a hybrid method that have proven both effective in doing field research while not ignoring the needs of people when it comes to mission and the need for social change. This article is not an exhaustive or final development of this suggested method; rather, it is simply a pilot project that is still being developed in its foundational assumptions and theoretical structure. However, I believe that if tested and implemented in a purposeful way, based on theological assumptions, considering the social sciences contributions, and driven by missiological perspectives, it may contribute significantly to missiological research methods and strategies.

Ethnography in Missiological Research

The birth of the industrial era also created an interest in the unknown and developed a sense in many that almost everything human beings had in mind could be achieved. Driven by humanistic and rationalistic beliefs that were widespread in the Old World during the 18th century, the scientific approach reshaped society and gave rise to the scientific method that was believed to be compatible with each scientific field.

During that period, the natural and physical sciences experienced an earlier and credible development due to their objective nature; the humanities continued to be developed under the framework of Greek philosophy, and the later categorized social sciences came into existence as a result of those scientists who studied human settings, behavior, and culture.
In the 19th century, sociologist Emili Durkheim became one of the revolutionary epistemologists within the social sciences. He argued for a naturalistic method that would explain social events completely separate from God, setting the foundation for later developments in the area of social sciences methodologies.

Later in the same century, anthropologist Edward Taylor started testing a much more interactive method in order to understand and analyze the life of exotic people groups who lived far from any influence of Europe (1881). The book presented an ethnographic method, which was later further explored and developed by anthropologists such as Bronislaw Malinowski (1914) and Franz Boas (1963). The ethnographic method was basically a description of social and cultural groups from within, with all their rituals, logic, rules, social protocols, and particular meanings. Ethnographic research was then applied extensively to sociological, anthropological, and political science research, although today it is no longer only reserved for those subfields.

It is difficult to define ethnography in clear and objective terms since the flexibly and adaptability of this method, combined with the several different formats as employed by various researchers over time, represent a much more fluid methodology used in the social sciences in contrast to a much more rigid and fixed methodology in the physical sciences. This characteristic has resulted in many negative critiques of the method from both outsiders and from ethnographers themselves. One of the criticisms is whether or not researchers have the right to print their own interpretations of the final outcome of the ethnographic record. That is to say, the whole research record is carefully systematized and interpreted by the researcher, and most of the time, the report seeks to present a coherent rationale to explain the social protocols and rituals of the researched subjects; however, such a report is written from the perspective of the researcher’s own worldview, of which he or she may even be unaware of.

Apart from those critiques, ethnography has proven to be a unique method that provides research with unique features. Among those are the ability to live within a totally different social group, the assimilation of the researcher by the group, access to the inner circles of a people group where values and worldview are shared and a much more genuine interaction can develop based on trust and truth that enables access to core value information.

Very early on, ethnography started to be applied to mission research; however, not in the same way that it is being applied to missiological research today. Nevertheless Catholics from the 17th century and Protestant missionaries from the 18th century started to employ some forms of ethnographic studies, although some of them were for colonialist purposes.
In fact, missionaries from that time period were often valuable resources for the colonial powers to some extent, for they held valuable information about the local people and culture, that once obtained made the exploitation by the colonialists powers much easier.

In the 20th century ethnographic methods began to be applied to missiological research using formats that were more academically-based and with an ultimate focus on getting information that could help in the outreach process to particular people groups.

When doing missiological research it is important to keep in mind the following core elements of ethnographic research: (1) the researcher must enter a social group and live within it as much as possible; (2) confidence and respect are key elements in order to gain access to a group; (3) seek trustworthy people who might become cultural informants; (4) it is essential to have open dialogs, to eat meals together, and to interact in the daily lives of the group; (5) record every element of the society such as architecture, routines, logic systems, and protocols of the groups in a field notebook; (6) focus on the “alter” (the differences) and in the symbolism employed; (7) remember that interviews, pictures, drawings, and maps are useful; (8) give special attention to rituals and their meaning; (9) note symbols and seek to decode them; (10) keep the local values and worldview in sight; and (11) keep asking key questions about group practices regarding the research questions.

When these elements are employed in missiological research, access to core information and a more vivid understanding of the group researched is possible. However, when doing missiological research other concerns must be kept in mind.

First, secular ethnographies are totally disconnected from religious values, and in almost all cases, driven by a strong relativistic framework that is at the core of contemporary social science philosophy.¹

Second, immersing oneself in a different culture and social group may represent a challenge to Christian researchers who are committed to core Christian values. The Christian ethnographer will be forced to make key decisions and stand for biblical principles while living among the group. This is vastly different from secular ethnography, where the researcher has a relativistic approach to life with no hesitation to experiencing the different lifestyles within the group researched.

Third, Christians doing participant observation for missiological ethnographic research will systematize the data based on perspectives other

¹ Both Boaz and Malinowski built, to some extent, upon the framework of Darwinism in order to foster their cultural relativism theory (Boaz) and structuralism theory (Malinowski). Modern and contemporary anthropology is essentially relativistic at its core, as are most social science theories (see Boas 1963:149).
than cultural relativism. Biblical theology must orient the interpretation of the data gathered using social science research instruments. Special care is essential not only to maintain a valid biblical orientation for the research but also to maintain a missiological focus that would not ignore immoral patterns and practices. This is where tension exists between secular academic research and the claims of theology (and practical theology). One way to meet this tension is to remain committed to biblical principles while utilizing the tools of social science—especially ethnographic research—during the research process. In this way a somewhat safer utilization of ethnographic methodologies can be employed in missiological research.

**Action Research in Missiological Research**

Action research was a much later development than ethnography. After the later waves of social science methodology development, action research started to be developed and applied in scientific contexts around the 1940s in the United States (Ferrance 2000:7). It was first utilized in social psychological research and then migrated to several other areas. It has been particularly utilized in social work and education field research. There are many commonalities between ethnographic research and action research, although each method has preserved several unique features that provide research with different contributions.

Noffke and Stenvenson describe action research as a “non-linear pattern of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting on the changes in the social situations” (cited in Ferrance 2000:7). German-American psychologist Kurt Lewin is considered to be the originator of the method. He stated that action research is “a comparative research on the conditions and effects of various forms of social action and research leading to social action” (1946:35). Action research, therefore, consists of a research process that aims to interact and provide solutions in a practical sense to some problem or the issues related to it. The action demanded to sort out the problem is not disconnected from the academic investigation and reflection. Ultimately, the method claims to provide real and positive changes and does not deny the importance of so-called academic rigor.

A unique feature of action research, though, is that it claims to go beyond the border of mere intellectual reflection. Action researchers tends to reject the perspective that research is comprised of purely theoretical or passive activity. Consequently, a core component of action research is to bring positive change to the problem itself. Action research involves key elements that characterize the method: empowerment of the participants, collaboration by participation, acquisition of knowledge, and ultimately social changes (Masters 1995).
Action researchers have produced various contributions and critiques of the method. One criticism is a concern the method is pure action without intellectual or academic reflection. This critique caused action research to be unwelcome in certain scientific fields. Some of those criticisms came from science theorists who spend most of their time in abstract theorization and idealization of science and who have little if any time for actual engagement with changing social activities. Perhaps the deviation of action research from the traditions of intellectual scholasticism (that is the basis of much scientific thought), and the tendency of action research to promote change is one of the reasons for such critiques.

When looking for the core elements of action research, several authors present different types of the method, but most seem to agree on three basic formats that gravitate around these three perspectives: (1) a scientific and technical action research perspective, (2) a deliberative and practical action research perspective, and (3) a critical and emancipatory action research perspective.

All three perspectives require the direct evolvement of the researcher and of those being researched, as well as bringing about strategies to solve the problems encountered. Direct involvement should be done following the spiral steps that are essential to action research: planning, action, results, reflection, followed by more planning, action, results, and reflection. In this sense, participatory action research as developed by the educator Paulo Freire suggests that those who are being researched (specifically in the education field) should stand and engage the research actively along with the researcher. Freire suggests that there is no transference of knowledge in a merely passive and reflective attitude; therefore, participation should be central to the method (1970).

When it comes to action research applied to missiological research, it still seems to be limited to some preferred subfields within missiology. For instance, the American Society of Missiology (ASM) has only a few papers dealing with action research. The University of South Africa (UNISA) holds a few more research entries than ASM that employed action research in a missiological context, but overall the application of the

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2 Janet Masters in her paper on “the history of action research” presents three differing modes of action research discussed by several action researchers. For instance, as Masters indicates, Grundy (1988:353) presents the three modes: technical, practical, and emancipatory (in Holter and Schwartz-Barcott 1993:301) and which indicate a technical collaborative approach, a mutual collaborative approach, and an enhancement approach. McKernan (1991:16-27) suggests a scientific-technical, practical-deliberative, and critical-emancipatory modes. See also Janet Masters (2000) The History of Action Research.

3 A survey with the key words “action research” at the American Society of Missiology website found very few related articles as of November 2016.
method is still incipient within missiological research. It is interesting to note that most action research projects deal with themes such as social justice, ministries of compassion, or education when used in missiological research. Those themes seem to fit well with an action research methodology, for they usually represent situations demanding real life changes, such as poverty, refugees, human exploitation, homeless issues, lack of access to proper education, and other related themes.

Action research has not been used much in missiological research, perhaps due to a preference for more conventional research methods. It is interesting that an action research approach correlates in many ways with some of the pragmatic characteristics of missiology. Practical theology claims to go beyond mere intellectual exercises and so does action research. Practical theology’s ultimate goal is soteriological by nature; action research’s ultimate goal is transformational by nature: to change positively the environment, life, or situation of the subjects researched. Practical theology seeks a response from those who have been ministered to—love, care, and preaching are expected to take Jesus to those ministered to with the hope that they will respond in faith; action research demands participatory involvement from those researched in order to promote empowerment, a positive exchange of knowledge, participant involvement in issues of concern, and development of strategies to overcome them.

The above correlations represent interesting aspects of action research yet to be fully explored in missiological research. In missiology, action research has the potential to decrease the gap between purely academic exercises and the goals of mission. For missiology to benefit from action research the following key elements should be highlighted and followed: (1) identify a problem to be explored from a missiological perspective; (2) encourage participatory involvement of the researcher and the engagement of those researched in the discovery and search for solutions of the problem (empowerment); (3) develop strategies in partnership with the local individuals that are being researched; (4) implement the strategies and assess the results; (5) maintain commitment to the underlying theological paradigms, research objectives, and social changes expected; and (6) encourage additional participatory involvement as needed.

Other elements that can further consolidate the practical aspects of action research with missional aims may include: (1) Christ-centered lectures, (2) training the community for empowerment, (3) providing social

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4 Thesis and dissertations defended at University of South Africa can be found at: http://uir.unisa.ac.za/handle/10500/506.
5 A survey of online databases of thesis and dissertations that utilized action research in theology or missiology programs indicate a preference for those subfields when employing action research (December 2016).
services as a means to meet immediate needs, (4) offering Bible studies as an additional opportunity to exchange community information with the local people, (5) involving the community in practical involvement in social service and spiritual activities (limited to non-teaching activities).

Similar to ethnography research, action research also demands adaptation when applied to missiology. One of the main concerns is with proper empowerment of the people researched and proper strategies that will not only fit the reality of that context but also are faithful to missional claims. As Norbert Elias and John Scotson indicate in their research on sociological interaction between traditional and non-traditional communities, the approaches and ideas of outsiders are not necessarily welcome or perceived as positive by insiders. Consequently, an adaptation of the insider and outsider perspectives are needed to implement the best strategies that fit the reality of the community (1994:160).

Ethnographic Action Research in Missiological Research: A Pilot Proposal

Having introduced the main elements of both ethnography and action research and its application to missiological research individually, this section aims to present a combination of both methods in an “ethnographic action research” pilot proposal specifically applied to missiology.

Both an ethnographic method and action research method are participatory at their core, avoiding mere passive intellectual reflection and both approaches holding one unique element that may make a positive contribution if combined in missiological research. Ethnography’s most distinct feature is its ability to immerse itself into the deeper aspects of a people’s social life and describe (and interpret) them from within, acknowledging the local theories while collecting and interpreting data. Action research’s most distinct feature is the empowerment of the people researched to help them discover real solutions that should be jointly designed and implemented to solve real social problems and change real life situations. In parallel with those features are the transformational and soteriological aims of mission, to which missiology seeks to contribute through the study of missions. In this sense, ethnographic action research can be described as a combination of the unique contributions of both methods with the aim to understand the culture of the community or group researched and bring about the transformation needed in their lives and contexts. In this pilot proposal, however, transformation is not limited to social change, although it might be driven primarily by social change. The ultimate goal is the transformation of people’s lives and hearts that is only possible when individuals receive Jesus as their personal Savior and become united with him by faith.
Consequently, ethnography action research should preserve the goal to develop a deep understanding of the community or social group and from that understanding encourage development of participatory strategic plans to deal with immediate needs focusing on the ultimate need, that is Jesus “the hope of glory” (Col 1:27), the core of missions.

As ethnography in mission research deals with the ability to immerse in new cultures, it provides research and understanding of the local worldview and the people’s perspective of God, thus supporting the building of bridges to reach out to those individuals. When combined with action research it should create important elements of emancipation from sin and its bondage, the empowerment of the people, and the very implementation of strategies to change their view of reality and life itself.

Figure 1 describes ethnographic action research as immersed in the culture of the community and bringing about the empowerment and changes needed.

**Figure 1.** Ethnographic Action Research at different cultural levels. *Source:* the author

When both main elements of ethnography and action research get combined in missiological research, there is a shortening of the distance between academic reflection and the pragmatic aspects of practical theology. Personally, during some of my research as an ethnographer or while employing methodologies such as interviews or questionnaires or participant observation I felt compelled to somehow intervene in those contexts to present Jesus, the Bible, and to engage in outreach among the people. As an academic researcher, however, I had to work within the ethical boundaries of research. In the end, the data were systematized and papers written, nevertheless there was still a missing ingredient—the benefits those people would have received if change and transformation of their lives had been included as a part of the research moment.
This concern was due to the pragmatic characteristics of missions that directly conflicted with the passive-reflective nature of a significant portion of science as done within the academy.

This tension can largely be eliminated by uniting action research with ethnographic research as a missiological method. In this way the mission researcher should not only be able to investigate the deep meanings of the new culture but also empower the people with the unique Seventh-day Adventist message of Scripture, health information, education principles, while encouraging them to plan strategies to improve their own community, make the required changes, and ultimately help them commit their lives to Jesus.

Ellen White presents two interesting statements about the way Jesus researched his audience before ministering to them.

While He [Jesus] ministered to the poor, Jesus studied also to find ways of reaching the rich. He sought the acquaintance of the wealthy and cultured Pharisee, the Jewish nobleman, and the Roman ruler. He accepted their invitations, attended their feasts, made Himself familiar with their interests and occupations, that He might gain access to their hearts, and reveal to them the imperishable riches. (1999:45, emphasis added)

Jesus’ ministry also comprised a level of research and sought for understanding about the people he wished to reach out to. Furthermore, he immersed himself in their social life and interacted with various segments of society, while never going against the principles he came to share with them. There are many interesting similarity between the above description of Jesus’s method and some of the elements of ethnography. Immersion in a culture, social participation, and previous study of the group are the most remarkable similarities.

“Christ’s method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Savior 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 1999:363). The level of interaction that Jesus had during his ministry would be a positive in ethnographic action research, particularly as a way to define community needs during the data collection phase. The action research approach also allows and encourages another important feature that Jesus employed when he ministered to their needs, thus promoting social change and opening the way to reach out to the people spiritually.

Ethnographic action research would allow for a description of people in their context, would provide tools to understand their needs during the ethnographic data collection stage, would make provision for ministry to those needs during the action research itself, and after strategizing and
empowering of the individuals through innovative ways of participatory thinking, the Bible and the Adventist message could become a driving force in the lives of the people.

Therefore, two main gaps may be fulfilled with an ethnographic action research method when applied to missiological research: (1) the penetration to the inner levels of the culture, allowing the researcher to understand the values and worldviews of those researched during the data collection phase, thus providing the missiologist with core information on their local theories of life, values, language, perceptions of religion, and their most prominent needs, followed by (2) the empowerment of those individuals in a participatory way by strategizing relevant means to fulfill their needs, thus ministering to them even during the research itself. This appropriation of the unique elements of both methodologies explored within missiology will not only provide relevant sources for study and understanding, but will also allow for ministering to the practical needs of individuals and the community. When needs are met and relationships established the possibility exists for future direct ministry that can result in the people becoming committed followers of Jesus Christ.

**Conclusion**

As an integrant part of practical theology, missiology has an advantage of not being confined within the boundaries of social science methods. Although, as an academic discipline missiological research makes use of some social science methods, its interdisciplinary nature and theological perspective should allow for innovative methodologies that not only contribute to academic research but also fulfills the mission of God even while doing research.

The pilot proposal introduced in this article presented a suggestion for an innovative methodology in missiological research. The proposed method combined methodologies from two main fields, ethnography and action research, combining their elements in a method that seeks to copy some of what Jesus did in his ministry. Missiology should also contribute to the fulfillment of the mission of God in our world; consequently, the proposed ethnographic action research method has the potential to directly benefit the church’s participation in God’s mission, all this while doing research in a more innovative, outreach oriented and missional way.

Finally, the practical results of the proposed method are still to be verified in missiological research. However, if all the elements mentioned above are combined in a genuine outreach methodology (as an ethnography action research plan) not only will valuable data and knowledge be gathered about a people, but also the practical claims of missiology may find a way to be fulfilled for the sake of ministry and salvation.
Works Cited


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Introduction

The idea that there is a relationship between strategy and structure was introduced to me by David Watson (who played a key role in shaping the structures behind the book, Miraculous Movements: How Hundreds of Thousands of Muslims Are Falling in Love with Jesus. In a lecture he presented at the VERGE Missional Community Conference held in 2010 he made two assertions. First, there is a relationship between structure and strategy. According to Watson, how a group is organized or structured shapes how they think and act when engaging others. He challenged the audience to consider that strategy and structure should be shaped by the people we are trying to reach rather than how we are structured (2010). His thesis made sense but it raised the question of whether this was simply the observations of a maverick church planter or if his assertions could be validated by additional research.

Structures

At a very elementary level the idea of structures conveys the concept of how things or individuals are organized or relate to one another. These complex systems of relationships between entities are fundamental to the
universe. Biology and chemistry teach us that how elements are structured in a system have a significant impact on their nature and function. Both water and hydrogen peroxide are made up of hydrogen and oxygen. However, how the elements are structured, H₂O or H₂O₂, determines whether the system or substance provides a refreshing drink or disinfectant.

The structures that define elements are highly complex. This is especially true of the structures that define human interaction. This complexity is largely responsible for the difficulty of finding simple definitions for human structures.

**Two Structures in Church History**

Paul Pierson, in his book *The Dynamics of Christian Mission*, points out that historically two structures have defined the church, (1) congregational structures, which “are local and inclusive of fervent as well as nominal believers, youth and the elderly, new Christians, and mature disciples,” and mission structures which “are small, mobile, focused groups of men and/or women who know that God has called them to a specific missionary task in a different place or culture” (2009:6).

He goes on to say that “both congregational structures and mission structures are essential to the completion of the mission of the Church to the end of history, and that both are equally the Church, the People of God” (6).

Pierson’s thesis affirms that different structures exist within the Christian community and are essential to its mission. He also asserts that mission structures often exist at the periphery of congregational structures, are a source of renewal movements within the church (6), and provide a vital force for creativity and innovation to the church (33). The emergence then of creative new mission structures is one of the signs of the vitality of the church. Pierson challenges those who question this view. He states, “We also must recognize that a theology which asserts that only the organized Church should be involved in mission has a very serious quarrel with history” (33).

For this reason Pierson urges that careful attention be paid to the matter of structures. If renewal as well as mission effectiveness are the fruit of structural innovation and creativity then this subject should be of special interest to anyone who is committed to the task of taking this gospel to the whole world in this generation (White 1942:262). For Pierson the understanding of structures is central to the understanding of the dynamics of Christian mission. In the introduction to his work he states:
In our study of history, we will look at the “means,” or the structures, God has created and used to take the Gospel across significant cultural, racial, and geographical barriers. Become a life-long student of the various “means” God has used in cross-cultural mission. Look for the different structures He has used to take the Gospel to new places, and be open to new methods the Holy Spirit is constantly creating for this purpose. (2009:30)

What follows in Pierson’s work is a compelling account that appears to affirm Watson’s observation regarding the importance of understanding structures. While this is encouraging the question of the relationship between mission effectiveness, structure, and strategy still needs further study.

Two Structures in Adventism

Bruce Bauer, in his dissertation, “Congregational and Mission Structures and How the Seventh-day Adventist Church Has Related to Them” explores the two structures in the context of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. His thesis is that there is a natural tension between congregational and missions structures (1983:4). These two structures consist of the inward facing nurture and service activities usually carried out by the local church body and the outward facing mission functions usually carried out by groups of dedicated Christians committed to some specific outreach goal (11).

The primary concern of Bauer’s work is that mission or the expansion of God’s kingdom is severely inhibited when congregational structures dissolve or assimilate missional structures (2, 3). He asserts that missional and congregational structures have very different concerns. The following chart summarizes Bauer’s reflections on the differences that exist between the two structures: (13-26).

I changed the order to help contrast the two structures. The numbers reflect the order in which the structural characteristics appear in the original document. Bauer concludes that in order for congregational and mission structures to coexist a third “organizational” structure is necessary. He states that cooperation between mission and congregational structures is necessary for sustained growth and that three basic characteristics exemplify the needed symbiotic relationship between the two structures: “(1) both structures should maintain a semi-autonomous relationship in decision making, (2) both structures should share a common purpose and objective thereby allowing for coordination of activity and maximized efficiency, . . . [and] (3) both structures should share a common reference point that will act as a basis for decision making and coordination” (1983:221, 222).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Congregational Structures</th>
<th>Missional Structures</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Multi-faceted concern—diverse programs for building up of the members.</td>
<td>1. Narrow concern—focused specific mission</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Consolidates gains—connecting and grounding believers.</td>
<td>2. Task-orientated—dedicated to reaching specific missional goals</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Nurture—focused on activities that will help people with different levels of spiritual commitment and experience, helps grow and mature believers.</td>
<td>3. Outreach—local congregations tend to reach people like themselves. Mission structures focus on unreached people/areas.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Unity—helps maintain unity of the church.</td>
<td>4. High commitment expected—engages and employs only the most committed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Runs on consensus—governed by structures that encourage consensus.</td>
<td>5. Innovative and open to change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Longevity and continuity—provides stability over a long time.</td>
<td>6. Helps renew congregational structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Leadership style—bold disruptive leadership in contrast to conservative leadership style of congregations.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Check and balance, authenticates—provides protection against radical and excessive trends.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Resource base—provides the resources for mission structures.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Concerned with organizational development—leans towards developing structures, often inspired by business.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Tends to be authoritarian, dominating, and tends to swallow mission structures</td>
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Figure 1. Congregational and Mission Structures. *Source: Bauer 1983:13-26*.

Bauer’s primary objective for making this recommendation is that the natural inward focus of congregational structures results in the needs of the unreached or the unrepresented being neglected. He concludes his paper with the suggestion that a semi-autonomous mission board be reestablished at the General Conference with the power to promote the needs of missions, raise funds, survey the world fields and appoint its members (1983:224-230).
While Bauer’s work has made a significant contribution to reinvigorating the Adventist missionary enterprise and rightfully points out that innovation in structures is key to the renewal of this focus, it does not address the critical relationship between mission, strategy, and structure.

**Strategy**

Patrick Lencioni is a consultant that has made a significant contribution to the business world because of his ability to make complex concepts easy to understand. In his book *The Advantage*, he argues that “the single greatest advantage any company can achieve is organizational health. Yet it is ignored by most leaders even though it is simple, free, and available to anyone who wants it” (2012:28). He goes on to identify four disciplines that help to foster organizational health: (1) building a cohesive leadership team, (2) creating clarity, (3) over-communicating clarity, and (4) reinforcing clarity through human systems (46 ff).

In essence organizations characterized by cohesion and clarity become healthy. This is true because “at its core, organizational health is about integrity, but not in the ethical or moral way that integrity is defined so often today. An organization has integrity—is healthy—when it is whole, consistent, and complete, that is, when its management, operations, strategy, and culture fit together and make sense” (32).

To create clarity, Lencioni says, an organization must answer the following six questions: (1) Why do we exist? (mission), (2) How do we behave? (behavioral values), (3) What do we do? (industry), (4) How will we succeed? (strategy), (5) What is most important, right now? (priority), and (6) Who must do what?” (engagement) (2012:130).

What Lencioni is arguing is that among other things, healthy organizations have high levels of alignment between mission (question 1) and strategy (question 4). I believe that it is helpful to understand the question of the relationship between structure and strategy against the larger backdrop of organizational health. Lencioni notes that “unfortunately, more than any word in the business lexicon, strategy is one of the most widely employed and poorly defined. Executives, consultants, and scholars use it to mean so many different things that it has become almost meaningless without a clarifying definition each time it is cited” (166).

To address this challenge he and his consulting company offer the following definition. “Essentially we decided that an organization’s strategy is simply its plan for success. It’s nothing more than the collection of intentional decisions a company makes to give itself the best chance to thrive and differentiate from competitors. That means every single decision, if it is made intentionally and consistently, will be part of the overall strategy” (167).
What Lencioni is suggesting is that strategy is the fruit of intentional decisions that are made consistently.

**The Relationship between Structure and Strategy**

A paper entitled “Modern Theory of Organization” compiled by Štefan Ivanko from the University of Ljubljana in Slovenia for English-speaking students who study under the faculty of public administration offers several insights pertinent to our study. In his paper Ivanko makes a very clear link between strategy and structure. The following statement is made in the context of a discussion of the 7-S Model originally described in “The Art of Japanese Management” by Richard Pascale-Tanner and Anthony Athos (2013:101).

Having established the company’s goals and strategies to achieve the goals, the manager next makes sure that the organizational structure conforms to the company’s strategy. The reason that the company’s organizational structure must follow its strategy is that the organization is responsible for putting strategy into practice. After senior managers have completed the strategy process, including redesign of the organization, they assign tasks to the members of the organization. For the company’s strategy to be carried out effectively, the organizational design should facilitate the assignment and completion of the necessary tasks by managers and employees. (102)

The connection between the strategy and structure is shown here, drawing our attention to the fact, too, that the structure is derived from the strategy. The structures are formed through the organizing, and the organization’s strategy is carried out through them. (102)

Ideally, organizational structure is to be shaped by strategies designed to effectively accomplish a company’s goals. Notice how this thinking culminates in specific mission-critical tasks being intentionality assigned to members of the organization. The need for alignment between structure and strategy may seem obvious but the challenge is that in reality this is often not the case. The reason for this is deeper than strategy or structure as the following statement suggests:

Many organization[al] problems rest in our ways of thinking, because there is a close relationship between the way we think and the way we act, and that many organizational problems are embedded in our thinking. This has very important consequences. First, it encourages us to take ownership of the part we play in shaping the problems that we have to solve.

Second, the appreciation of the close relationship between thoughts and actions can help to create new ways of organizing. (103)
This is alarming when we consider that institutions are designed to reinforce certain ways of thinking that then perpetuate themselves through the corporate action of the individuals engaged in the organizational systems. The solution, this model suggests, is to focus change in the correct place. What the authors are suggesting is that significant change begins with a shift in thinking. This is especially true when contemplating the mission of establishing church planting movements. The structures that are created to execute the mission are of great importance because, “the effectiveness of every human deliberate activity largely depends upon an adequate organization; for organization is a purposeful human activity coordinating all the-necessary production factors into a harmonious whole, directing the operation of the whole towards the realizing of the objectives set” (Ivanko 2013:108).

Both Pierson and Bauer have argued that inattention to mission-critical structures has negatively impacted mission throughout history. For Pierson the issue is congregational structures not recognizing the critical need of mission structures; for Bauer the issue is that congregational structures within Adventism slowly suffocate mission among the unreached unless mission structures are allowed to operate semi-autonomously. Lencioni, Watson, and Ivanko have introduced even deeper challenges that have profound implications for the establishment of church planting movements. Lencioni has pointed out that alignment between the reason for an organization’s existence and its thinking regarding how it will carry out its mission is fundamental to organizational health. Watson and Ivanko have pointed out that there is indeed a critical link between strategy and structure, but institutional thinking and values (Ivanko 2013:104), if incompatible with mission, can have a devastating impact on effectiveness.

Institutional Structures

The industrial revolution with its focus on large scale productivity developed “the guiding principle for organizing enterprises by function, . . . [and] the distribution of work by labor specialization” (Ivanko 2013:30). Since then various models have been developed for understanding organizational structures. One author suggests that there are five kinds of organizational structures with six basic elements that define organizational structures.
Social movements are driven by a desire for change within a culture or social system, are more broadly aimed at cultural change (Christiansen 2009:5). So what exactly is a social movement? Christiansen offers the following definition: “Social movements . . . can be thought of as organized yet informal social entities that are engaged in extra-institutional conflict that is transformative action. This last point is powerfully illustrated by the following statement: ‘The two graphs provide examples of the six elements of functional departmentalization and one kind of structure—hierarchical organizational structure. Institutional structures with their concern for longevity, organizing, and consolidating power, concerns for unity, and uniformity parallel Pierson’s and Bauer’s descriptions of congregational structures. Many people expect to understand institutional structures in terms of organizational charts, job descriptions (with definition of roles and responsibilities), and resources (typically financial, human, infrastructure and technology). With this as a background for this article I now turn my attention to the type of structures that characterize movements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>And Six Basic Elements</th>
<th>Kinds of Organizational Structures</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Specialization of Work</td>
<td>Hierarchical - top down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departmentalization</td>
<td>Functional - leadership divided by function</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standardization</td>
<td>Staff-line - combines hierarchical and staff-line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Span of Control</td>
<td>Combined - functions around projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centralization and Decentralization</td>
<td>Interaction - individuals aligned in teams around specific tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chain of Command</td>
<td>Authority – upper to lower organizational levels that clarifies responsibility</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Figure 2. Organizational structures (Ivanko 2013:110 ff).

Figure 3. Functional departmentalization.

Figure 4. Hierarchical organizational structure.
Social Movement Organization

In social movement analysis, the acronym SMO (standing for social movement organization) has proved one of the most popular (McCarthy and Zald 1977); however, it has also proved very ambiguous, as it has taken very different meanings among different authors (Della Porta and Diani 2006:140). Social scientists have spent considerable time studying what they call social movements because it is recognized that these movements “continue to be a major force (for change) in the world” (Christiansen 2009:5). So what exactly is a social movement? Christiansen offers the following definition: “Social movements . . . can be thought of as organized yet informal social entities that are engaged in extra-institutional conflict that is oriented towards a goal. These goals can be either aimed at a specific and narrow policy or be more broadly aimed at cultural change” (2).

Social movements are driven by a desire for change within a culture or social system, are informal in nature, and provide the most effective structures for recruiting individuals to transformative action. This last point is powerfully illustrated by the following statement:

How frequent is recruitment through social networks vis-à-vis other mobilization channels, such as exposure to media messages, or spontaneous, unsolicited decisions to participate? In one of the first studies to document the importance of personal networks for recruitment processes, Snow, Zurcher, and Ekland-Olson (1980) showed social networks to account for the adhesion of a large share (60 to 90 percent) of members of various religious and political organizations, with the only exception being Hare Krishna. They suggested that only sects, overtly hostile to their social environment, attracted a significant share of people with personal difficulties and lacking extended relational resources (see also Stark and Bainbridge 1980). (Della Porta and Diani 2006:117)

If this is indeed true then recruiting through any other means would prove to be tremendously inefficient and ineffective. The importance of personal connections to movements is further illustrated:

Individuals often become involved in collective action through their personal connections to people already involved. Those connections help them overcome the innumerable obstacles and dilemmas that people usually face when considering whether to become active on a certain cause. Not only that: the amount and type of individual networks also affect the chances of people remaining active for a long time, or instead reducing their commitment, or cutting it altogether, after brief spells.
Individuals not only become active in a movement through their previous connections, but also create new connections by the very fact of being involved in multiple forms of activism and associations. From this perspective, individual activists operate as bridges between different organizational milieus, linking, for example, social movement organizations to established political actors or institutions, or organizations mobilized for different causes. (134)

Social networks form the primary structure in which movements form and by which they are sustained. The strength of an individual’s relational connections to these networks is critical to the effectiveness of the movement. In order for movements to be seen as inviting they must be perceived as bringing positive change to the network. Objectives, strategies, and ideologies that are seen as hostile or threatening to a community’s social networks are doomed to be embraced almost exclusively by social outcasts.

Social movement organizations or structures are quite vulnerable as long as they exist solely as an expression of solidarity around a corporate desire for change. Additional structure or organization is necessary in order for the movement to accomplish its objective. Herbert Blumer first identified four stages in the lifecycle of a movement, social ferment, popular excitement, formalization, and institutionalization (cited in Della Porta and Diani 2006:150). According to Christiansen (2009), contemporary “scholars have refined and renamed these stages but the underlying themes have remained relatively constant. Today, scholars refers to the four stages as, emergence, defined by an informal process of discovery focused on corporate felt needs and where communication is ad hoc and travels along relational networks (150). The second stage is coalescence which come as clarity around discontent and the desired positive change settles into the corporate consciousness of the individuals in the networks and people begin to organize for action (150). Bureaucratization is characterized by the following: “In this stage, social movements have had some success in that they have raised awareness to a degree that a coordinated strategy is necessary across all of the SMOs. Similarly, SMOs will come to rely on staff persons with specialized knowledge that can run the day-to-day operations of the organization and carry out movement goals” (3).

This transition is significant for two reasons. At this stage the movement begins to include the early signs of organizational structures that include specialized staff, infrastructure, funding and technology. As these structures mature they can become more and more formal and rigid. At this point it is possible that the movement that gave birth to the institution (designed to support it) begins to die. This stage is referred to as decline.
Christiansen points out that decline is not inevitable nor is it always undesirable. There are four possibilities that can accompany decline: repression (the movement is quelled by forces outside of it), co-optation (internal leadership reconciles or joins forces with the former opposition), success (the movement is no longer necessary because its objectives have been accomplished), and failure (the movement falls short of the objective that called it into existence (Della Porta and Diani 2006:3).

Christiansen concludes by noting that while the four stages of social movements are helpful both to scholars and practitioners, they should not be seen as linear, distinct, or inevitable. Rather they should be seen as an instructive model for assessing, understanding, and engaging social movements (5).

Mission Movements

There is no doubt that the Christian church started out as a social movement powered by the miraculous workings of the Holy Spirit and under the authority of the Word of God. That movement presented a powerful message of promised change and deliverance in the face of the powerful and sometimes brutal Roman Empire. According to Stephen Neill, “By the end of the third century there was no area in the Roman Empire which had not been penetrated to some extent by the Gospel” (1991:35). Evidence that this objective was the result of movement structures can be seen in the following paragraph:

Our next piece of evidence, the famous letter of the younger Pliny to the Emperor Trajan in about the year 112, gives us a very different picture. Pliny, an intelligent, humane, and not unsympathetic observer, was dismayed by the rapid spread of Christian faith in the rather remote and mainly rural province of Bithynia in north-west Asia Minor which he had been sent to govern. He speaks of many in every period of life, on every level of society, of both sexes . . . in towns and villages and scattered throughout the countryside. What was he to do with them? All the handbooks quote the illogical answer of the emperor that Christians were not to be sought out, but that if they were brought before the governor they were to be punished. We are interested at this point not in the legal question, but simply in the growth of the Church. The evidence of Pliny is unimpeachable; we seem to encounter here one of the first mass movements in Christian history. The growth of the Church was so rapid that Pliny had cause to fear that the shrines of the pagan gods would come to be wholly deserted. (Neill 1991:28)
All this happened in the absence of powerful institutional structures because it seems that the mission of the church, the very purpose for which it was established, was to catalyze and support disciple-making movements that would mature into church-planting movements (Watson and Watson 2014:6).

Russell Burrill notes that Jesus “built a movement based squarely on community and diffused leadership with an empowered people (1997:123). “For the first 200 years of the Church’s life, it was a home-based movement. No special church buildings were constructed for Christian worship until the close of the second century (54). In other words the church was defined by movement structures. He points out that “the New Testament church does not have a ministry, it is ministry. All members of the community participated in the one ministry of the whole church. It was organized around the giftedness of the members rather than hierarchal structures of authority and power” (110).

Jesus expected his disciples “to go forth and create communities of mutual care and servant leadership, without the hierarchal structures so apparent in the religions of His day” (125). If this was so then, why is this rarely the case today?

The Relationship between Movements and Institutions

What then is the proper relationship that should exist between movements and institutions? We have seen that clarity about and alignment of mission and strategy are signs of health and effectiveness. Bauer and Pierson argue that the relationship between mission and congregational structures is often fraught with tension. Bauer also pointed out that institutional structures are prone to devour mission structures. We have also identified that what starts out as a movement is vulnerable to shift towards bureaucratization and ultimately decline. Burrill describes what the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church thought about organization. “The earliest Adventists believed that if they were to organize, they must do so biblically rather than simply copying existing organizational structures. Obviously, they couldn’t help but be influenced by such structures, but the one that influenced them most was the most biblical—the Methodist organization” (1997:184).

As a result “the early church quickly developed into a church planting movement because this is what they imagined Jesus wanted when He gave them the Great Commission” (1997:45). Burrill notes that “the entire church structure, including its finances, was organized to support a church planting movement” (307). From Burrill’s perspective there are two things that play a significant role in making this possible, the role of
the pastor and the strategies for the care of members. Members were nurtured in “social meetings” (307) and pastors focused on church planting.

This return to Adventism’s roots must be driven by three factors: the need to be faithful to Scripture and to the counsel of Ellen White, the need to be faithful to its mission, and the need to adequately nurture its believers. Therefore, present-day Adventism must return to a more biblical view of the role of the pastor and to a biblical plan of mutual member care instead of clergy dependency. (308)

Burrill goes on to observe that to return Adventism to its roots as a movement, “[a] radical restructuring of the local church is needed. The role of the pastor as the primary care giver must be replaced by local congregations who once again assume their New Testament role as the chief care givers of the church” (78).

Della Porta and Diani provide a very useful insight into the relationship that should exist between an organization and movements.

Even though social movements do not equate with the organizations active in them . . . , organizations often play very important roles within them. Like any kind of organization, organizations active in social movements fulfill—if to varying degrees and in varying combinations—a number of functions: inducing participants to offer their services; defining organizational aims; managing and coordinating contributions; collecting resources from their environment; selecting, training, and replacing members (Scott 1981:9). Social movement organizations must mobilize resources from the surrounding environment, whether directly in the form of money or through voluntary work by their adherents; they must neutralize opponents and increase support from both the general public and the elite (see McCarthy and Zald 1977:19).

Organizations are also important because they act as powerful sources of identity for a movement’s own constituency, its opponents, and bystander publics. No matter how aware people may be of the complexity and heterogeneity of any movement, its public perception is likely to be associated with its most conspicuous characters. (Della Porta and Diani 2006:137)

This relationship between organizations and movements appear to be the focus of the books, T4T (Smith and Kai 2011) and Miraculous Movements (Trousdale 2012) where the single minded objective of catalyzing, supporting, and sustaining disciple-making movements defines the structures or organization. The healthiest situation is when the more powerful
structure (the institution) sees as its mission the support of the more vulnerable structure (movements) because this is its mission. It appears that this is the most vital service that can be provided by the institution.

Centralized power and the specialization of leaders and critical roles actually end up working against the very movement most institutions hope will come into being. In contrast, “social movement action on a large scale has always been organized in network forms” (Della Porta and Diani 2006:159)

For this reason it is important to understand how to organize in such a way so as to provide movements to Christ with the best possible opportunity for success. It seems there is considerable flexibility regarding what such structures could actually look like. “The organizations engaged in social movements have often been described as loosely structured, decentralized, and prone to engage in contentious political challenges or countercultural practices. However, research has shown that, in reality, a plurality of organizational models co-exist within any social movement” (161, 162).

Della Porta and Diani point out that hierarchical or collaborative structures can both support movements; however, the organization must understand that it exists to initiate, support, and sustain movements and not the other way around. When this happens the results can powerfully transform the identities of individuals in the movement (89). It could be that this phenomenon helps to explain the observation in Acts 4:13: “When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.”

Lessons from China

The history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in China provides an intriguing case study of the principles explored thus far. The work in China had four major functions, “working for the conversion of souls, publishing religious materials, educating the minds of the local people, and healing their bodies through medical treatment” (Lee and Chow 2015:55) The following presents a picture of the structures employed by the missionaries to deliver and support these services:

In structure, the Adventist movement in China was highly centralized and hierarchical. By the mid-twentieth century, all the congregations and institutions were divided into seven regional unions under the China Division, the Adventist mission headquarters in Shanghai. Funded by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in the
United States, the China Division and most regional unions were headed by the missionaries before 1949. This rigid hierarchy created a subordinated relationship between the missionaries and Chinese staff when other Christian missions indigenized their leadership and became self-supporting. A major strength of this centralized model was that Chinese Adventists could easily access American missionary resources and seldom needed to cooperate with other denominations. The drawback was that the Adventists became isolated in Chinese Protestant circles. Nevertheless, the strong American ties shielded the Adventists from Nationalist control before 1949. (Lee and Chow 2015:47)

This structure was able to sustain a “systematic attempt to gain access to the China mission field” (52) with the publishing work serving as a strategic anchor. “After the Communists seized power in 1949, they launched the Three-Self Patriotic Movement to integrate the diverse Protestant denominations into the socialist order” (48). The institutions and structures of the Seventh-day Adventist Church were systematically infiltrated and undermined by servants of the state. It was “against this backdrop, the congregants found themselves in a dilemma, torn between the public need to support the state and the private life of upholding their faith and continuing religious activities at home” (50). This was especially true “in rural areas with relatively weak government control,” where “many Adventists carried out evangelistic work” (50) in spite of the fact that the foreign missionaries had been expelled from the country. During this time the church continued to grow almost doubling in membership between 1949 and 1956 (50).

On many occasions, women led the congregations after the ministers were arrested. What motivated their evangelistic zeal was the belief in God’s providential care and their final deliverance, continuing the Christian tradition of resisting a hegemonic power. Even though the Communists were capable of infiltrating all Christian institutions, they failed to penetrate into the decentralized Adventist network. The Adventists’ survival as a denomination during the repressive period enabled them to expand during the 1980s and 1990s. (51)

When the communist regime infiltrated the institutional structures the “decentralized Adventist network” carried forward an underground movement. “When the Adventists were no longer permitted to hold regular religious activities outside of Three-Self affiliated churches, they embraced activism and created a self-sustaining Christian community rather than abandoning their faith” (Lee and Chow 2015:84). This included the publishing work which continued to play a significant role in the growth of the church (167).
In another article exploring the “symbiotic relationship between social networks and Christian conversion among some Seventh-day Adventists in contemporary China” (Chow 2013:167). Chow argues that

long-standing kinship, friendship, and discipleship networks (guanxi 關係) are fundamental to the Adventist conversion process. This extensive web of human relationships helps sustain potential converts’ interest in Christianity, nurture[s] their understanding of Adventism, and reinforce[s] their efforts to cultivate a distinctive Christian selfhood and identity in Adventist terms. These relationships also give meaning to the Adventist congregational practices such as Sabbath observance and healthy lifestyle, insofar as the converts rely on the relational resources of the family and church for support. (Chow 2013:167)

Chow’s article further illustrates the critical role of guanxi or relational networks as core to movements. This dynamic may explain the extraordinary growth that the Chinese church has seen. Movement structures serve as the DNA of the work in China. Social networks meeting in homes and using personal resources to carry on the work under difficult circumstances play a central role in the preservation and expansion of the church in China. However, in the absence of a supportive central unifying organization structure one might be tempted to argue that the Chinese church illustrates that without institutional structures the Chinese church was subject to schisms (Lee and Chow 2013:51). This is one of the most significant challenges to the Chinese church today. Adventism is defined by several independent networks that are distinguished by both theological and filial loyalties. One of the greatest challenges faced by the church is the battle for legitimacy and orthodoxy. Strong charismatic leadership defines the fractious landscape and define the contentious relationships that characterize relationships between the various factions.

**Conclusion**

Strategy, structure, and mission are inextricably linked. In order for corporate efforts to be effective, clarity and alignment between these three elements of coordinated activity are essential. When structures and strategies are not aligned with mission it is possible that even great efforts can be sabotaged, especially when the mission is to initiate, support, and sustain movements. Institutional structures can exist without movement structures. Movements on the other hand cannot exist without just enough structure to initiate, coordinate, sustain, and protect the efforts of the movement.
Both Christianity at large and Seventh-day Adventism in particular clearly started out as movements dominated by movement thinking and structures. In both cases as institutional structures matured and movement structures were undermined, growth slowed or stopped. Pierson, Bauer, Burrill, and social scientists confirmed this natural tendency from the perspective of history and science and have recommended various solutions for rectifying this problem.

The work in China has shown that it is possible for the Adventist Church to flourish in the absence of centralized hierarchical structure; however, such movements are prone to fracture when there is not enough structure to define orthodoxy, create legitimacy, and facilitate communication.

Since movement making is the church’s mission it is important not to ask how movements can be integrated into the church but rather how the church can return to its original mandate to initiate and sustain disciple-making movements. The good news of the gospel is most effectively lived and communicated through social networks. In the absence of movement structures the institutional church focuses on selling a message and sustaining institutions. It can even come to see its members as financial and human resources that it can leverage to accomplish its mission. The center of activity is located in committees, conferences, conventions and public meetings. Initiatives, branding, risk management, and power structures become the main concern rather than delivering the product of the gospel, the abundant living Jesus promised (John 10:10). If this gospel is actually going to be preached in all the world as a witness to all nations in our generation then what is needed is the courage to change.

A church that defines itself by movement structures sees the center or activity as taking place in hearts and homes of its members. The mission is living the message, empowering, facilitating, and catalyzing and should define the culture of the organization.

It is my conviction that this journey with its focus on creating movements represents a seismic shift in thinking and behavior. There is no doubt that further research is needed that by God’s grace will help create a multitude of disciple-making movements again in many parts of the world.

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Laurence Burn was born in South Africa, served as a student missionary in Palau, Micronesia, worked as a Youth Pastor in Roseville CA, Chaplain at Andrews University, and currently serves as the Training Director at Adventist Frontier missions. He is married to Lois Burn and they have two teenage children. His passion is disciple making movements!
Introduction

In 1990, the 55th General Conference Session of the Seventh-day Adventist Church voted to establish Global Mission as its department for strategic mission engagement in the historically more challenging fields of the 10/40 Window and among thousands of still unreached people groups throughout the world. As part of this initiative, it was understood that merely investing more resources would not be enough. There was also a need for better methods in reaching the people coming from major religious groups; therefore, several religious study centers were established by the General Conference for researching the nature of the challenges that the Seventh-day Adventist Church was having in evangelizing Buddhists, Muslims, and Hindus. Later the church added centers focusing on Jewish, Secular/Postmodern, and Urban peoples with the centers renamed as Global Mission Centers.

To accomplish this mission, the Global Mission Center for East Asian Religions (CEAR) seeks to research the beliefs and practices of Buddhists, Taoists, Confucians, and Shintos to better understand the people CEAR is trying to reach with the gospel. Ultimately the goal is twofold: (1) to develop better resources and better equip our gospel workers for this work—this is the output—and (2) to see a growing body of Buddhists, Taoists, Confucians, and Shintos who are responding to the gospel by committing their life to Jesus Christ.

As the director of the Global Mission Center for East Asian Religions, I am interested in developing an instrument to poll Buddhist Background
Believers (hereafter I will refer to them as “BBBs”) who are part of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the five major Theravada Buddhist nations of Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia. As part of this survey I also hope to identify geographic and ethnic distribution of BBBs, the ratio of BBBs to other converts and members, and other information on their spiritual experience.

This initial research can lead to further research in interviews and panel discussions to learn more about the experiences of the members. Some of the possible lines of research include, determining what has been the most effective methods in reaching Buddhists in the past and the spiritual maturity of BBBs in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. I am particularly interested in assessing the spiritual maturity of BBBs.

In my initial research, I came across a study conducted by Fred Hayes Smith published in 1985 titled “Measuring Quality Church Growth.” Smith’s thesis is that “measuring spiritual quality is not only a valid effort, it is a necessary effort and one that can be effectively accomplished” (1985:2). My research is an example of a communication research design as summarized by Elliston (2011:127-133). Smith conducted his research in an era when church growth was an emerging discipline that swept across Christianity in North America and beyond. Smith sought to offer a balance to the emphasis on quantitative growth as a sign of success and to determine ways to measure qualitative growth as well. I posit that there must also be ways to measure qualitative success in discipling BBBs and will necessarily include cognitive (beliefs), affective (feelings), and conative (actions) variables. Smith discusses these three variables for assessing spiritual maturity in his dissertation; however, he opted to only measure the conative variables (1985:185).

In this article I will describe the research objectives, instrument design, sampling procedure, implementation plan, validity, reliability, and analysis of data. At the end of the article are five appendices showing the forms I have developed for this research.

Research Objectives

The objective of this research project is to identify what the relationship of Seventh-day Adventist congregations are to the Buddhist communities that dominate the social landscape in their countries. I seek to assess the following:

- What percentage of current Seventh-day Adventists are BBBs.
- Are BBBs concentrated in geographical areas?
- Are more Buddhists converting to Adventism over the last 20 years since the Global Mission Center for East Asian Religions was founded?
Do BBBs witness to other Buddhists at a higher frequency than other church members?
Do BBBs have more success in reaching other Buddhists than other church members?
How do BBB and non-BBB members compare in general?
Which Buddhist ethnicities are most represented in the Adventist Church?
What percentage of BBBs were first discipled by other Christians before becoming Adventists as compared to directly being discipled by Seventh-day Adventists?
Do BBBs want more training in how to make disciples of other Buddhists?
How do the survey results of BBBs in the Adventist Church compare across the five Theravada Buddhist countries?
Is there any correlation between the percentages of BBB membership in the SDA congregations to the number of baptisms it had in a given year as compared to other congregations?

To my knowledge, no survey of this kind has ever been conducted in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Some surveys have been done in the Evangelical churches in Thailand; however, I do not know of any that have been done across all five Theravada Buddhist countries.

Instrument Design

This kind of survey falls under the category of communication research and is heavily used in marketing. The purpose of communication research is to help manage the decision-making process (Elliston 2011:128). In my context, the decision-making process I am interested in is how local missions form their strategies for investing resources in community outreach, evangelism, and church planting. There are four key components to this type of research as outlined by Elliston. First, systematic activity—meaning that this type of research requires researchers who are well versed in the scientific research methods and the research is well planned out. Second, objective activity—meaning that this type of research needs to be as objective and unbiased as possible for it to be scientifically valid. Researchers must avoid tampering with the instruments to achieve a desired result. Third, provision of information—meaning the research must be related to a specific research situation. Fourth, research for decision making—meaning it seeks to focus an organization on the real task for its intended audience. The implication for CEAR is that this type of research will aid in raising the awareness of local church administrations regarding their situation in reaching Buddhists.
Content of the Questionnaire

I have developed a questionnaire and have included it in appendix A. The questionnaire is divided into several sections: (1) general demographic information, (2) specific inquiry into the religious history of the members, and (3) the current life experience of church members in relation to outreach to Buddhists. Below is an overview of the types of questions in each section.

General Information

The general information section has 15 questions. The first three questions ask about church membership, gender, and age. There are five questions regarding citizenship status, ethnicity, and language, followed by questions on marital status, education, occupation, and income bracket.

Religious Background

There are nine questions in the religious background section that focuses on getting a picture of the member’s religion of their childhood, when and where they were baptized into the Adventist Church, whether the respondent was Christian before joining the SDA Church, and whether the respondent has always been Christian or when they first became one.

Respondents’ Relationships with Buddhists

The last section is the longest with 21 questions and focuses on the nature of the respondents’ relationships. The first three questions ask about the types of relations the respondents have with Buddhists—in the home, in the extended family, or with friends. The last 18 questions ask about the respondents’ experience in sharing their faith with Buddhists. I added a couple of questions regarding their outreach to non-Buddhists. The goal was to not merely see how much time they spend in outreach but how outreach to Buddhists and non-Buddhists compare, and whether there is any difference.

Sampling Procedure

As I think about how to conduct a survey of the Adventist Church in the five countries where Theravada Buddhism is the dominant religion, I am greatly challenged with how to go about forming a scientific sampling.
Just to get surveys filled out tells me nothing. I have to ensure that my sampling base is scientifically sound or my research is of little use.

The challenge I am faced with is that in the majority of these five countries, the BBBs are few in number compared with the total membership. For example, in Myanmar, it is estimated that there are only 50 Burmese Buddhist background Adventists. Of that number, it is possible that only half became Adventist directly while the other half belonged to other Christian denominations before becoming Adventists. Another challenge is that a significant minority of Karen people (likely the largest ethnicity in the Adventist Church in Myanmar) grew up as Buddhists. Many Karen are Christian and Adventist; and these populations are not geographically isolated or clustered into convenient homogenous churches.

It would be difficult to form a scientific sampling with a small sample population. The Adventist population in many of these regions and ethnicities is statistically either so small or so limited geographically that statistically one could easily miss them and they would show up as non-existent in the study or if not enough congregations were surveyed, some of these homogenous minority churches would skew the picture significantly. In conclusion, it seems that the sampling size would have to be quite large. Bernard writes, “The biggest problem in conducting a science of human behavior is not selecting the right sample size or making the right measurement” (2006:25). Further along he writes, “If the population you are trying to study is rare and hard to find, and if you have to rely on a simple random sample of the entire population, you’ll need a very large initial sample” (168). Applying this to Myanmar, if there are 28,000 Adventist members but only 50 Burmese BBBS (the dominant Buddhist people group in the country), it would require a very large sample to get to those 50. If, on the other hand, there were 14,000 Burmese BBBS in the country, the sample size could be much smaller. In some of these countries it might be easiest to get a reliable representation of reality by simply taking a census of all the members, although this would still be quite challenging.

The picture is very different in Cambodia. The majority of Adventists in Cambodia come from a Buddhist background. A much smaller sample size would be required in Cambodia. However, the question I have yet to determine is what the implications would be if I use different methods for gathering data from each country. My concern is that I want to be able to compare the countries not only in a narrow window of time but also using a similar method so that the comparisons between the countries are not invalid due to different sampling methods.

The discussion on sampling does not stop here, however. To conduct a census a person will actually have to track down each person on a mem-
bership list, which is especially difficult when taking into account that the church is notoriously lax on keeping its membership records current. In many local church fields one-third or even as many as two thirds of the church members are not attending or are simply missing. To conduct a survey over a period of three Sabbaths would only cover those in attendance. It may be possible that BBBs are over represented or underrepresented by the people who are actually attending regularly or semiregularly. This could greatly skew the results of the survey.

Another challenge is that the church membership records are full of errors with some members remaining on the membership books in more than one church concurrently. This weakens the reliability of the sample pool as well.

All churches are required to not only keep membership records but also attendance records. Every quarter the church records attendance at the beginning of the quarter and at the end. It may be possible that a systematic random sampling based on the attendance record could be done and that a sampling of each congregation would be possible; however, we come back to the problem of how many members should be sampled in each church? It becomes a logistical nightmare—there are several hundred churches across these five countries.

Ultimately, I am of the opinion that the most straightforward way to conduct this survey would be to poll all people in attendance over three Sabbaths with the belief that most members who are in good standing will show up in at least one of those three Sabbaths. While a nonprobability sampling is not preferred Bernard suggests there are three cases when this is the proper method:

1. For labor-intensive in-depth studies of a few cases. A prime example would be Kelvin Onongha’s research of dual allegiances of Yoruba Seventh-day Adventists who seek out diviners for assistance (2014).
2. When collecting cultural data from key informants rather than data about individuals. Here the researcher is not trying to find trends or patterns in a population but is simply trying to learn about culture in general.
3. In conducting large surveys when, despite our best efforts, we just cannot get a probability sample. In these cases one simply must document the bias and move on (2006:186-187).

There are a number of types of nonprobability sampling. In this study, the method followed will be convenience or haphazard sampling with the sample based on those who are present and willing to fill out a survey at church.
Implementation Plan

My plan for this survey is to create a self-administered questionnaire. What makes this a preferred method of research is that it can be conducted quickly using a drop-and-collect technique by national church leaders sending the survey packets to local church leaders to then distribute to willing participants. Self-administered questionnaires are relatively inexpensive and respondents are not influenced by the interviewer or her bias. Another advantage is that this type of survey allows longer batteries of questions than you could ask in person as well as giving the respondent anonymity.

The disadvantages include that there is no control over how the people will interpret the questions, one must take steps to ensure high involvement rates, and one cannot be sure that the respondent who received the survey is the one who filled it out (Bernard 2006:258-261). Under the research requirements, however, the advantages outweigh the disadvantages.

Phase One

The first phase of this survey will be to ask the SDA Church administration in each country to create a list of all congregations, the name and contact information for each leader, and the language the worship service is conducted in. Based on this data I will have some idea of how many languages the survey will need to be translated into. Some churches may be bi-lingual with an older or less educated portion of the church speaking one language and the rest another.

Phase Two

From experience traveling in the five countries I know that the survey will need to be translated from English into at least the following ten languages:

- Tamil
- Sinhalese
- Karen
- Chin
- Burmese
- Thai
- Hmong
- Mien
- Lao
- Khmer
To ensure the instruments are accurately translated, there will be a two-step process for the translation. First, a native language speaker of the target language will translate the tract. Then a second translator who is either a native English speaker or a person highly fluent in both languages will back translate the translated survey. This person will not communicate with the first translator to ensure that it is the instrument and not the intent of the translator that is being translated. If the translation is not identical, something was lost in translation and needs to be rectified (Bernard 2006:277-278).

For oral languages, the illiterate, or the blind, a system will be created to ensure they can participate in the survey and with an acceptable degree of reliability. The system will need to include clear instruction on how to conduct the interview. It may be preferable that the illiterate respondent would select a family member in the church to help in completing the form in order to keep the process objective and anonymous. However, it can only be assumed that some will choose not to participate. Wikipedia’s entry on “List of Countries by Literacy Rate” gives these literacy rates for the five countries included in this research:

- Thailand – 96.7%
- Myanmar – 93.1%
- Sri Lanka – 92.6%
- Laos – 79.9%
- Cambodia – 77.2%

In three of the five countries it appears that the number of people unable to fill out the survey is minimal. Two countries will be problematic but it is beyond the scope of this article to develop a satisfactory methodology to fully address this issue.

Phase Three

Pilot testing will be essential to ensure that the survey works in each language. This enhances reliability. Pilot tests will need to examine the complexity of the survey. For example, is the proposed survey made overly complex by using different types of questions—fill in the blank, yes/no, checking all that apply, Likert scale, etc.? Additional concerns are whether local church leaders can understand how to carry out the surveys and do them well, how well do the respondents understand the questions, and are there any difficulties with how they answer the survey? The pilot testing will inform me on how to revise the surveys before moving forward with the research.
Phase Four

The surveys will be shipped to the local churches or delivered at a workers meeting with the following components:

1. A survey pack will include an unsealed manila envelope containing a Member Questionnaire (appendix A), a Cover Letter (appendix B), and a Participant’s Report Card (appendix C).

2. A letter to the church leader explaining the purpose and procedures for carrying out the survey (appendix D).

3. A report form for the church leader to fill out regarding the number of church members and the number in regular attendance. The survey will also include questions about the dates the surveys were distributed and the dates they were collected (appendix E).

The church leader will read the instructions and work with the church board or pastor to plan three Sabbaths during which the survey will be announced and distributed to the members. Respondents will be encouraged to complete the survey at the church but they may also take them home as well.

The church leader will give the survey packs to all members in attendance on those three consecutive Sabbaths. Members will return the survey in the sealed manila envelope with the Participant Report Card returned separately. The church leader will record how many respondents completed the survey on the report form and send everything back to the mission office.

Phase Five

A paid worker at the mission office will translate the data from the member surveys and the church leader reports and will enter the responses into a spreadsheet template designed for this survey. The postcards will also be translated and entered into a second spreadsheet designed for that purpose. The hard copy forms and the digital spreadsheets will be sent to the researcher who will spot check the data to ensure that there were no transcribing errors.

Validity

The validity of the survey depends on how well the sampling works. While I would have preferred a probability sample of the membership, there are so few BBBs in some fields and there are so many different ethnic groups with some barely represented in the church population, it seems that anything less and sampling each congregation would be invalid.
Therefore, I have decided to survey a nonprobability sample of the attending members over three Sabbaths. The bias is that there may be a greater percentage of non-attending Buddhists to attending Buddhists than non-attending other believers; however, this is a risk I have chosen to accept.

Because I am trying to research how many members are BBBs and specifically what their religious experience is as compared to other members, I am not able to conduct a snowball sampling—this survey has a quantitative approach that requires looking at the wider population.

Content validity will be established by assessing the model against the goals of the study. The goals this study are meant to assess include: (1) the percentage of BBBs in the church, (2) how many church members have relationships with Buddhists and is there a significant difference between BBBs and other members, and (3) how active are church members in sharing their faith with Buddhists and if there is a significant difference between BBBs and other members.

**Reliability**

As mentioned above, the biggest issues related to reliability have to do with the accuracy of translation into each language, the ability to adequately sample oral respondents in an unbiased way, ensuring the church leaders are able to follow the instructions without difficulty, and ensuring that the data collectors/transcribers are translating and entering data without error. I have already outlined steps I will take to ensure these are as free from error as possible.

**Analyzing Data**

The first type of analysis is to create simple summaries of the number and percentages of BBBs in the Adventist Church as well as their activity levels in sharing their faith. A much more complex process of looking for identifying correlations will require consultation with experts in the field.
Appendix A
Member Questionnaire

Directions
Please do your best to honestly answer each question. Sometimes you will need to write an answer—please write neatly. Other times you can simply check or circle the response. Please be as truthful as possible in order to not distort the results. Please do not write your name on this questionnaire form.

When you are finished, please fill out the form at the bottom of the last page. Then tear it off and give this to your church leadership separately from the survey. Finally, take the survey form and seal it in the envelope enclosed with this survey and also give this to your church leader.

General Information
1. What is the name of the church where you are a member?

2. What is your gender? □ Male □ Female

3. How old are you?
   □ 12 – 19 years old
   □ 20 – 34 years old
   □ 35 – 49 years old
   □ 50 – 64 years old
   □ 65 years or older

4. Please check your status in the country of Thailand:
   □ Thai Citizen □ Permanent Resident □ Temporary Resident
   □ Refugee/Asylum Seeker □ Other ______________________

5. What is your first language? __________________________________________

6. What language do you speak at work/school? ____________________________

7. What language you worship in at church? ______________________________

8. What is your ethnicity? Check all that apply. You may check more than one:
   □ Central Thai □ Northern Thai □ Isaan Thai □ Hmong
   □ Lahu □ Karen □ Indian □ Chinese
   □ Filipina □ White □ Korean □ Black
   □ Other ____________________________
9. What is your marital status? □ Single □ Married

IF YOU ANSWERED “MARRIED” TO QUESTION 9, SKIP TO QUESTION 11.

10. If you are single, which of the following describes your situation?
    □ Never married □ Separated
    □ Divorced □ Widowed

IF YOU ANSWERED “SINGLE” TO QUESTION 9, SKIP QUESTIONS 11 AND 12.

11. If married, what ethnicity is your spouse? ______________________________

12. If married, what religion is your spouse? ______________________________

13. Please check for each level of education that you have completed
    □ Primary School (6 years)
    □ High School (6 years)
    □ Vocational Training
    □ University
    □ Post University Studies (Masters/Doctorate)

14. What is your occupation? ______________________________

15. On average, what is the household income for your immediate family?
    □ 15,000 THB or less
    □ 15,001 – 30,000 THB
    □ 30,001 – 50,000 THB
    □ 50,001 – 100,000 THB
    □ 100,001 or more

Your Religious Background

16. When I was born, my mother was a…
    □ Seventh-day Adventist □ Catholic □ Other Christian □ Buddhist
    □ Hindu □ Muslim □ Animist □ Taoist
    □ No Religion □ Other: ______________________________ □ Unknown
17. When I was born, my father was a…

☐ Seventh-day Adventist ☐ Catholic ☐ Other Christian ☐ Buddhist
☐ Hindu ☐ Muslim ☐ Animist ☐ Taoist
☐ No Religion ☐ Other: ________________________ ☐ Unknown

18. When I was a child, my home practiced the following religion(s):

☐ Seventh-day Adventist ☐ Catholic ☐ Other Christian ☐ Buddhist
☐ Hindu ☐ Muslim ☐ Animist ☐ Taoist
☐ No Religion ☐ Other: ________________________ ☐ Unknown

19. Are you a baptized member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church? ☐ Yes ☐ No

20. If yes, how old were you when you became a baptized member of the SDA Church?

☐ Younger than 20 years old
☐ 20 – 34 years old
☐ 35 – 49 years old
☐ 50 – 64 years old
☐ 65+ years

21. What local SDA Church did you first have membership?

____________________________________

22. Were you a member of another Christian or Catholic denomination before you joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church? ☐ Yes ☐ No

23. If you began life in a non-Christian home, did you join another Christian or Catholic church before becoming Seventh-day Adventist?

☐ Yes, I first became Christian or Catholic before I became Seventh-day Adventist.
☐ No, I became Seventh-day Adventist first.
☐ This question does not apply to me.

24. If you have not always been a follower of Jesus, please check which of the following experiences played an important part in your becoming a believer and follower of Jesus Christ? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY TO YOUR EXPERIENCE)

☐ My parents became believers and followers in Jesus Christ
☐ The influence of Christian relatives (not immediate family)
☐ Studying at a Christian school
☐ Friendship with Christians in my community (not at school)
☐ Receiving some type of help from Christians with my personal or family needs
☐ Buying or being given Christian literature or the Bible to read
☐ Attending Christian meetings that taught about the end of the world and the second coming of Jesus
☐ Attending Christian meetings that taught about Jesus Christ
☐ Attending Christian church services
☐ Receiving an influential dream
☐ God answering my prayers
☐ God breaking the power of demons/spirits in my life
☐ God healing me
☐ Conflict in my family caused me to look for answers in a Christian religion
☐ Serious doubts or dissatisfaction about the teachings of my own non-Christian religion
☐ Conflict with religious leaders in my non-Christian religion
☐ Other: _______________________________________________
☐ Other: _______________________________________________

Your Relationships with Buddhists

25. Do you live in a home that includes Buddhists? ☐ Yes ☐ No
26. Do you have any relatives that are Buddhist? ☐ Yes ☐ No
27. If yes, which of the following family members are now Buddhists?
   ☐ Spouse ☐ Children ☐ Father ☐ Mother
   ☐ Father-in law ☐ Mother-in law ☐ Grandchildren
   ☐ Maternal Grandparents ☐ Paternal Grandparents ☐ Other Relatives
   ☐ No Relatives
28. How often do you spend time with Buddhist people?
   ☐ Daily ☐ 2-5 times per week ☐ Weekly
   ☐ Monthly ☐ Less than monthly ☐ Never
29. How frequently do you pray for Buddhist friends or family members?
   ☐ Daily ☐ 2-5 times per week ☐ Weekly
   ☐ Monthly ☐ Less than monthly ☐ Never
30. How frequently do you show God’s love to Buddhists through purposeful acts of kindness and service to them?
   ☐ Weekly ☐ Monthly ☐ 2-6 times per year
   ☐ Almost never ☐ Never
31. How frequently do you share your personal testimony about God’s working in your life with Buddhists?

☐ Weekly  ☐ Monthly  ☐ 2-6 times per year
☐ Almost never  ☐ Never

32. Have you ever led a friend to have faith in Jesus Christ?  ☐ Yes  ☐ No

33. Have you ever led a Buddhist friend to have faith in Jesus Christ?  ☐ Yes  ☐ No

34. Have you led any of your friends to become baptized members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church due to the work of the Holy Spirit and your influence?  ☐ Yes  ☐ No

35. Have you led any of your Buddhist friends to become baptized members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church due to the work of the Holy Spirit and your influence?  ☐ Yes  ☐ No

PLEASE RATE YOUR AGREEMENT WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS (1 = very strongly disagree and 5 = very strongly agree)

36. My Buddhist friends admire my beliefs and religious experience.

37. I enjoy sharing my faith and religious experience with others.

38. I enjoy sharing my faith and religious experience with Buddhists.

39. Buddhists understand me when I witness to them.

40. I am satisfied with my outreach and witness to Buddhists.

41. My local church is very welcoming to Buddhist visitors.

42. I am comfortable bringing Buddhists to my local church.

43. I would like help in knowing how to share my faith with Buddhists.

44. The majority of the members in my church come from a Buddhist background.

45. My church trains its members in how best to share the Gospel with Buddhist people.

Write the date you completed this survey: ________________________________

➢ Please write down any comments that you have about this survey……
Appendix B
Cover Letter for Respondent

Gregory Whitsett
c/o Thailand Adventist Mission
PO Box 234
Prakanong, Wattana, Bangkok 10110

[Date]

Dear Seventh-day Adventist Member:

Peace and grace to each of you.

I am writing to request your help by participating in this nation-wide survey that I am conducting with the blessing of the Thailand Adventist Mission. The purpose of this survey is to learn more about who we are as the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Thailand. I am wanting to learn about what types of people are in our churches, about your religious backgrounds, how you became a Seventh-day Adventist church member or if you grew up in an Adventist home. In addition, I would like to know what it is like for you to live as a religious minority—a Seventh-day Adventist—in a Buddhist context and what types of relations you have with Buddhist people.

Please understand that we are not wanting to identify you individually and therefore we are not asking you to tell us your name or how to contact us. We ask that you fill out the enclosed card and give it to your church leadership so that they can make sure that every member has had a chance to fill out the survey.

You are not required to do this survey but we request your support. We hope that we can use the information to better understand our church.

Please complete this survey as soon as possible and return it to your church leadership.

May God richly bless you,
Gregory Whitsett
Peace and grace to each of you.

I am writing to request your help by participating in this nation-wide survey that I am conducting with the blessing of the Thailand Adventist Mission. The purpose of this survey is to learn more about who we are as the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Thailand. I am wanting to learn about what types of people are in our churches, about your religious backgrounds, how you became a Seventh-day Adventist church member or if you grew up in an Adventist home. In addition, I would like to know what it is like for you to live as a religious minority—a Seventh-day Adventist—in a Buddhist context and what types of relations you have with Buddhist people.

Please understand that we are not wanting to identify you individually and therefore we are not asking you to tell us your name or how to contact us. We ask that you fill out the enclosed card and give it to your church leadership so that they can make sure that every member has had a chance to fill out the survey.

You are not required to do this survey but we request your support. We hope that we can use the information to better understand our church.

Please complete this survey as soon as possible and return it to your church leadership.

May God richly bless you,

Gregory Whitsett

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SURVEY COMPLETION CARD

After you have completed the survey, please seal it in the enclosed envelop. Then take this card, fill it out, and also give this card to your church leadership with your survey envelop. Thank you!

NAME ____________________________

Church Name ____________________________

I would like to receive summary of the results from this survey. ☐ Yes ☐ No

E-mail ____________________________

Mailing Address ____________________________

________________________________________________________________________________
Appendix D
Church Leader Cover Letter

Gregory Whitsett
c/o Thailand Adventist Mission
PO Box 234
Prakanong, Wattana, Bangkok 10110

[Date]

Dear Church Leaders:

Greetings in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ!

This survey is being conducted to identify the religious background of our members and to see how frequently we are sharing our faith with Buddhists. Thank you for your help!

In your package you will find the following materials:
1. Church Leader’s Report
2. Survey envelopes containing a Cover Letter, Member Questionnaire, and a Participant Report Card

If you did not receive everything, please contact the mission office right away to request what is missing.

Please conduct this survey on three consecutive Sabbaths to ensure all members have a chance of completing the survey. All attending members are asked to participate but they may opt to not participate if they prefer. All members are asked to participate in the survey whether they are members in good standing or not. Please do not filter out people.

INSTRUCTIONS
1. Make sure you have enough copies of the survey in the language you need.
2. During your announcement period, explain the purpose of this survey and explain our desire for all to participate but that they are not required to.
3. Give the instructions on how to complete the survey.
4. Handout the survey packs to each member who is willing to participate in the survey.
5. If someone needs help, please have another member (preferably a member who is part of that person’s family) read the questionnaire to them and fill in their answers.
6. Ask that all surveys be sealed in the manila envelopes with postcards separate.
7. Collect the surveys in the now sealed envelopes.
8. Repeat the announcement and survey three Sabbaths in a row.
10. Mail your report, survey envelopes, and postcards in one box to the mission office by [date].

Thank you for your participation and help,

Gregory Whitsett

Appendix E
Church Leader Report

Please fill out this report form and send it to the Mission with the rest of the survey packs and postcards.
1) Church Name: _________________________________________________________
2) Address: ____________________________________________________________
3) Church Pastor’s Name: ________________________________________________
4) Your Name: _________________________________________________________
5) Your Phone Number: ________________________________________________
6) Your Email: _________________________________________________________
7) Please fill in this information regarding how you completed the survey:
   Date of 1st Sabbath: _________________ Number of Surveys Completed: ______ 
   Date of 2nd Sabbath: _________________ Number of Surveys Completed: ______ 
   Date of 3rd Sabbath: _________________ Number of Surveys Completed: ______ 
8) How many members are on the Church books?  _____________________
9) How many baptisms and profession of faiths in your church in 2015? ______________
10) How many baptisms and profession of faiths in your church this calendar year? ______
11) How many total members completed a survey? _________________________
12) How many total members did not do a survey? _________________________

Deadline for mailing surveys back to mission: [Date]

X
Signature of Reporter Date

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Bibliography


Works Cited


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Gregory Whitsett is the Director of the Global Mission Center for East Asian Religions (CEAR) in Thailand and a Doctor of Missiology student at Andrews University.
An Aging Church in an Aging Society: Averting a Possible Grim Future for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Russia

Yuri N. Drumi

Introduction

A couple of years ago, I received an e-mail from good long-time friends whom I met twenty years ago when I was a student at All Nations Christian College in England. They belong to a Protestant church and live in Scotland. Followig is their letter quoted with some abridgments.

Our church life is very hectic at the moment. At 62 and 65, Keith and I are the youngest church members apart from one couple. . . . Keith has a very heavy workload as a deacon, secretary, treasurer, webmaster, computer operator in services, guitarist, [and] the list just goes on. . . . When my Grandfather died, it was said that they needed 12 people to do the work he did, and within a very short while of him dying, the church closed as no one else could take on what Granddad did. I fear it would be the same with us if Keith dies before more young folk come to the church and get involved. We have no youth work at church as we have no youth. . . . We are a church of old people. We desperately need some young blood but at the moment, none is forthcoming. It isn’t helped by the fact that we have one group within our church that do all they can to keep it as it was in the 1950s. No youngster wants to come to the sort of service they fight for, and it makes life very difficult. They have already forced 2 ministers to go as they are such dominant characters, and all they do is hold the church back. (Dec 15, 2011)

After I read that letter, I realized that much of it describes my own church in Russia today. As a fourth-generation Seventh-day Adventist, I
have always known my church to be vibrant, full of young people, and a
creative community. I cannot remember a single congregation I belonged
to or pastored that did not have a good group of young people, young
couples, children, and teenagers. Even during the late Soviet era, the local
Adventist churches I knew, visited, and was associated with, with rare ex-
ceptions, were full of young people. The mass evangelism of the 1990s cre-
ated a church that was even younger than what it was like in the Soviet era.

This was in the past, however, and today the picture of the Adventist
Church in Russia is quite different. The church I knew was a community
of young people, but that is no longer the case. Looking at the make-up of
today’s churches in all four of Russia’s unions in the Euro-Asia Division, I
see more and more graying heads and many gloomy faces.

In order to illustrate what is happening, some statistics will be looked
at first, then some interpretations will be discussed before drawing con-
clusions. In this article I am not trying to blame anybody, but rather at-
tempting to offer help so the Adventist Church can reverse the process of
a slow death.

Demographics Picture of Russia

It is self-evident that the church as a smaller social body is affected by
the larger society. The church, however, has a responsibility for society
(Niebuhr 1946). The gospel invitation is to be given to all (White 1974:102).
To understand the social conditions in which Russian Adventists live and
minister today, it is important to look at the major social changes Russia
has gone through during the last two decades or so. This is important for
navigating future mission initiatives of the Seventh-day Adventist Church
in Russia. The more sensitive the Church is to its social environment, the
closer it follows the Master who said, “Love your neighbor as yourself”

The following charts demonstrate several major demographic trends
that developed during the 20th century and accelerated at the beginning
of 21st century in Russia. First, by taking a closer look at the larger demo-
ographic picture of Russia one is able to come to a better understanding
of the social dynamics which led up to the disappearance of the USSR in
1991 and the collapse of the political, economic, and institutional systems
soon after that. Second, the charts help the readers to understand how the
social context in the Russian Federation affects the Seventh-day Adventist
Church’s age and gender make-up. The charts will also help us to foresee
how the social body of Russia will develop in the decades to come and
therefore what the Adventist Church in Russia can expect in the future.
As figure 1 shows, the population of Russia reached its low point in 1946 shortly after the end of World War II, but reached its high in 1992, the first year after the collapse of the USSR. It is expected that the population will decrease by 2026 when it is predicted that the population will be 137.1 million, close to the population in 1979.
If figure 2 data is compared with historical events, Russia’s demographic processes were heavily influenced by social catastrophes which “repeatedly broke the long-term patterns of populations change” (Zakharov and Ivanova 1994; cf. Prokhorov 1998; Glotov 2012:36-46). In 1992, for the first time since WWII, the number of deaths in Russia exceeded the number of births, and with the exception of 1995, that trend has continued ever since. Deaths were higher than births by almost a million people in 1994-1995 and in 1999-2003. The birth rate dropped sharply in periods of economic crises in 1962-1969 and 1992-1999. The collapse of the USSR, followed by drastic economic reforms triggered demographic disasters. For the first time in its millennial history, Russia was labeled a “disappearing” country (Rudenko 2007). As Eberstadt observes, over the two decades since the Soviet collapse, “the country’s population has been shrinking, its mortality levels are nothing short of catastrophic, and its human resources appear to be dangerously eroding” (2011:95).

Eberstadt explains Russia’s gruesome deterioration as follows:

Although the country’s problems with infectious diseases—most alarming HIV/AIDS and drug-resistant tuberculosis—are well-known, they account for only a small fraction of the awful gap between Western and Russian survival rates. Most immediately, the country’s fateful leap backward in health and survival prospects is due to an explosion in deaths from cardiovascular disease and injuries [which] account for the overwhelming majority of Russia’s spike in mortality levels from those of Western countries. At the moment, death rates from cardiovascular disease are more than three times as high in Russia as in Western Europe, and Russian death rates from injury and violence have been stratospheric, on par with those in African post-conflict societies, such as Liberia and Sierra Leone (2011:98).

In 2005, the Russian government launched a new demographic initiative which was entrusted to Dmitriy Medvedev, who was at that time the Vice Prime Minister in charge of national projects and priorities (Latsa 2012). The idea behind this initiative was to boost the country’s birth rate and lower mortality rates. Starting on January 1, 2007 the government began paying maternity capital (family subsidies for mothers of more than one child, if the second child and any further children come after January 1, 2007). In 2007, the amount of the lump sum allowance was 250,000 rubles (about $6,820) for the second child and any additional children and was indexed against inflation, reaching 429,408 rubles (about $11,720) in 2014 (Pension Fund of the Russian Federation 2014).

This however did not reverse the demographic situation, and as of 2012, the death rate was still higher than the birth rate (Federal State Statistics
Service 2013). Only in 2013, for the first time in the last two decades did the population increase from January to November 2013. Within 11 months, there were 1,743,300 births which is 22,700 more than the number of those who died (Ministry of Labor and Social Protection Report 2013).

Figure 3. Difference between births and deaths in number of population in Russian Federation (in thousands). Source: Gorshkov and Shereghi 2010:18.

According to statistical predictions, starting from 2008 the percentage of the population that crossed the line of the “able-bodied age” (retirement) will double, from 21% to 42% in 2050 (Osipov and Rybakovsky 2009:250). This means that the burden to support elderly people will inevitably increase taxes on the younger generations, and the rising life expectancy in Russia will make this burden even heavier and worsen the pension crisis (Putin 2007:7).

Figure 4. The median age of population in Russian Federation (in years). Source: Gorshkov and Shereghi 2010:19.
It is also important to understand that the decrease in the number of young people in the population is not an independent process but a part of the larger depopulation of Russia in general (Semenova, Tvanova, and Dabrouina 2005:318-361). Russian society shares in the “global aging” phenomenon, a phenomenon indicating “a fundamental demographic shift with no parallel in the history of humanity” (Jackson and Howe 2008:3). The median age in Russia will rise by almost two days every week, from 38.7 years in 2011 to 42.4 years in 2025. Accordingly, Russians who are 65 and older will make up almost 19% of the population in 2025, compared to 13% in 2011 (Eberstadt 2011:102). Within eight years, from 2013 to 2021, the number of young people aged 14-30 will decrease by about 8 million (see fig. 5), which is over a half of the population of Moscow.

Figure 5. The number of population aged 14-30 in the Russian Federation and prognosis until 2021 (in million). Source: Gorshkov 2010:15.

Against this background of the Russian demographic picture, I next look at the growth rate of the Adventist Church in Euro-Asia, primarily in four Russia-based unions, the West Russia Union Conference, the East Russia Union Mission, the Caucasus Union Mission, and the Far East Union Mission of Churches.
First, I will look at the Euro-Asia Division membership growth rate from 1991 to 2013. As someone who was born in the Soviet Union and who grew up being a Seventh-day Adventist, I never heard any preaching in the church that envisioned the collapse of Marxism-Leninism and the disappearance of its grand political creation, the USSR. Neither did I hear this topic mentioned in any private conversations, nor did I ever see anything from the Bible or the writings of Ellen G. White applied in any way to even hint that one day soon the mega-project of Communism would collapse without a single shot being fired. However, this was exactly what happened in 1991 when in a twinkle of an eye many people in the USSR and its satellite partners encountered a dire reality, utter misery, and existential emptiness. To use a well-known image from Jesus’ parable that I used in another publication “the rags and dirt on the body of the prodigal son [is] a picture of post-Marxist Russia” (Drumi 2008:164). It is against this background that one needs to interpret the rapid growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church during the early post-Soviet years (see fig. 7).
What was the main reason for the rapid if not phenomenal church growth among Seventh-day Adventists in Russia in those days? By the 1980s, the growing inadequacy of the Russian version of the Marxist ideological paradigm became evident to the political elite led by then president Gorbachev of the Soviet Union. Many of the reforms that were initiated during the period of perestroika resulted eventually in the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Not surprisingly, two surveys done in Russia in 1990 and 1991 demonstrate that the “rapid growth of religiosity and just as rapid ruin of mass atheism” went hand in hand in Russia (Furman 1992:7).

However, to say that religious faiths replaced atheism would be an exaggeration. The disillusionment with Marxism-Leninism did not lead the
masses to embrace an actual *practicing* of religion (Shterin 1998). It is also true that from around 1997, interest in a religious life began a steady decline. In the first half of the 1990s, the rate of church attendance across the Russian Federation was no more than 6-7 percent of those who claimed to be believers (Kaariainen and Furman 1997:36-38). The worldview of Russians did not suddenly become “religious,” “Christian” or “biblical.” Rather, it became more eclectic and controversial, allowing old atheistic clichés to coexist with the emerging new patterns of thought (38).

During that same period when the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) was gradually filling an ideological niche, the conditions for non-Orthodox denominations to operate in Russia worsened. The Russian government reaction to the supposed threats from foreign sects and various isms led to the development of protectionist ideologies (Balmforth 2011). The dominant role of the ROC was legitimized when Russian president Boris Yeltsin in September 1997 signed legislation that recognized only the Russian Orthodox Church, Islam, Buddhism, and Judaism as “traditional religions” (System Garant 2013). Later amendments to that legislation introduced between 1997 and 2013 further narrowed opportunities for conventional methods of evangelism used by “non-traditional” religions, particularly Protestant ones. The amendments reflect a strong move by the government toward implementation of the “spiritual security” policy as an important subset of the national security concept of Russia (Elkner 2005).

Taking a closer look at figure 7 it appears that the excitement created through public evangelism—that the world is coming to its end—lasted probably only 10-11 years (from 1991-2003). The sudden increase in church growth slowed after reaching its peak in 2003, a downward trend that continues to this day. In the years that followed the collapse of the Soviet system, mass evangelistic campaigns had been initially well received and resulted in rapid church growth with most of that growth experienced in regional and district cities. By the end of 2003, the church membership in the Euro-Asia Division reached its highest point, increasing from 37,388 in 1990 to 144,760 (in the Russian Federation, from 8,666 to 45,000). In the late Soviet years, the majority of Soviet Adventists lived in the Ukraine and Moldova.

The tide started to turn in 2003 with a steady decrease in membership since that time. By the end of 2013, the membership of the ESD totaled 117,028. If compared with 2003, there was a drop of 27,732 or over 20 percent. Moreover, according to the ESD Secretary’s Statistical Report Analysis, from 1990 to 2011 the Adventist Church baptized 293,131 people (ESD SSRA 2013a:3). However, during that same period the Church also witnessed a great loss of members (as listed below).
Several things stand out as one looks at those numbers. First, the reasons for the large number of dropped/apostatized/missed members has not been analyzed in a comprehensive way. To the best of my knowledge, no in-depth study has been done in the ESD as to why so many people left the church between 1990 and 2011. The two international surveys among former and inactive church members conducted under the leadership of the General Conference Nurture and Retention Committee from 2011 through 2013 (Sahlin 2013; Kent 2013) did not shed any light on the specific situation in the Euro-Asia Division.

Nevertheless, two indicators from the survey conducted by Monty Sahlin might provide keys to better understanding the situation regarding dropouts in the Euro-Asia Division. First, he points out that 66 percent of those who left the Adventist Church were people from 18-29 years of age (37%) and 30-39 years of age (29%). Most of them were within the category of “youth.” Second, 83 percent of those who left the church had never attended an Adventist school (Sahlin 2013). It seems that there is some correlation between these two findings. It may well be that the greatest failure of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Euro-Asia in the 1990s and early 2000s was a lack of appreciation of the importance and missional value of Adventist education as a long-term mission strategy. Hardly anybody in those days could foresee that the Russian government would change its attitude toward private (religious) schools (that is, kindergarten to 11th grade). Starting from September 2012 onward the government started to provide considerable financial support to private schools.

For example, during the 2013-2014 school year, the government subsidy of Zaoksky Christian School of the General Education (an Adventist school operated by Zaoksky Theological Seminary) amounted to 40 percent of the school operating budget (Bychkov 2014). Unfortunately, there are presently only two Adventist schools in the territory of the Russian Federation eligible to claim such benefits from the government—the one in Zaoksky and another in Tula. Had there been more schools established in the 1990s and early 2000s, and had there been a strategic focus on Ad-
ventist education for children rather than focusing only on new baptisms, today’s statistics would most likely be different.

Second, the number of those who died is close to 40,000, or an annual rate of about two percent of the total church membership. This means that the death rate within the Adventist Church has been twice as high as that of the general population in Russia (see fig. 3). In other words, this index indicates that the age of church members is older than that of society in general.

Third, there is a steady emigration of Adventists into other countries outside the Euro-Asia Division, mostly to North America and the European Union. From 1990 to 2011, 13,535 transferred their membership to other countries. The sad thing about this emigration is that among those who left the division were a number of key intellectuals and pastors. This “brain-drain” has hurt the church because it has not been able to regain the intellectual capital it used to have.

Because of the above factors, between the 2005 and 2010 General Conference sessions the church leadership in the ESD launched an all-ESD program of reclaiming church members. As part of its “Come Back Home” initiative the Church emphasized pastoral visitations and the establishment of friendly relationships. After the first stage was completed in 2013, the Church was able to reclaim 2,913 church members but unfortunately 16,569 members withdrew their membership (Euro-Asia Division 2013a:8-9, 13).

Two more things need to be pointed out in this context. As figure 7 shows, the turning point from good to poor church growth coincided with the decline of the youth population in Russia (fig. 5). Second, the beginning of the declining membership trend coincided with the downward enrollment trend at Zaoksky Adventist Seminary and Institute (fig. 8), an educational institution run by the Euro-Asia Division since 1988. As can be seen from figure 9, starting from the 2003/04 school year when the number of on-campus bachelor students in the Zaoksky Adventist Seminary and Institute was the highest—close to 300 students—from that point on there has been a clear downward trend. The negative trend has not been reversed in spite of unprecedented financial support provided to the institution by the Euro-Asia Division in the way of scholarships. Unlike the 1990s when there were large numbers of young people eager to get a Christian education and when many of them were short of money, today it is just the opposite. There is money available but a significant lack of young people willing to use it to take programs offered on the campus of Zaoksky.
One of the questions that needs to be asked is What went wrong? Did the church do anything wrong or what happened in society? To answer the above questions I would say that probably things have changed both within the Church and in society. As more Russians experienced exposure to material affluence and a lifestyle of a developed country, consumerism became the new ideology of Russia. As Golova points out, an entrenchment of consumerism through a system of control over consumerist behavior has led to an internalizing of “the values of the consumerist society and [the] creating [of] a new formation: an active and manageable consumer” (Golova 2011:91). As she concludes, the “inertia of our culture has been broken, and the Russian nation is now oriented to consumption” (102).

As Russia entered the orbit of capitalism and unrestricted wealth, it had two effects on the country’s population. Besides improving the economic conditions of the population, it caused people to idolize wealth. In light of Jesus’s remark that it is the pagans who fall prey to consumerism (Matt 6:31-33), the new lifestyle that Russians so quickly acquired was pagan and paganizing (Hirsch 2006:111). In Russia, the Orthodox version of the Christian faith has been gradually re-adopted by the state as a new ideology, thus filling the vacuum left after the disillusionment with Marxism-Leninism. This new ideology, however, has deviated from such key values and images of the gospel as the narrow gate and the difficult way (Matt 7:13, 14), the need to lay up treasure in heaven and not on earth (Matt 6:19, 20), taking up one’s cross and following Jesus (Matt 10:38), and not following Caesar.
How did these shifts affect the church? As one looks back at the developments of the 1990s and 2000s, one soon realizes that Russian Adventists were too slow to change and adapt to the fast changes that were taking place in the social, spiritual, and intellectual realms of Russian society. Nobody taught us that adaptation and reshaping was necessary because of the changing social and spiritual landscape. Too many thought that any change was compromise. Somehow, we came to believe that “the present truth” works automatically, simply because it is “the truth.” We under-appreciated how competitive the “spiritual market” would become in a matter of a few years and how fast people would gain self-respect and critical eyes as to what to believe, which church to attend, which books to read, etc.

In the days of mass evangelism when a certain euphoria was imported by foreign evangelists, we became “number-possessed” trying to achieve the highest numbers of baptisms in the shortest time possible. Sadly, the quality of those baptisms left much to be desired, and the social body of the Church could not and did not “digest” the numbers of newcomers properly. It may have well been that the strategy of “advancing the message” by producing new baptisms was implemented at the expense of growing churches that would be sound spiritually and healthy socially.

Perhaps, we as Russian Adventists relied too heavily on the quality of spiritual bread baked on other continents and did not dare to offer our own recipes to bake a bread with Russian flavors in it. The more society changed the more we were alienating ourselves from it, and the more foreign we became as a religious group of people in Russian society. By an extreme emphasis on the “immanent end of the world” at the expense of being sensitive to the social needs of the society (for instance, its deep need of morally sound and academically strong education for children) we became more “unique” but less understood by the surrounding culture.

The dominant theological reasoning of those days was keeping the truth rather than offering the truth. In other words, by keeping the truth we wanted new comers to reproduce what we did as we had kept the truth in our semi-underground Soviet existence. It is true that the keeping the truth paradigm worked perfectly well during the decades of persecutions and did help the church remain close to its message. The message did have a liberating power in the lives of the believers. Later, however when freedom of expression was restored, the concept of keeping the truth became an obstacle. As the new Russian society emerged around us, the members of the Church did not know how to become more sensitive to the surrounding culture, and thereby did not produce a more nuanced approach to mission in a rapidly changing society. In the hidden and sometimes open clashes between the old keeping the truth paradigm and the emergence
of the new reality, the Church made theological gains but lost missiologically. For example, at times the issue of right belief became more important than obeying the commandment to “love your neighbor as yourself.” In other cases, the issue of having a strong administrative and financial structure was more important than following Jesus’ teaching about receiving sinners and helping them grow and become disciples. There was also the issue of maintaining the right interpretation of Daniel and Revelation to the point that it became more important than teaching about following the Sermon on the Mount in everyday life. As a result, probably the greatest missiological failure was that by trying to keep the truth Adventists gradually developed a self-protective, semi-closed mentality and thereby hindered the development of an externally focused mission.

Youth in the Adventist Church in the Russian Federation

There are four unions of the Seventh-day Church in the Russian Federation today: the West Russian Union Conference (WRUC), the East Russian Union Mission (ERUM), the Caucasus Union Mission (CaUM), and the Far Eastern Union of Churches Mission (FEUCM) (fig. 10). With insignificant exceptions, the territorial borders of the four unions follow the administrative borders of the Federal Districts (FD) of Russia. WRUC includes Central, North-Western, Privolzhskiy, and Ural FDs; CaUM includes the Southern FD; ERUM includes the Siberian FD; FEUCM includes the Far Eastern FD. If taken together, the four Russian unions comprise about half of the 117,028 church membership of the Euro-Asia Division.
Due to the numerous territorial reorganizations that took place in the 1990s and early 2000s, the membership statistics in each of the four unions is somewhat fragmentary and available with varying degrees of precision. To track the yearly growth patterns for the same timespan as has been done for the Euro-Asia Division is beyond the scope of this paper. At this point, suffice it to say that church growth/decline in the four Russia-based unions reflects the dynamics seen in the Euro-Asia Division in general.

In the following section, I will first compare the number of young people living in the territories of the Federal Districts of the Russian Federation (coinciding with the corresponding unions) to the general population. Second, I will compare the number of baptized young people (16-30 years of age) in each of the unions to the total membership in those unions. Third, I will compare the proportion of young people in all four Russia-based unions to the proportion of young people in the Russian Federation. This will give a better understanding of the demographic conditions of the church as compared to the demographic conditions of society.

Two additional things need to be stated at the outset. First, the total membership in each of the unions does not coincide with the number of those who actually attend church on a given Sabbath, for attendance is lower than the membership. Take, for example, the WRUC as the largest (in terms of membership) among the four Russia-based unions. As of the fourth quarter of 2013, there were 29,361 church members. The number of those attending Sabbath School was 18,155 on the second Sabbath of the quarter and 18,661 on the seventh Sabbath of the quarter (WRUC, Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Department Report 2014). That means that roughly one-third of the official members did not attend church at all.

Second, there is a small, and I believe, acceptable statistical error in the following calculation. Prior to 2011, not all statistical data regarding young people was properly collected in the unions and it is therefore unavailable for comparison. Therefore, the comparison I make will be between the numbers of young people in the country as of 2009 and the numbers of young people in the four Russia-based unions as of 2012.

**Youth in Russia vs. Youth in the Russian Adventist Church**

As of 2009, there were 33,009,000 young people aged 15-29 in Russia, which is 23.3% of the general population of the country (UNICEF 2010:9). The number of young people living in the four Federal Districts (FD) covered by the WRUC (including Volgograd and Astrakhan regions) was 23,703,000 or 23.4% of the population in those Federal Districts (UNICEF 2010:11, 12). As of 2012, the number of young people in the WRUC was 3,614 or 12% of the membership which stood at 30,011 (Euro Asia Division 2013b). This percent is 1.94 times less than the percent of young people in the population in the four Federal Districts.
In the same manner, if similar calculations are made for each Russian-based union in correlation to the population in their respective Federal District(s), it results in the following percentages of baptized young people compared to the number of young people living in their respective territories.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Government Territory</th>
<th>Percent of Young People (ages 15-29)</th>
<th>Adventist Church Structure</th>
<th>Percent of Young People (ages 15-29)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central, North-Western, Privolzhskiy, and Ural Federal Districts</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>West Russian Union Conference (WRUC)</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Federal District</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>Caucasus Union Mission (CaUM)</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siberian Federal District</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>East Russian Union Mission (ERUM)</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Far Eastern Federal District</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>Far Eastern Union of Churches Mission (FEUCM)</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Russian Federation</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td></td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*with the exception of Volga and Astrakhan regions

If the data for all four Russia-based unions are summarized, the percentage of young people to the general membership in the four Russia-based Unions is less than half the percentage of young people to the general population of the Russian Federation.

This index should create deep concern among church leaders, pastors, and educators because it states that the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Euro-Asia is graying much faster than the Russian population in general, a population already considered old (Jackson and Howe 2008:3). In Russia, the retirement age for males is 60 and for females is 55, and the number of people in this age category or older is 13 percent of the general population, that is, 6 percent above the mark of 7 percent accepted as borderline between young and aging population. That means that every 8th person in Russia is older than 65. Within the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Russia that percentage is even higher, meaning that the Church is an old and further aging social body within a rapidly aging Russian society.

The general statistics collected at the local church and reported to the higher church administrative levels are not separated by age and gender.
From our analysis above this would be of significance to show who is coming in or leaving the church. To the best of my knowledge, the age profile of the church has never been analyzed in-depth and discussed publicly during church business meetings that I have had a privilege to attend. But it appears that such membership accounting would be vital for the planning and establishing of programs, especially to attract young people.

**Socio-Theological Reflection**

According to Paul, the church is Christ’s body (1 Cor 12:27). Is this a theological statement only or can it be interpreted sociologically as well? In my opinion, the latter is just as acceptable as the former. All who saw Jesus when he walked on this earth remembered him being a thirty-year-old male (Luke 3:23). Those who watched him dying on the cross remembered him being a thirty-three-year-old man. Other ages of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke mention him as a one-day and eight-day-old baby (Luke 2:7, 21) and as a twelve-year-old boy (Luke 2:42). As Jesus was shaping the nucleus of his religious movement, he surrounded himself with men and women of his age or close to it. Perhaps it was because of the itinerant nature of his mission and the demanding lifestyle that went with it. Youth seemed to be at the forefront of the early church mission. A good example was “a young man named Paul” (Acts 7:58; italics added).

The Jewish religious establishment struggled to accept Jesus who boldly proposed a rejuvenation of the Jewish religion as well as liberation of people from spiritual decline. Religious leaders of that time criticized Jesus, saying, “You are not yet fifty years old” (John 8:47). Thus, they showed their inability to embrace new thinking and realign the spiritual and theological values of their own religion. The novelty of Jesus’ teaching and freedom of his behavior could not and did not fit the dead religious forms. Old wineskins could not contain new wine. This resulted in the death of the Messiah and the tragic historical divorce of Judaism and Christianity.

Although it is true that history repeats itself, it is equally true that it does not have to do so. As one looks beyond Paul’s metaphor and takes into consideration the demographic picture of Seventh-day Adventists in Russia, two questions come to mind. First, figuratively speaking, What happened to Jesus’ young body, that is the Church that claims to be that body? Second, What can be done to rejuvenate the Church’s youthful potential?

The demographics picture of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Russia shows that there is a dangerous lack of “young” followers of Jesus in the many Adventist congregations and companies scattered throughout Russia. True, there is no way for the Seventh-day Adventist Church to stop
or reverse the “global graying” trend. Neither is it the Church’s mission. On the other hand, silently sitting by is not acceptable for a church eagerly seeking to bring the Good News of Jesus to every corner of the world.

As time goes by and if Jesus does not return soon, Adventism in Russia will find itself at a critical crossroad. The options Russian Adventism has can be reduced to either retract or to rethink itself. The first option will cause Adventism to be even less flexible toward local cultural contexts and more vulnerable in the face of current and looming challenges. If Adventism wants to survive and be relevant in Russia it will need to become more aware and flexible toward the local cultural environments and less monolithic and homogeneous. Neither option is an easy one.

The first option will further stagnate the movement that used to be vibrant and appealing to the public. A rigid church will lose touch with the radical changes that have occurred in society during the last two decades. Those events have changed how people think, feel, behave, communicate, socialize, and who they really are, culturally, socially, economically, politically, and existentially. I believe that a preoccupation with prophetic charts and schemes at the expense of ignoring the fast changing cultural and demographic landscapes in the Russian Federation has contributed to the shrinking of the Adventist Church in Euro-Asia.

Notice what young Russians (age 14-30) usually do in their leisure time:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leisure Activities of Young Russians (as of 2009)</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. social gatherings, visiting with friends</td>
<td>65.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. watch TV, listening to radio</td>
<td>64.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. listening to music, reading books, watch videos</td>
<td>58.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. resting, relaxing</td>
<td>49.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. going to countryside, out-of-door activities</td>
<td>46.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. spending time with computer, Internet, computer games</td>
<td>45.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. housekeeping, time with children, working at dachas</td>
<td>29.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. reading newspapers, magazines, and journals</td>
<td>28.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. going to café, bars, restaurants</td>
<td>28.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. going to nightclubs, other entertainments</td>
<td>26.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. sport clubs, sport activities</td>
<td>20.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. professional growth training, self-education</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. hobbies (needlework, photography, modeling)</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. going to church and other religious meetings</td>
<td><strong>8.1</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. going to museums, exhibitions</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. music/dancing clubs</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. participate in public non-commercial organizations, associations</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. participate in political organizations, meetings, mass-meetings/rallies</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 11. Sample of leisure activities of young Russians. Source: Gorshkov and Shereghi 2010:196-197.
One of the implications of the above picture is that religion and church, if presented to young people in an abstract way (as a concept, theory, or ideology) will not be understood by most young people, and will be even less appreciated and acceptable. A far better focus of the church’s mission would be to help people encounter God rather than the distribution of knowledge about Him. There is no other option for the church but to follow Jesus in meeting people where they are mentally, socially, virtually, and even physically.

If Adventism in Russia fails to interact in creative ways with local cultural contexts and does not produce locally appreciated patterns and practices of spiritual life, its members will become poorer and poorer intellectually, spiritually, and socially. The present methods of Adventist mission in Russian will only continue to attract people of a certain mindset, mostly elderly and retirees, but will close the doors for many others. “Fitting” in this context, is not a matter of moral choice and morality as such but a mental worldview picture the church generates and offers to spiritually thirsty people. If Adventism resists rethinking itself and prefers to keep reproducing itself in the exact forms and meanings of a 19th century eschatological movement, the church will be diminished in its relevance and eventually in its existence.

The danger of having old missiological clichés in presenting a “young Jesus” are two mutually exclusive and incompatible things, and the sooner the church realizes that the better it will be in the long run. To some extent, the preaching of the “soon coming of Jesus” and the “three angels’ messages,” that is, a message about a new, otherworldly reality violently breaking into this world order may have also led to the decline of youth in the church. A message about heaven sounds appealing for people who have already lived their lives on earth and who do not expect much more in this life. The idea of the soon coming of the Kingdom of God was very attractive in Russia when people suffered and were persecuted, but that message has lost its appeal for those who have just begun to live and mature and who want to experience life in all its fullness. A message of heaven does not provide answers to the challenges of daily life. If the message continues to keep its focus on transcendent issues of highly speculative theology and fails to touch people where they are, the result will be no better than what the church is experiencing today.

The worldview paradigm of nineteenth-century Protestant America into which Adventism was born and shaped, and the highly different worldview that Russians have created today, is so different that it is time to rethink and reformulate the Adventist identity and message. If Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb 13:8), why not try to understand him and his gospel anew, in Russia through Russian eyes?
is vital to decode Adventism and let God’s Spirit produce locally understood and appreciated religious meanings. By avoiding open conversations and honest discussions in formulating such a relevant and culturally-accepted message may result in the church becoming an obstacle in God’s mission instead of being its agent.

A second option, in which Adventism rethinks itself, is by no means an easy task. There is no such thing as shapeless truth. Religious truth that remains in the forms and rituals (including verbal formulas and methods of theologizing) of a bygone era and people in their 70s has the potential to create conflict and misunderstanding between older and younger generations, between archaic and modern worldviews, between modern and post-modern, faith and knowledge, universal and local, Western and non-Western, and between propositional truths and truths hidden in narratives, etc.

Perhaps, it would be helpful, in the context of Russian Adventism facing a demographically tough future, to introduce a concept of “emerging Adventism” and let it coexist with the conventional “growing Adventism.” In my view, this change offers some hope that, if enough thinking, thoughtful discussion, theological research, and prayers are given to the issue, the church will be able to redefine itself and be better prepared for the next historic era that may last longer than we expect.

To achieve such a goal and re-define Adventism will require that there be among other things, (1) a common understanding of what has gone wrong, (2) a genuine desire for biblically acceptable change; (3) patience to listen to and accept others regardless of their different views; (4) honest conversation about what has become theological “sacred cows.” This will eventually lead to the reformatting of Adventism in a way that allows it be more locally sensitive and spiritually responsible for the name and message it bears.

If one dares to offer some suggestions as to what needs to be done to help Russian Adventism face its demographic challenges, several important steps should be taken.

First, we urgently need to have an open, honest, and frank discussion about the methods and approaches the church has used over the last two decades of religious freedom. The wider this discussion is, the more painful the process will be. Yet the church has neither the time nor the moral resources to allow anything less than that. It is time to listen to local pastors, elders, and church members and let them speak, as the Spirit would tell them to speak. This discussion, I believe, will lead to a careful analysis of what has gone wrong in the past and what might be a long-term strategy of finding a way out. It is naïve, however, if not arrogant, to expect the Spirit to answer questions that we already know the answers to.
Second, it is time to have a long-range family and child/youth policy in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Russia for the next 20-30 years. Helping young Adventist parents, especially those who have many children, to rear them in a Christian way must be considered as the missionary work. This demands the heavy and systematic support by the church, including the use of tithe monies. From a priority, family and children/youth work must become the priority of the church’s mission. If youth is not the focus, in twenty years the results will be much worse than the picture we see today that is itself the result of twenty years of significant under-appreciating the importance of these areas.

Third, it is time to include in church statistical reports age and gender information of church members in the local church, mission/conference, union, and division. This is not something difficult to achieve, but statistically speaking, this will help present a much better understanding of the demographics of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Russia. Here is a sample of what can be done by the church in terms of getting more accurate information about itself:

Figure 12. Age and sex structure of Russian population as of January 1, 2012 (males left side, females right side). Source: Federal State Statistic Service 2013.
No doubt, if such a demographic distribution chart of the Russian Seventh-day Adventist Church were made today, it would provide an eye-opening bit of information for all levels of the church organization. Just numbering baptisms and charting that information has become misleading and does not show the real picture. The church should take much more seriously the aging population of its members. If accurate statistics were available the church could then compare the percentage in each age bracket with the life expectancy charts for the various regions of Russia.

There is another issue that should cause concern: Most of the money given to the church is provided by elderly people who strongly support the church structure, church projects, church institutions, and church workers. According to a survey conducted by the Ministerial Association of the ESD in the fall of 2011, almost 80% of the local churches have a membership where the number of female church members is 70% and higher (Euro-Asia Division 2012). The church organization and its workers need to realize that they are primarily supported by one of the most vulnerable and often least protected social groups in Russia, namely babushkas (old women).

Fourth, a one-size-fits-all approach to mission has completely exhausted its potential. The older a person becomes, the more receptive they are to an eschatological message. However, the younger a person is, the higher the importance attached to a message of hope for life here and now. An eschatological message helps older people face their future encounter with death without fear and panic; a message of hope for the present gives meaning and fulfillment to life here in this world. As mentioned above, much of the “revival in Russia” evangelism focused on eschatological hope at the expense of practical, Bible-based knowledge on how to live this life with meaning and purpose now.

Fifth, Russian Adventists should remember their history, particularly the fact that it was the graying minds that brought their country, the USSR, to disaster and caused its disappearance. Gerontocracy is just as dangerous as immaturity in leadership.

Finally, it is time to read anew Jesus’ parable regarding the old and new wineskins. Jesus said, “No one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine will burst the wineskins and be spilled, and the wineskins will be ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins, and both are preserved. And no one, having drunk old wine, immediately desires new; for he says, ‘The old is better’” (Luke 5:37-39 NKJ). If this parable was true regarding Judaism during Jesus’ days, why would it not apply also to 21st century Adventism in Russia? There is no shame in acknowledging the fact that in Adventism, there is both old and new wine, and, perhaps, there are both old and new wineskins. It is time to develop a locally meaningful Adventist “theology of change” that could help avert...
the very possible grim future the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Russia will otherwise face.

There is a great need to look at Adventist theology and decide: What are the key essentials that make us Adventists? Are they all equally Bible-based? How detailed should they be spelled out? In my view, these essentials must transcend time, culture, and history. They should not be too numerous, too complex, too specific, or too abstract. Yet, they must be spiritually profound, practically applicable, well-articulated, and well understood in each given time and culture. A good example of this approach is Acts 15:28, 29 where it says, “it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us [church leaders], to lay upon you [“the brethren who are of the Gentiles”] no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well.”

Just as the Adventist pioneers were able to extract key essentials from the Bible in the 19th century that shaped a new religious understanding, so too must the Church today be more proactive in the ongoing task of seeking God and his will in and for a given culture and context. The members at the grassroots level of the Church must have more freedom to articulate what they see in the Bible, how they understand it, and how they plan to follow its precepts. There should be more spontaneity in theologizing as well as in practicing what the Bible teaches. No doubt, the theological/doctrinal framework of the Church must be universally agreed upon. At the same time, within that framework there must be enough room for creative theological and missiological inputs from the local churches and their believers.

Presently, many church members feel alienated from much of what takes place in their church. There is a sense of alienation from the giving and use of tithes and offerings, from the process of developing and elaborating the church’s strategies and plans, from the process of appointing or moving local pastors, etc. These areas of alienation lead many church members to feel alienated from the church’s mission. Eventually, this leads to the costliest loss, the loss of ownership of mission, when people no longer think and feel that it is their mission and their responsibility to reach out and bring the gospel to all people. Without overcoming these and other areas of alienation, there appears little hope for significant progress of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Russia in the foreseeable future.
Conclusion

Being an international and highly diverse community of believers, the world-wide Seventh-day Adventists Church has always struggled with maintaining its identity in a fast-changing world. This is natural, and much credit is to be given to several generations of church leaders for success in this regard. Nevertheless, after the seeds of Adventism have been liberally sown all over the world and as the seeds have grown, it is time to let those plants share more responsibility for their own future. Paternalism and top-down strategizing is no longer adequate to facilitate the spiritual rejuvenation of local forms of Adventism.

To experience the refreshing power of the Spirit is clearly the work of God. It is time to ask him to give us courage to re-think our Adventist message and identity both universally and locally. Otherwise, as it has been demonstrated in this article, the Adventist Church will keep producing one-sided results that simply do not have a future. This is at least true for Russia. If an inspiring image of a “young Jesus” emerges in the heads and hearts of people who claim to believe in him and who want to follow him, most likely the result will be an emerging Adventism, renewed in the image and likeness of a “young Jesus.”

Works Cited


After receiving a PhD from Andrews University (2008) Yuri Drumi has been serving at Zaoksky University in Russia. As a missiologist he keeps working on building bridges through publications, lectures, sermons, and personal witnessing so that the gospel (evangel) of Jesus Christ can more easily be communicated with people in contemporary Russian culture.
Introduction

It can be assumed that a number of well-educated missiologists would not easily agree to the idea that the voices of the poor and displaced bear the potential and capability to substantially contribute to mission in relevant and effective ways. Can the poor’s lived experience of conversion and missional witness be valid and reliable sources of information for contemporary and relevant mission theology? Does spirituality have an impact on the resiliency of displaced people? And what is the essential nature of family resilience in new Christian converts who have committed their lives for God’s mission? Missiological questions of this kind are seamlessly interwoven with the research topic of my doctoral dissertation, “The Experience of Family Resilience in Buddhist Background Believers within the Broader Context of the Experience of Displacement in Myanmar.”

This short article seeks to illustrate the outcomes of a pilot study conducted with one exemplar family that resides in Karen State in Myanmar. The purpose of conducting this field-based research project was to develop a specific and unique research instrument that could guide the research and writing throughout the implementation of my field-based research. Specific attention was given to issues of validity and reliability as the research instrument was prepared. The goal of this pilot study was to apply the methodology of hermeneutic phenomenology and to see how people in the field would respond to this methodology and to identify whether phenomenology can be confirmed as a valid and reliable methodology for researching family resilience in the context of multidisciplinary
missiology research. Further, the overall goal of this hermeneutic phenomenological inquiry was to come to a deep-layered comprehension of what the essential nature of experiencing resilience and thriving means for Seventh-day Adventist lay ministers in Myanmar. With this study, I am particularly interested in exploring the experience of religion and spiritual life in resilient displaced missionary families who converted from Buddhism to Christianity.

During various sequences of this pilot research study for the Doctor of Missiology, research participants convicted me that devoted Buddhists in Burma do carry a deep desire for serving and worshipping the God of absolute authority, the Creator God—in spite of their commitment to formal religion with its adherence to idol worship. When Hsha Paw fled from forced labour in Burma to a refugee camp in Thailand in 2000, she strongly held on to worshipping her Buddha image that she had brought with her to Thailand. Worshipping the Buddha image provided her with inter-generational resilience. Hsha Paw believed that image worship held her in connection with the true God. She and her extended family members did not have access to formal Buddhist doctrines or sacred texts. Instead, their devotion was to a common Buddhist faith, and worship practices filled their lives with confidence in being true God-worshippers.

However, when a Christian lay minister approached Hsha Paw with the words, “You are the daughter of the biblical Creator God,” this Karen woman embarked on a journey that changed forever her image of self and God. God himself answered her burning questions: *Who is the true God to be worshipped? Is it Buddha or is it Jesus?* And since Hsha Paw personally encountered her Creator God, she promised to be obedient to his will and call to mission. Hsha Paw and her family became Christ followers and currently serve displaced children and families in Burma.

Whereas I will further elaborate on the nature of this family’s faith experience in the context of my phenomenological resilience study, this preview into the unique faith experience of this family from Myanmar (pilot research participants) helps to emphasize the light their story sheds on my deeper understanding of theology and mission. In this paper, I propose that a mission theology of devotion is rooted in the experience of an intimate relationship with the Trinitarian God and the restoration of God’s image in his followers. This builds the divine foundation for single-minded worship and obedience, which is the ultimate purpose of being human and becoming Christ’s followers in his mission. This divine insight directly correlates with the core essence of what spirituality and mission means for this pilot research participating family: “Spiritual life means to be human and to do God’s work means to become human.” In order to discern and analyze the relationship of lived spirituality, resilience, and
mission endeavour in a cross-cultural context in trustworthy ways, I committed myself to study the Karen people’s cultural context “to understand the categories, assumptions, and logic the people use to construct their world” and to withhold premature judgments (Hiebert, Shaw, and Tienou 1999:22).

The phenomenological research findings of this paper were derived from a pilot study done in partnership with one displaced family from an ethnic Karen background. The problem statement of this family represents one major reason for ethnic minority displacement in Myanmar, which is forced labour commonly called portering by the Burmese military. The family reported, “Here in Myanmar it is not easy to work because the soldiers come to ask for a porter or to ask us to do ‘voluntary’ labour. But we don’t have things to offer [in exchange for their demands] because it is difficult for us to even find food.” There is no way to escape from forced labour except through displacement. Before the family in the pilot study chose to serve as missionaries in Myanmar, they found refuge in a camp in Thailand. The purpose of this pilot study was to determine the validity and reliability of phenomenological research methodology in a socio-political context.

The preliminary literature review done for this paper and one E-mail conversation with the Co-director of the Chicago Center for Family Health, Dr. Froma Walsh, quickly revealed an existing research gap in the sector of Internal Displacement. I decided to design my research questions for the interviews and focus groups along the lines of Froma Walsh’s framework and questionnaire. While the particular criteria for the sample selection are further described in the methodology section of this article, it is important to mention that the research participants in this pilot study represent a family that exemplifies resilience in the context of adversity that enabled them “to heal from painful experiences, take charge of their lives, and go on to live and love well” (Walsh 2016:251).

Their description of resilience in adversity underscores the mantra “problem-free-is-not-fully-prepared,” commonly used in the field of “positive youth development and casts a vision for young people [and their parents] who are active agents in their communities” (King and Clardy 2014:190). Therefore, I integrated the Relational Development Systems Paradigm (RDSP), which considers the theology of thriving in this hermeneutic phenomenology inquiry research. The Positive Psychology movement represents a social science perspective of optimal development and living. Therefore, Pamela Ebstyne King and William B. Whitney (2015) argue that a pressing question for the integration of psychology and theology is to consider what Christian theology suggests to be essential for humans to thrive. Throughout their literature, Lerner, Roeser, and Phelps (2008)
confirm that psychology’s claim of optimal development suggests that individuals have a repertoire of adaptive behaviours that are appropriate for their developmental context. However, he also expresses concern that psychology cannot make more than normative or conventional claims.

The author of this paper proposes that the selected methodology of Hermeneutic Phenomenology will provide adequate epistemological “tools” and attitudes to encounter the social, cultural, theological, and missiological complexity of the lifeworld and family resilience as a lived experience in displaced people. Further, in the realm of emerging studies on human thriving, optimal development, and positive outcomes in children, youth, and adults, I focus on the key strength of positive deviants, also called exemplar. In positive deviant research, outliers who succeed against all odds are in focus. This rests on the assumption that participants, who manifest the phenomenon under investigation in a highly developed manner, are experts who can provide valid input through surveys, questionnaires, and interviews (Matsuba, King, and Bronk 2013: loc 241).

The first part of this article elaborates on underlying theoretical frameworks and paradigms. It is important for the reader to note that theoretical frameworks need to be considered as an analytical style that functions as another lens to sharpen my perceptions and interpretations of the research data only after the coding process has been completed. This is followed by a section on research methodology and procedures as well as on the role of the researcher. The article continues with the outline of the contextual description of the research participants and concludes with textural, imaginative, and composite descriptions of this hermeneutic phenomenology inquiry.

### Theories and Paradigm Assumptions: Naturalistic Inquiry, Social Constructivism, and the Relational-Development-System-Paradigm (RDSP) in Homogenous Blend with Hermeneutic Phenomenology

Validity and Reliability in the Light of the Naturalistic Paradigm

As crucial and specific as the concepts surrounding validity and reliability are to empirical fact-based science, it likewise needs to be acknowledged that the researcher’s unique perspective, contextual experience, underlying theoretical assumptions, and particular frameworks emphasized in the study illuminate that such questions have a different relevance in phenomenology. The epistemological rationale behind this study of family resilience in displacement is deeply anchored
in the naturalistic paradigm, of which social constructivism is part. John W. Creswell and Dana L. Miller advanced a two-dimensional framework to provide the rationale for choosing validity procedures that are governed by two perspectives: (1) the researchers’ paradigm assumptions and (2) the lens researchers choose to validate their studies (2000:124-130).

Among others, Lincoln and Guba contributed to the emerging research paradigm that contradicts “the prevailing scientific paradigm [which] assumes that there is a single objective reality” (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, and Allen 1993:11) but proposes that “context-unique complex questions cannot be generalized across human different settings” (13). While the naturalistic paradigm makes different assumptions about reality, objectivity, and generalization, it also proclaims that there are “multiple realities” which cannot be resolved “through rational processes or increased data” (14). This rings particularly true in the current life context of displaced children and families from Myanmar.

During a time of rapid change and increased levels of insecurity for Burmese refugees, migrants, and internally displaced people, all the political attempts towards democracy and peace building have not stopped the displacement. And as a case in point, this is how Erlandson and his research team summarize their position: “Multiple realities enhance each other’s meanings; forcing them to a single precise definition emasculates meaning” (15). Therefore, I am committed to establishing a qualitative research lens that respectfully uses subjective views of people who participate in this study. Further, this missiological study on resilience assumes that families’ particular reality in the experience of human thriving is not only socially, but also religiously, spiritually, and missionally constructed. Reality “is what participants perceive it to be” and “validity-as-reflexive-accounting” is “where researchers, the topic, and the sense-making process interact” (Creswell and Miller 2000:125). This will constitute the essence of my research perspective and action.

Validity and Reliability in the Light of Social Constructivism and Doing Phenomenology Research with Families in Mission

As mentioned above, Creswell and Miller argue that validity procedures require thinking beyond specific procedures. The lens and paradigm assumptions of a researcher are of paramount importance (2000:129). However, as Charles Van Engen summarizes, normally, in social science research, the concept of validity has to do with the question, “How can we be sure that we are collecting the right data in the right way? And the concept of reliability addresses the question, “How can we be sure that if the same approach were to be taken again, the same data
would be discovered?” (in Elliston 2011:113). Whereas Elliston affirms that researchers need to seek control over all the variables that may occur, except the dependent variable, that is, the outcome or resulting variable in experimental research, while the causal variable that causes change is identified (69, 70). However, he also acknowledges that in some church and mission situations it would be virtually impossible to do an experiment because one does not have the potential for maintaining control of the setting. And, in many cases it is not possible to manipulate the variables. Experimental research in missiology is often inappropriate because of the sovereignty of God in his mission (70).

Meanwhile, researchers hold the position that reliability needs to be measured by other indicators than “repeatability” and “generalizability” (Van Engen, in Elliston 2011:114, 118, Erlandson et al. 1993:14-16, Van Manen 2016:635, 644). According to my research methodology adviser Edyta Jankiewicz, “the impact of certain variables on other variables is not measured in phenomenological studies.” Van Manen suggests that “phenomenology does not offer us the possibility of effective theory with which we can now explain or control the world, but rather it offers us the possibility of plausible insights that bring us in more direct contact with the world” (2016:398). Phenomenology is the systematic attempt to uncover and describe the internal meaning structures of lived experience, the study of essences, and aims to gain a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of everyday experiences (421, 398). Phenomenology is not inductively or empirically derived as a science of empirical facts and scientific generalizations because generalizations may distract the inquirer’s ability to discern the uniqueness of human experience (635, 652). Van Manen and Buytendijk (Morse 1994: 131) refer to the “validating circle of inquiry” or “phenomenological nod” which confirms that a good phenomenological description is “validated by experience and validates lived experience.” Therefore, the author exclaims, “the only generalisation allowed by phenomenology is this: Never generalize” (744, 644).

The phenomenological question of this family resilience study is: What is the essential nature of the lived experience of ‘family resilience’ for internally displaced Christian lay ministry families in Myanmar? Cross-cultural studies done by Dunn, Miller, and Lareau on early socialization in the family confirm that human development of communicative competence depends on their “involvement in everyday cultural routines within families” (Corsaro 2015:95). The Constructivist Model in sociological studies proposes that “socialization is not only a matter of adaptation and internalization but also a process of appropriation, reinvention, and reproduction” (9, 10). William A. Corsaro coined the term interpretive reproduction. It is important to note that “the term interpretive captures
the innovative and creative aspects of children’s participation in society” and the term reproduction “captures the idea that children are not simply internalizing society and culture but are actively contributing to cultural production and change” (Corsaro 2015:18). Researching families’ lived experience in cross-cultural communities will reveal differing assumptions and perceptions of the meaning of resilience. Citing Charles Kraft (1996), Elliston says that “one’s worldview provides the deep level assumptions about issues of cause, classification or categorization, the relationship between the spiritual, social, and physical worlds, the relationship between an individual and the group, the relationship between a person and the material universe, and issues of time and events” (Kraft, in Elliston 2011:60). This is where trustworthiness comes in. And because phenomenology does not aim to explicate meanings specific to particular cultures, as in for example ethnography, but attempts to explicate meanings as people live them in their everyday existence and lifeworld (Van Manen 2016:43), I believe that the credibility of the study will become largely measured by trustworthiness.

Family Resilience in Context: The Relational Development System Paradigm (RDSP): Implications for Methodology Design and Research Inquiry

In the context of this study on family resilience, I cannot emphasize enough the significance of Charles Van Engen’s statement that “a particular theological understanding in a particular time and place, though holding many generalizable principal values, is in fact unrepeatable” (in Elliston 2011:114). This statement rings true and I agree with Van Engen’s conviction that empirical data gathered in a theology of mission area plays a subordinate role to assumptions, ideas, goals, and conceptual paradigms through which the data are being examined. And “evangelical mission theologians would add the assumption that truth is a unified whole to be found in God’s final, unique, unrepeatable and unified revelation, written in the Bible.” Thus, “the question of validity must be transformed into one of truth, and the matter of reliability must be seen as one of trust” (in Elliston 2011: 115).

This thesis could easily become interpreted as being in contradiction to the core principles and goals of phenomenology, namely to reflect the essence of the experience under investigation. Therefore, I will further elaborate in this section on the core of the chosen paradigm of this study and how this Relational Development System Paradigm correlates with the theological framework of Reciprocating Selves (RS). I will then close this section with an argument that expresses my commitment towards
the nature and procedures of phenomenology and how its intimate interconnection with the Relational Development System Theory and embedded Theology of Reciprocating Selves will finally work towards credibility, truth, and trustworthiness in this study.

A brief review of resilience science will disclose the rationale behind further epistemological considerations and set the stage for paradigm discussions. In the 1980s, Emily Werner “adopted” the classical term *resiliency* to signal the move from an era of understanding children and childhood in terms of fragility towards invulnerability and strength (Damon 2004:16). “The interest in the strength of youth, the relative plasticity of human development (the capacity of organisms to change in response to varying conditions) and the concept of resilience coalesced in the 1990s to foster the development of the concept of positive youth development” (Lerner, Roeser, and Phelps 2008:607). The body of literature on resilience reveals an overwhelming consensus on defining the essence of resilience by following key notions such as, the ability to withstand and rebound from adversity; doing good or okay in terms of the quality of adaptation or of developmental outcomes; the process of healthy human development, ecological in nature, which cannot be developed by sheer willpower within the at-risk person; not simply an innate quality that children either possess or lack, but instead it is conceptualized as a capacity that changes over time in relation to a child’s changing contexts, vulnerabilities, competencies, developmental tasks, and environmental influences at any given time (Walsh 2002; Masten 2001; Bernard 2004; Brooks 2006) This present research inquiry is based on a large body of literature in the disciplines of Human Development, Positive Psychology, Trinitarian and Christological Anthropologies of Being and Becoming, Theological Anthropology, Biblical Anthropology, Theology of Change (worldview), World Religions, Spirituality, Family Systems Theory, Theology of Thriving, Resilience Science, and Positive Youth Development. Over the past two decades, the field of family therapy and childhood/youth studies has refocused its attention from a deficit-based lens to competence and strength in children and families (Walsh 2002:130; Damon 2004:20).

While the positive youth development approach recognizes the existence of adversities and developmental challenges that may affect children in various ways, it resists conceiving of the developmental process mainly as an effort to overcome deficits and risk. Instead, it begins with a vision of a fully able child eager to explore the world, gain competence, and acquire the capacity to contribute importantly to the world. (Damon 2004:20)
Richard Lerner, Jacqueline Lerner, Edmond Bowers, and G. John Geldhof describe the Relational Developmental Systems Paradigm as the “contemporary cutting-edge theoretical frame” because it emphasizes reciprocal bi-directional relations, represented as individual $\rightarrow$ context relations (2014:608). The focus on bi-directional relations allows a relational-functional perspective where a person contributes to one’s own development as well as to the lives of their family, friends, and the society (King and Clardy 2014:181). Pamela Ebstyne King from Fuller Theological Seminary adopted the term “The Reciprocating Self” for describing Trinitarian and Christological Anthropologies of Being and Becoming. King provides a Christian theological anthropology worldview that proposes a developmental teleology. Based on the acknowledgement that humans are made in the image of God and that Jesus Christ is the perfect image of God (Col 1:15), King envisions God’s purpose for human development in becoming a “reciprocating self by emphasizing the importance of conformity to Christ, individual uniqueness, relatedness, and reciprocity” (2016:216).

In response to a recent email-dialog with Pamela Ebstyne King about the developmental systems approach and reciprocating self model, the co-author of Reciprocating Self responded with the words: “I have found the whole PYD/Thriving Approach so consistent with a theological perspective.” These powerful words helped me to become engaged in the concepts of Positive Youth Development and Thriving. The interdisciplinary movement of PYD emphasizes strategies for young people into becoming fully reciprocating selves (King and Clardy 2014:187). The terms PYD and Thriving are often used interchangeably, but both concepts strive for optimal development in young people while thriving is defined as “a dynamic and purposeful process of individual $\rightarrow$ context interactions over time, through which the person and the environment are mutually enhanced” (185).

How will this theoretical framework relate to phenomenology and the establishment of validity through credibility, truth, and trustworthiness? In addition, what is needed in my proposed conceptual paradigms to examine data in truthful ways? First, scholars noted “that the embeddedness of all levels within history imbues temporality into individual $\rightarrow$ context relations, meaning there is the potential for plasticity, for organized and systematic change in these relations, across person, time, and place” (Lerner et al. 2014:609). Or said differently, methodological choices that use reductionist Cartesian approaches to development science are not sufficient to emphasize how individuals act in context and thus contribute to plastic relations. The focus on individuals “as active producers of their own environment” and on individual agency, family strength, and respect for developmental and contextual alteration across the life span.
is best instantiated by person-centered research approaches (Lerner et al. 2014:609-610). Second, since the question of validity must be transformed into one of truth and the matter of reliability must be seen as one of trust, Van Engen writes that research in biblical theology of mission searches for trustworthy and true perceptions concerning the church’s mission that are based on biblical and theological reflection, seeks to interface with the appropriate missional action, and creates a new set of values and priorities that reflect as clearly as possible the ways in which the church in a particular context may participate in God’s mission at a particular time (in Elliston 2011:118).

My research will focus on missionally engaged lay minister families who devoted their lives and service to people in Myanmar. A major part of the phenomenological inquiry will rest on interviews and focus groups. The semi-structured, in-depth type of research questions gives ample opportunity for theological and spiritual reflection. This will require the gift of intentionality and discernment from my side as a researcher. To establish trust and to identify truth, I fully commit myself to the phenomenological practice of thoughtfulness, a practice that has been described “as a minding, a heeding, a caring attunement—a heedful, mindful wondering about the project of life, of living, what it means to live a life” (Van Manen 2016: loc 444, 453). To further strengthen credibility, the researcher’s interpretations of constructed realities will be re-presented in the format of a story to the families in order to be affirmed by research participants (Erlandson et al. 1993:30).

Methodology, Research Procedures, and Methods Applied in the Research Context of Cross-Cultural Resilience Science

Essential Components of Hermeneutic Phenomenology

The goal of this hermeneutic phenomenological inquiry is to come to a deep-layered comprehension of what the essential nature of experiencing resilience and thriving means for Seventh-day Adventist Lay ministers in Myanmar. With this study, I am particularly interested in exploring the experience of religion and spiritual life in resilient displaced missionary families who converted from Buddhism to Christianity. John W. Creswell (2013), Max van Manen 2016), and Clark Moustakas (1994), are leading authors in Qualitative Research who thoroughly describe that phenomenology methodology is a research of essences with the purpose to reduce individual experiences of a single concept/phenomenon that all research participants commonly experienced. The reality of an object is only
perceived within the meaning of individual experience and the theme of meaning derives from the “intentionality of consciousness.” As a practice of thoughtfulness and reflection, “research is a caring act: to care is to serve and to share our being with the one we love. We desire to truly know our loved one’s very nature” (Creswell 2013: loc 1694, van Manen 2016:333).

The Role of the Researcher

This section introduces the direction I wish to pursue as a researcher in this study. My personal experience with crisis and family resilience as a missionary in Southeast Asia were key experiences that triggered my compassion and commitment for families at risk and in adversity. However, graduate studies in global childhood studies at Fuller University were an eye-opener for the diversity and uniqueness of childhood experienced globally. Both, my personal and educational encounter with resiliency and thriving as essential parts of human development taught me that “we should refer questions of knowledge back to the lifeworld where knowledge speaks through our lived experiences” (van Manen 2016: loc 1084).

Van Manen’s words that “there exists a certain dialectic between question and method” and that “the method one chooses ought to maintain a certain harmony with the deep interest that makes one a [researcher in Missiology]” (2016:267) leave me with the profound conviction that phenomenology methodology and the Theology of the Reciprocating Self as part of the Relational System Approach are intimately linked. As a researcher, I understand hermeneutics as interpreting the “texts” of life (Creswell 2013: loc 1724) in the sense of “borrowing other people’s experiences and their reflections on their experiences in order to better be able to come to an understanding of the deeper meaning or significance of an aspect of human experience, in the context of the whole human experience” (van Manen 2016: loc 1342).

However, in order to do theological reflection well, I agree with Creswell that we need a new definition of *epoche* or bracketing, “such as suspending our understandings in a reflective move that cultivates curiosity” (2013: loc 1805). From a missiological perspective, I consider the interviews with missionally active participants in the research as “doing theology.” Together, we will reflect back on family life and mission practice as an integrated whole. In *Ministry and Mission*, Helen Cameron and Catherine Duce elaborate on “The Four Voices Approach”:

As it sees practice as one of the places in which theology is disclosed, actions can be bearers of God’s grace and so we can learn about God
from studying what people of faith actually do—operant theology. This needs to be put alongside what people say about what they do, their espoused theology. If there is a tension between what people do and what they say they do, they will often turn to the Christian tradition for authoritative guidance—normative theology. (2013: xxx)

The fourth voice of theology is the formal voice. This Four Voices Approach as a methodological procedure in phenomenology will be helpful because “the task of theological research is to bring the four voices into conscious conversation so that all voices can be enriched” (Cameron and Duce 2013: xxxi). In Hermeneutic Phenomenology, it is my goal to bring all existing voices to speech while I acknowledge that the main research instrument in this methodology is the researcher herself. Throughout the entire research process, I will closely collaborate with an interpreter who is personally and professionally suited to contribute to the trustworthiness of the study. Van Manen states that “the human science researcher is a scholar-author who must be able to maintain an almost unreasonable faith in the power of language to make intelligible and understandable what always seems to lie beyond language” (2016:231). This claim rings true when I recall the intense process of the pilot case study project. In fact, I made the observation that the various steps of translation and transcription involved in the research are an opportunity for developing new skills in deciphering meaning.

Preliminary Methodological Design

First, it is important to alert the reader that the assessment framework as well as the research questions and data analysis are provided in the appendices. The assessment framework summarizes key processes in family resilience and growth characteristics as outlined in the assessment framework of Walsh, and the work of Lerner and others (2014). Described key processes and growth characteristics are frequently used in non-Western contexts and frequently appear in the literature as part of the cutting-edge relational development systems (RDS) research paradigm. It should be noted that given assessment frames and human development indicators have been utilized to inform the researcher about empirical observations and applications of reliable assessment frames and characteristics on the international field level. Therefore, I am encouraged to utilize Relational-Development-System-approved measures to inform the process of the textural and structural description and the composition of the essence of the phenomena “family resilience.” Thus, indicators and measures of Walsh’s assessment framework and growth characteristics of the “5 Cs Model”
will form the backbone of underlying paradigm assumptions, as indicated earlier in this article. In the 5 Cs Model for Positive Youth Development,

Research seeks to identify the individual and ecological relations that may promote thriving and, as well, that may have a preventive effect in regard to risk/problem behaviors. Thriving is understood as the growth of attributes that mark a flourishing, healthy young person, (e.g., the characteristics termed the “Five Cs” of PYD—competence, confidence, character, connection, and caring). (Lerner et al. 2014:620)

In the book *Strengthening Family Resilience*, Walsh outlines a systemic view of resilience that further describes characteristics that belong to the belief systems, organizational processes, and communication processes in families. The interviews for this phenomenological study were designed in alignment with Walsh’s Family Resilience Framework and Lerner’s Five Cs Model. Further, the systematic phenomenological procedures of this study are in alignment with Clark Moustakas’ systematic steps as further outlined by John W. Creswell. The data will be collected from in-depth and multiple interviews, participant observations, visual media research with young people, music, and other forms of art (Creswell 2013: loc 1768-1770).

Participants will respond to the questions: “What have you experienced in terms of the phenomenon?” “What contexts or situations have influenced or affected your experiences of the phenomenon?” However, since the literal wording of these questions are far too abstract for the South-East Asian context, the actual interview questions are addressed in concrete and brief format. Focus Group questions are based on a resilience-based Genogram interview and relationship resilience-based questions. Each family research session begins with a family focus group, continues with an interview with the parents, and closes with an interview with the children/youth. During the interview with the parents, the children will be asked to do some art work (drawings, craft productions, poetry) that will illustrate the following three themes: (1) illustrate your favorite scene in the lives of the following Bible figures: Daniel, Joseph, Moses, or Ruth; (2) illustrate one of your most favorite activities or interests in life; (3) illustrate your ideal family. In addition to these onsite research activities, it is planned to organize a 2-day youth gathering with the children of the research families. During those days, children will have an opportunity to express themselves in drama, role play, songs/music, and focus groups with the youth focus groups playing one of the major roles.

Daniel Shaw observed that focus groups are particularly valuable for verifying the quality or reliability of data based on observations or interviews. Observations, interviews, and focus groups provide for effective triangulation in research.
The focus group combines interviewing with observations of human interaction within the construct of a carefully chosen group of individuals who are knowledgeable about the research topic and understand its context. Research is carried out for the purpose of utilizing interrelationships among those in the group in order to maximize understanding. (in Elliston 2011:145, 146)

To further strengthen the validity, reliability, truth, and trustworthiness of the research, I am committed to integrate prolonged engagement, the phenomenological interpretation of referential adequacy materials (photographs, documents, and websites), member checks, and thick description. While the description of sights, sounds, scenes, and relationships comes natural in phenomenology, member checks need to be planned carefully. Through the work of reflexive research journaling, I intend to rewrite the families’ resilience stories and to invite research participants to dialog about the portrayal of given experiences (Erlandson et al.1993:30-33). At the end of every research session at the family sites in Burma, interviews and focus group recordings will be translated and transcribed. Data analysis will follow systematic procedures that move from the narrow units of analysis (significant statements) on to broader units (meaning units) and on to detailed descriptions that summarize the what and the how of the experience (Creswell 2013: loc 1773-1794). As seen in the pilot study section of this paper, the phenomena is described horizontally, structurally, and finally in its very essence.

**Pilot Case Study: Field Research with a Displaced Family in Myanmar**

This pilot case study is designed according to the principles and procedures of phenomenology and therefore does not follow the methodological guidelines for a typical qualitative case study. The purpose of this family case study is to first build relationships and rapport with one Karen lay ministry family who voluntarily left their registered refugee status in Thailand to serve as missionaries in rural communities of Myanmar. The parents are Seventh-day Adventist believers and are 42 and 43 years old. Their three children are 22, 20, and 16 years of age. They also adopted two children (8 and 1) from the village. In phenomenology, the inquirer collects data from persons who have experienced the phenomenon. The chosen family fulfilled my “purposive sampling” criteria. I wanted the research participants to be of Karen ethnicity, missionally active in lay ministry, originate from a former Buddhist background, and ideally have children who are teens or young adults.
When we (the translator and I) were ready to cross the river, the father (ministry leader) of the family was already there. In fact, he had already contacted us by phone a few times before our arrival, simply to ensure that the crossing of the river would be safe. When we got off the boat on the other side, a handful of children from the leader’s school joyfully carried all the groceries and materials we had brought. As we climbed the slippery slope, the leader continued to help us until we reached a most beautiful but simple place located at the top of a hill. After a warm welcome by a group of women teachers and family members, and after being refreshed with lots of fresh fruit and water, I saw one of the poorest dormitories, kitchen, and school facilities I have ever seen in Southeast Asia. However, every single chair, curtain, and all the other ordinary objects were surrounded by loving gentle care and kindness from this extraordinary family. The lack of resources was compensated by resourceful creativity and the little church on the hill was equipped with almost nothing but loving, devoted people.

Our welcome description would not be complete without a mention of the armed military soldiers who were all over the place; however, the grace and charm of the people had already disarmed the soldier’s hearts long ago. We chose the church as a research venue and when we gathered on the floor, surrounded by markers, flip charts, and art material for the children, the soldiers snuck in and settled in the pews to get a glimpse of what was going on. I was surprised when the father mentioned that they welcome every opportunity to share about God, even with the soldiers. Although the soldiers soon disappeared, I was ready to learn what resilience means for this family and how they continue to live it in very difficult circumstances. In the following section I describe the experience of the “what,” and continue with the “how,” and finally close with the essence of the lived experience of a family’s resilience in displacement.

**Textural Description**

“I feel like God provided for me right at my feet.”

“What touches our heart is that one day, when they are grown up, we will send them to God’s feet.”

Both of us as parents grew up with grandparents who taught us to have a heart for religion as part of the Buddhist monastery life. They kept their faith, although military soldiers heavily abused them when they could not give in to so-called voluntary labor. We had no choice, but to flee to Thailand. When we lived with our children in the refugee camp, we met Jesus Christ. For the first time in our lives we felt joy and contentment. From
then on, we daily submitted ourselves to God, discussed with one another, prayed over issues, and did what God showed us to do. We joyfully serve all the people God sent our way. We also joyfully commit our children and the children attending our school to God’s care and guidance.

The daily routines in our spiritual life as a family and ministry family give us hope, purpose, and confidence. As a couple, we feel strongly connected. Together, we learned to read and write the Karen and Burmese language. As a husband, I am grateful for my dear wife because she is the major mentor, supporter, and encourager in my life. I appreciate her wisdom and spiritual insight and know when the time has come for an immediate agreement over major decisions in our lives. When my wife suggested for me to stop working and become the housekeeper, I realized I would finally have time to study God’s Word, to pray, and to fast. It was through that time of spiritual formation that I was able to stop taking drugs. As a couple, we begin our day with personal devotion. We also taught our children and students to follow our practices, and they do. After personal devotions, we meet as a whole ministry (students, teachers, family) community to worship God. (Voices of children saying: “Yes, what we most like about our family worship is that it is full of happiness, praise, and times of silence. We are co-leading community worship and our father encourages everyone to pray.”)

It is also part of our family routine to visit sick people, to pray for them, to teach them God’s Word, and to bring healing. After being separated for some time, we children love to reunite with the family. These are the best moments in our life. We are close, so it even works well that I (voice of one daughter) am raising an adopted child together with my mother. Even in our severe poverty, we stick together as a family. As parents, we do our best to model a good missionary example to our children, and we are seeing our children develop a Christ-like character and behavior. “They are doing God’s work in the same way as their parents.” For us as a family, church happens when we are leading worship as a team and “when we call and gather those who don’t know God to the feet of God.”

Imaginative Description

“I have seen that working with God always gives contentment and happiness, even though we don’t have anything.”

“I am from the trash and God lifted me up to this position.”

We arrived in Thailand’s refugee camp in 2000. Before we followed God’s call to return to Burma in 2011, our lives were transformed. We went through a lot of displacement and transition in those years. This
included one deportation out of Thailand, back to Myanmar, and into poverty. After our return to Thailand to the refugee camp (voice of the wife), my relatives rejected our company because we were so poor and brought shame to them. We lived on 30 cents per month, but God brought us in touch with an Adventist lay evangelist.

Later, we wanted to turn our backs to him because he rejected our religious background and idea of worship. Out of my confusion and desperate search for the true God, God sent me dreams. God revealed to me who He is, so I gave him my promise to only serve him. My husband and I were overwhelmed when we realized that God is our Creator and Redeemer. Our whole family stood up for Christianity against the will and arguments of our relatives. Because we knew that they could not give eternal life to us, we overcame our sadness caused by the family rejection. At that time, our general condition was still critical because my husband was not yet addiction-free.

Our lives were further complicated since both of us were illiterate, but all that changed when we learned that God blesses those who tithe. I started with a small business in the camp, giving tithe regularly. From that point on, our family always had enough food, and that circumstance restored our social standing among our extended family. During these hard times, we also had a growing desire to study the Bible for ourselves. We prayed and read, read and prayed, and soon we were able to read and teach others.

When we started our school and church plant in Burma, church leaders did not give us much support. At that time, we were offered the opportunity to resettle in Canada. However, in my prayer time, God told me four times that Canada was not the place for our family to be. When our school-age children heard about the possibility of moving, they said: “If you go there (Canada), what will we do, how will we live?” Since they were also reading God’s Word, their hearts were also impacted by biblical principles. We had taught them that when we truly rely on God and look for his leading, God will never leave us or forsake us.

When we saw the struggles in our children’s lives, we provided a school education for them that included practical exposure to spiritual life practices, because we wanted to prevent them from going through the same spiritual crises we had. God taught us that when we are poor and suffer with our people, our children get to see how God provides and cares for us. That was one reason why we embraced the opportunity to move to a new place because we were able to show our love to new neighbors and people around us.

During those times of economic crisis, our children went out and looked for work to help support the family, giving them the experience
and joy in doing God’s work. This is their own testimony: “We feel connected with God when we teach the children, worship God, and plan our future careers for medical missionary work. We as children deeply feel that we should have a relationship with God every day and at all times.”

Composite Description—the Essence

“Spirituality is the fertile ground for positive youth development”
(King and Clardy 2006:56).

“Spiritual life means to be human—to do God’s work means to become Human”
(research participant).

“Resilience appears to be a common phenomenon arising from ordinary human adaptive processes”
(Masten 2001:3).

I feel deeply privileged and honoured to have had the opportunity to meet this inspiring and wonderful Adventist family in Myanmar. I also want to express my gratitude for all the lessons about life, faith, and human development they have shared. First, I want to emphasize the observation that the family’s life experiences reveal a solid foundation in intergenerational resilience. The nature of their sincere spiritual response and commitment to spiritual life practices and God’s mission can possibly be traced back to their forefathers’ lived spirituality. Although they also developed a strong capacity for change and adaptation to severe life challenges like extreme poverty, social and cultural up-rootedness, and continuous cross-border displacement, the core characteristic of their resilience seems to be relational resilience.

The family’s commitment to live as reciprocating selves is a powerful testimony. Through the ground-breaking experience of being lifted up from the “trash” (a term used by the mother) to a position of being seen, loved, and cared for by a personal Redeemer and Creator transformed the lives of all the family members. The family’s proactive response to God’s love enabled them to become participants “in the ongoing creating, redeeming and perfecting work of the Trinity” (King 2016:215). Pamela King “proposes that living as reciprocating selves is God’s telos for mankind” (215).

Another powerful foundational characteristic of the nature of their resilience experience is their lived conscience towards an eschatological purpose in life. In the light of their vivid expectancy for the soon return of their Creator God, the family was able to discover meaning in their adversity. Their strong belief that crisis is manageable (a sense of coherence)
transformed adversity into an opportunity to introduce Burma’s children to Jesus. This also helped the parents develop a strong sense of leadership in their family and children’s ministry.

Through consistent and authentic spiritual life practices and daily rituals and routines, their biological, adopted, and foster children received an opportunity to grow in competence, confidence, caring, character, connection, and contribution to the greater good of the society. “Positive development occurs when the mutual influences between person and environment maintain or advance the well-being of the individual and context” (Lerner et al. 2008:55-74). Walsh describes this optimistic view with the words “master the possible, accept what we can’t change” (2002:132). The family powerfully described exactly this optimistic view in these words: “We do all we can, the rest we put to God’s hands.”

The family lives in the confidence that all their children will develop in the best possible way because they are engaged in spiritual practices and mission work. That is what the children confirmed throughout the interviews. I believe that the source of this strong belief and confidence derives from the family’s deep connectedness and consistent spiritual guidance they receive straight from God’s Word. At the end of this pilot study, the father of the family prayed that the family’s testimony might teach others about faith and mission. As a result of my interaction with the family, I propose that the father as the family and ministry leader understands human development and relational resilience as follows: Spiritual life means to be human—to do God’s work means to become human.

**Concluding Thoughts**

This paper was introduced by the assumption that missiologists might feel uneasy with the notion that the voices of poor and displaced minority people from the non-western world might be able to substantially contribute to innovative missionary paradigms with global implications. This phenomenological pilot study applied the methodology of hermeneutic phenomenology and discovered that national research participants from the Karen State in Myanmar positively responded to this research approach. I can honestly say that the entire process was a confirming experience for all stakeholders involved. Throughout the interviews and focus group sessions, I noticed that the research participants felt very comfortable with sharing their life experiences in the ways proposed.

In summary, I evaluated hermeneutic phenomenology as a valid and reliable methodology for researching family resilience in the context of multidisciplinary missiological research. This is one major outcome of this project. However, God’s mission is a far larger enterprise than the
development of specific and unique research instruments. It is about people, their lives, and their transformative experiences with their Creator God. In this sense, I would argue that this experience-oriented research intervention was an ideal springboard into the lives of people whose lives give a testimony and a “thick description” of what it means that a mission theology of devotion is rooted in experience of an intimate relationship with the Trinitarian God and the restoration of God’s image in his followers. From their words and witness, I discerned a divine foundation for single-minded worship and obedience, which is the ultimate purpose of being human and becoming participants in Christ’s mission.

The ultimate outcome of this pilot study is that methodological validity and reliability was reflected in the overwhelming data that pointed to the preliminary thesis that the essence of resilience in displaced people is deeply rooted in a meaningful faith relationship and spiritual life practices. This powerful insight was gleaned from listening to the voices of the poor and a displaced minority people. This insight does have an impact on my current understanding of theology of mission, and it will have a modifying impact on the direction for my doctoral research.

The voices of the poor confirmed a common recommendation among scholars to combine the best of person-focused approaches with the best of variable-focused approaches in resilience studies. This could be especially beneficial for comparative studies in terms of religion and culture adherence. In other words, I am considering to slightly tweak my research topic and widen the scope towards a comparative religious study within the same environment and to specify the impact of comparative faith traditions on the human development context in displacement. Finally, my better understanding of the nature of family resilience awakened my curiosity for discovering the nature of resilience in people from both Christian and non-Christian faith traditions.

Appendix A
Interview Responses and Themes

What have you experienced in terms of the phenomenon?
What contexts, circumstances, or situations have typically influenced or affected your experiences of the phenomenon?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentences/Statements</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We grew up with our grandparents and that was how we lived. We felt connected.</td>
<td>Connectedness through intergenerational resilience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>But I get to live so I have a heart for my religion</td>
<td>Sense of coherence through religious connectedness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I started receiving joy and feel content after baptism</td>
<td>Emotional Sharing of relational resilience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joyful is the time when our family has to live separately, in faraway places, then we get to meet each other</td>
<td>Relational resilience, collaboration, mutual support and respect, love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'm sad when I have to stay alone and I don't want to stay alone</td>
<td>Sense of belonging, expression of needs, emotional sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel happy when I come home</td>
<td>Emotional Sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We siblings have to live apart and get to meet with each other once in a while</td>
<td>Relational resilience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So we are talking, and are happy when we meet each others.</td>
<td>Connectedness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church is when we call and gather those who don’t know God to the feet of God</td>
<td>Spiritual life (To be human), To do God’s work (To become human). Relational resilience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can't go because then only one group of my family will get to live better (resettlement)</td>
<td>Sense of coherence, commitment, strong leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don't feel good to leave my people and children, they have to be a part from God’s community</td>
<td>Relational and missional resilience Contribution to the greater good of the society (God’s kingdom)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The one who is close to me is my wife, she encourages me to do God's work</td>
<td>Strong marital partnership, marital encouragement that focuses on strengths and potential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We committed all our children in God's hands</td>
<td>Strong leadership: nurture, protect, guide children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That they may have the same heart in us, two parents</td>
<td>Connectedness, relational resilience, purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I call her “the little one,” both as a child and grandchild</td>
<td>Varied family forms, cooperative parenting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well-being means people who have complete parents, protected by mother and father</td>
<td>Concept of strong leadership and spiritual guidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When we become parents, we are the guidance</td>
<td>Strong leadership, spiritual guidance through spiritual life practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We have to be good example for children and teach them the way of God</td>
<td>Larger values, purpose, future goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t have a heart to keep my children separately</td>
<td>Strong leadership, connectedness with mutual support and commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Even if we have only salt or fish paste to eat but we will stay together</td>
<td>Active initiative and perseverance (can-do spirit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When they live with others, their habits will be spoiled (bad influence)</td>
<td>Proactive stance: prevent problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, happiness is all over when children are staying together, in the family</td>
<td>Connectedness and emotional sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To adapt to a new place is a good experience, to show our love with neighbours. It is a good experience to build up our fellowship with others</td>
<td>Capacity to change, rebound, adapt, sense of coherence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We were reading together and if we can’t read, then we were asking each other</td>
<td>Equal partnership in mutual support in marriage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Today, our children have the character and habits that we wanted for them, they have it by God’s grace.</td>
<td>Confidence through relational resilience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They do God's work in the same heart with parents</td>
<td>Affiliative value: relational resilience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I know about medical work, medicine and how to heal patients, then I will use it in missionary work</td>
<td>Future goals and dreams, contribution to the greater good in society, “spark”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want to draw pictures and include moral stories and God’s Word in it, to let people around us know</td>
<td>Future goals and dreams, contribution to the greater good in society, “spark”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We should have relationship with God every day and every time when we have time, when we are in trouble or not in trouble</td>
<td>Character, Proactive stance, Larger values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'm going for God. The money I got, I sent for the dormitory students to get to eat dry fish</td>
<td>Caring, contributing to the greater good of society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is good to work for God, makes me feel strong and happy</td>
<td>Sense of coherence, crisis is meaningful, emotional sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A few days ago, I let the children draw and write about what they want to be in future</td>
<td>Proactive stance in child education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m interested to teach children speaking Thai language</td>
<td>Proactive stance: Prepare for future challenges, prevent problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am a chair lady sometimes in day time or evening time They always give me chance</td>
<td>Competence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If we let God use us, God will use us and guide us to do what we should do</td>
<td>Development of faith and trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Later I recalled that it weren’t the leaders who asked me to do the ministry but God</td>
<td>Faith development, relational resilience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I don't do it, that would mean I don't keep my promise to God</td>
<td>Transformation: Learning and growth from adversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We pray that we will do whatever we can and the rest we cast into God's hand</td>
<td>Faith, confidence, sense of coherence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>But I got a dream that God doesn't want me to go (resettlement), so I didn't go.</td>
<td>Faith, sense of coherence, confidence, relational resilience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know that God really works in our life, this is how I can feel that God doesn't pass me by but listens to our prayer</td>
<td>Confidence, trust, optimistic view</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Today we talked about what we have been through, for many others to understand God’s work

<p>| Purpose: that family’s testimony will teach others about faith and mission. Contribution. | I told them that if we rely on Him and look up to God, He is right beside us | Faith, optimistic view of life, emotional sharing, spiritual guidance |
| --- | I have no worry for my children because God will lift them up | Confidence in children’s development because they are engaged in faith practice and mission work |
| I am from the trash and God lifted me up to this position | Sense of coherence and relational resilience |
| I am doing God’s work and got to stand in front of people and I can say that I became one of the leaders here, because I care | Confidence, caring, leadership development |
| So we do medical missionary work that everyone here receives happiness | Purpose, calling, contribution to the greater of the society |
| Before we check the patients we will teach them from the Bible, learn God’s Word together. Then we pray for them. We healed both, physically and spiritually | Commitment towards Jesus’ method of reaching out to the people |
| We are doing God’s work and God provides for our family and gathers us together | Confidence, hope, collaboration, relational resilience |
| Because we are doing missionary work, our children obey what we are saying | Confidence in strong leadership and guidance of children |
| We are leading worship together | Varied family forms, co-operative leadership |
| Sometimes each and everyone takes turns to say prayers | Connected by mutual support |
| Our family always has morning and evening worship | Spiritual practice and routines |
| Our family is visiting sick people together as a family | Family practice and routine |
| When I’m reading the Bible, the more I read, the more it makes me feel good and I feel like God is right beside me and talking with me | Spiritual connection, emotional sharing |
| Before we do something, we hand all our plans to God. After saying a prayer, we will do the work. We are not simply doing it as our own desire | Spiritual commitment, Follow God’s guidance and will |
| When we have problem in the dormitory, I prayed and I feel like God provided me right at my feet. This happens every year, since we started the school | Commitment for spiritual life |
| I thought in my heart that God is right at my side and He hears me when I call out to Him. That is how I feel | Spiritual connection and emotional sharing |
| We train dormitory students to lead in worship, to pray, and how to study the Bible | Strong leadership, spiritual guidance |
| We have some of our dormitory students who are not baptized yet, but they can lead worship and pray | Envision spiritual growth and transformation of students |
| During worship service, I call out any one of them to practice praying. | Envision spiritual growth, encouragement, spiritual guidance |
| Before we gather for worship with all students in the morning at the church, the two of us pray on our bed first. | Commitment for spiritual discipline |
| We told our children and dormitory students to pray before bed and when they wake up, then we gather for worship here in the church | Commitment for spiritual practice and routine shared |
| What I like about our family worship is that it has happiness, giving praise to God, and solemn time | Connection via spiritual practice, relational resilience |
| We have silence during worship time and keep silence when we talk about God’s Word. | Spiritual life |
| I have relationship with God in school | Relational resilience through family connectedness |
| I have seen that working with God always gives contentment and happiness even though we don’t have anything | Confidence, sense of coherence, emotional sharing, reciprocity, mutual empathy |
| It is me who knows that God is at my side | Spiritual confidence |
| I truly believe that God is with me | Trust and confidence |
| So when we are living in this world, we are poor and suffering. When we will be poor and suffer with our people, then the children will get to see the light and see God. | Relational resilience |
| And they will grow up with God and get to know God | Confidence in relational resilience |
| Now I have a purpose, to help people with herbal treatment, as much as I can, to use what a pastor had shown me. I feel that I will be useful for them if I stay here | Purpose and relational resilience |
| When the children told us that they got to come here to learn and to hear about God's Word, it makes us feel so good, it makes us feel so pleased and happy | Emotional sharing, strong purpose and connectedness |
| We adopted children because we feel sympathy for them | Empathy, caring, character, contribution to the greater good of society |
| What touches our heart is that one day, when they are grown up, we will send them to God’s feet | Contribution, proactive stance, prevention |
| First the two of us will submit to prayer. When we have a problem, our hands and legs are ended | Commitment to maintain spiritual life and connectedness |
| The most joyful for me is Saturday. I get to go to church and meet with friends and have relationship with God. | Commitment for spiritual life and reciprocity |
| Here in Myanmar it is not easy to work because the military soldiers come to ask for porter or ask us to do voluntary labour, and ask for many other things to offer them | Adversity (oppression and exploitation) |
| Voluntary labour (forced labour) is a must to do in the villages | Oppression and exploitation |
| In my past life, I was always spoiled (bad habits, addiction) | Addiction through multiple life adversities |
| It is God’s arrangement that I met with the people I know from my village | Sense of coherence |
| We told each other that we can’t go back to Myanmar and we don’t have any money to give to offer tax or voluntary labour | Adversity in poverty and oppression |
| We came with only a pair of clothes and a small bag (one mosquito net and a piece of cloth for each child) | Poverty |
| My cousin chased me away from his house and did not let me live in his house | Social exclusion, marred identity |
| Moved to live at my friend's house for three days and my husband came back | Social and material providence in crisis |
| We only had 10 Baht (30 cents) per month available to spend | Extreme poverty |
| Maela Camp has so many problem: drugs, fighting, punching Right in front of your eyes | Violence |
| When I saw one person beating up his father, I shivered and had tears, I never saw such a thing | Eye witness of abuse |
| My son’s mother already understood (the gospel) and told me that we are going to change our religion and believe in God | Clear, consistent message |
| In the camp, I got to know that God is the creator (lay pastors) | Seek the true God |
| I was still worshipping my own pagoda/god | Spiritual connection with Buddhist religion and tradition |
| Words of Christian evangelist: You shall not make idols and bow down to them. This really hurt me and I felt like someone hit my head with hammer | Experience of rejection of cultural identity |
| He discriminated my religion | Experience of religious exclusion, emotional sharing |
| I am totally confused. I don't know whether it is wrong for me if I worship God, because my parents and grandparents didn't do it for us before. | Relational (intergenerational faith resilience) versus seeking truth, emotional sharing |
| I want to know whether worshipping the monks or worshipping God is correct. | Searching for truth, confusion. Emotional sharing |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I can't figure it out anymore</th>
<th>Confusion in religious rituals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I don't know how to pray in the Christian way</td>
<td>Searching for spiritual and relational identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I prayed: Father in Heaven, reveal to me Buddha or Jesus Christ is my creator and redeemer, who is the true God? Reveal it to me and I will follow it.</td>
<td>Committed and devoted through intergenerational resilience, emotional sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That was my promise</td>
<td>Spiritual guidance through dreams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After the prayer, I had a dream (for 11 hours). Dream of an earthquake and people dying all around me. Saw a group of people on a mountain top. They have a song they sang, looking up to Jesus. I went to them. I belonged to them, not to the dead people around me.</td>
<td>Committed and devoted through intergenerational resilience, emotional sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am going to be baptized because God reveals himself and let me see the truth</td>
<td>Confidence, relational resilience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can’t read even a word. We two were reading together and when we saw complicated words that we couldn’t read; we just skipped it and read further.</td>
<td>Strong co-partnership and collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I dreamed another dream again. I dreamed that I saw Jesus. While I was crying it seemed that someone wiped my tears, all the sorrow was completely gone.</td>
<td>Spiritual guidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Then we as husband and wife decided to get baptized together</td>
<td>Relational confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel happy because I saw God as the truth since He revealed himself in my dreams two times</td>
<td>Emotional sharing, joy in spiritual guidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Try me with tithe and see if I pour down blessing or not</td>
<td>Faith, creative resourcefulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wanted to see if God keeps His promise or not</td>
<td>Testing relationality, mutuality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whatever my hands did, I got to eat (earn profit)</td>
<td>Confidence in overcoming odds, trust and hope in relationship and future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before we were so poor that our uncle and auntie didn’t see us as relatives. But later our neighbours look up to us.</td>
<td>Marred identity, social exclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I pray to see (to have a vision) which of the two religions is truth, and who of the two Gods can redeem us. Now I can see, Jesus revealed it to me. I am going to be baptized because God reveals and let me see the truth.</td>
<td>Conversion through spiritual guidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After baptism, my husband could still not quit drugs. I told him not to go for work but to stay at home, to look after the children</td>
<td>Creative resourcefulness, adapt to fit challenges, collaborative problem solving, co-parental relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and to do the cooking and washing—and I am doing business</td>
<td>Creative resourcefulness, adapt to fit challenges, collaborative problem solving, co-parental relationship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I gave him time to study the Bible. One hour in the morning, and one hour in the evening. He did it. (through that practice, he could stop with any type of addiction)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We had enough money but we didn’t have contentment</td>
<td>Character, integrity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...even if my husband does God’s work, and I am doing business, I will surely sink into this earth’ gravity. But when I follow God’s way I receive happiness, more than by doing business. Now, I have more joy.</td>
<td>Emotional sharing, self reflection, greater values and purpose in life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is no one to cheat on me, and I am content and have joy in God because we are doing missionary work.</td>
<td>Relational resilience and faithful obedience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We are blessed by God through giving us obedient children.</td>
<td>Love for obedient submission, nurture and guidance of children towards discipleship. Emotional sharing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is only our family and no other family who baptized at the same time with us, to stand up for God like us.</td>
<td>Confidence and questioning community of believers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After we knew God, the two of us, husband and wife, we didn’t know how to pray at night-time. So we prayed in our own way</td>
<td>Relational resilience in spiritual life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The story of Noah touched my heart, and if I don’t accept God, I will be destroyed.</td>
<td>Conversion, transformation (learning and growth from adversity)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So my son’s mother said that from now on, she will believe in God. “If believe, then let’s believe.” With this statement, he shows his agreement with his wife’s idea.</td>
<td>Pro-active decision making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She told me, because of the dream she will get baptized. And I said, “If have to baptize, let’s get baptized.” Since then, we discussed, prayed, and handed all to God.</td>
<td>Proactive decision-making, relational resilience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If God wants us to accept Him, we will believe in God. We prayed about it.</td>
<td>Obedience and envision new possibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of us can read, and we want to read the Bible at night time. I learned Karen first, and tried to learn Burmese bit by bit. Every night, the two of us prayed and read together.</td>
<td>Developing competence through active initiative and perseverance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was sure that God asked me to do His work. I said that I don’t have education. I can’t read, so I can’t do gospel work.</td>
<td>Process of developing capacity for change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From then on, my son’s mother encouraged me. I gained courage and started doing it.</td>
<td>Encouragement, mutual support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can do it, without getting a stipend, because God is leading me until I become</td>
<td>Active initiative and perseverance (can-do spirit)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
much better. But I can work even if I don’t receive a stipend.

I came here (place of ministry), and met with these children. I didn’t want them to fall in the situation of my past life. I have a heart for the children and the place we set up here. We don’t give them only the physical- and school education, but spiritual and religious education, so that they don’t get spoiled, like I was in my past. (Spoiled: drug and alcohol addiction).


Friends and leaders tell us to do the missionary work, they told us to build the building.

Encouragement and (limited) support from church community and leaders

Yes, we do what we can but we don’t have support for what we need

Master the possible, accept what cannot be changed

When the church leaders don’t support us, for how long can I look after it? What will I do when I used all we have? It will be a shame for others.

Cultural perspective of group/community shame

Many problems of this kind. Sometimes my heart is so completely down.

Acknowledge to be human, emotional sharing

I pray to God: If I can’t stand on my own feet for the future, it will be a shame for others, and will badly reflect on my church’s reputation

Mobilize spiritual and social support

We get only rice support. But we have to buy all cooking oil, fish paste, yellow beans, chilly, and salt. So my daughter goes to work.

Master the possible, accept what cannot be changed, mobilize economic support

Now, she (daughter) adopted a little girl. So she goes to get money for milk. She told me: “Daddy, I worship anytime here, and I got to support your dormitory students.

Mobilize support, relational resilience, build financial security, mutual support in the family

The children of our school said: “If you go there (resettlement country), what will we do, how will we live?” They have learned education for physical life and they have heard about God’s Word, it lightens their heart. They said, if they go to the government school, they will not get to hear God’s Word.

Sense of coherence

Through purpose, crisis as meaningful and manageable challenge
1. Making meaning of adversity
   - Affiliative value: resilience as relationally based
   - Family life cycle orientation: normalize, contextualize adversity and distress
   - Sense of coherence: crisis as meaningful, comprehensible, manageable challenge
   - Appraisal of crisis, distress, and recovery: Facilitative vs. constraining beliefs
2. Positive outlook
   - Hope, optimistic view; confidence in overcoming odds
   - Courage and encouragement; focus on strengths and potential
   - Active initiative and perseverance (can-do spirit)
   - Master the possible; accept what cannot be changed
3. Transcendence and spirituality
   - Larger values, purpose; future goals and dreams
   - Spirituality: faith, communion, rituals
   - Inspiration: envision, new possibilities; creativity
   - Transformation: learning and growth from adversity

**Organizational Patterns**

4. Flexibility
   - Capacity to change; rebound, reorganize, adapt to fit challenges over time
   - Counterbalanced by stability: continuity, dependability through disruption
5. Connectedness
   - Mutual support, collaboration, and commitment
   - Respect individual needs, differences, and boundaries
   - Strong leadership: nurture, protect, guide children and vulnerable family members
   - Varied family forms: cooperative parenting/care giving teams
   - Couple/co-parental relationship: equal partners
   - Seek reconnection, reconciliation of troubled relationships
6. Social and Economic resources
   - Mobilize extended kin and social support; models and mentors
   - Build community networks
   - Build financial security; balance work-family strains

**Communication Processes**

7. Clarity
   - Clear, consistent messages (word and actions)
   - Clarify ambiguous information: truth seeking and truth speaking
8. Open emotional sharing
   - Share range of feelings (joy and pain; hopes and fears)
   - Mutual empathy; tolerance for differences
   - Responsibility for own feelings, behavior; avoid blaming
   - Pleasurable interactions; humor
9. Collaborative problem solving
   - Creative brainstorming; resourcefulness
   - Shared decision making and conflict resolution; negotiation, fairness, reciprocity
   - Focus on goals; take concrete steps; build on success; learn from failure
   - Proactive stance: Prevent problems; avert crises; prepare for future challenges
10. Five Cs Model of PVD
    - Competence
Confidence
Connection
Character
Caring
All five Cs lead to Contribution to the greater good of society

Appendix B

Research Questions for Family Focus Group,
Interview with Parents, Youth, and Children

Research Topic: Family Resilience in Displacement

Main Research Questions

1. What is the essential nature of family resilience for displaced lay ministry families in Myanmar?
2. How did these families experience family resilience? Under what circumstances? In what context?

Sub-Questions

1. How did the family adapt to circumstances of displacement and adversity?
2. What was the process of restoring displacement towards a stable functional state?
3. What family roles and routines in daily life were helpful?
4. What family beliefs and religious/spiritual practices are helpful in dealing with stressful situations?
5. What is the nature of religious engagement and experience of spirituality? What is it like for the parents? What is it like for the children/youth?
6. How does the proximity of parent-child relationship and spiritual role models have an impact on positive youth development?

Appendix C

Interview Questions for Focus Group: Resilience-based Genogram-Interview and Timeline

Demographic Questions

1. Please help us draw a Genogram, something like a family tree. You are the experts on your family relationships. It is important for you to build. The more you can teach your children about the long line of people they come from, the more family medicine you can give them for their life.
3. Who lives in your household? Who belongs to your family? Name, age, gender. How long, recent changes? Indicate how all are related.
4. Who else is important and belongs to your family? Auntes, uncles, godparents, friends?
Genogram Demographics

Mom and Dad’s Family or Origin

1. When and where were your grandparents born?
2. What are their names?
3. Are they still alive? Where are they living now?
4. If deceased, when did they die, at what age, and what was the cause?
5. What kind of work do or did they do?
6. Did they remain together? Were they separated or divorced, what were their ages?
7. What was their ethnic and religious background?
8. How many children did they have?

Relationship Resilience-Based Questions

1. As we look at the folks who are drawn here, who would you say you are real close with? What do you value or appreciate most in that relationship?
2. Who is looked up to as a role model in the family?
3. Who has been a source of inspiration?
4. Can you share a story about that person and the strengths you admire?
5. Who can you turn to in times of trouble for support? For emotional support? Any person from the community?
7. Who contributes to joy in your life? Can you recall a particular fun memory with any family members in your Genogram so far?

Communication, Family Life, Practices

1. Do you as a family remember any special event that made you all very happy and joyful and hopeful as a family? What did this moment mean for you? Can you share positive feelings, appreciation, humor, and fun to find relief in difficult situations?
2. When you have sad feelings, anger, or fear, do you share these feelings with one another?
3. Do you remember a very sad event, when you shared your true feelings about it, and then felt stronger as a family?
4. What family practices were especially helpful for your dealing with stressful situations? Like devotion time together? Mealtimes together? Prayer times together? Being in church? Serving others together?
5. How were family routines in your family life affected when you went into transition?
6. Can you share an experience when you felt closest with God as a family?
7. What does wellbeing of a family mean for you?

Individual Interview Questions with Parents

1. Grand Tour: What are the stages/steps of your displacement? When did displacement happen? How did you as a family experience this?
2. How did you experience your conversion? What were life circumstances and what did conversion mean to you?
3. How did conversion affect your life? Your family? Your role in the community?
4. What did leaving the camp mean for you? What changes in life did you experience as a family?
5. How do you experience your personal faith?
6. What spiritual practices are most important for you and your family? Prayer, meditation, nature, creativity, art, music? What helps you to feel close to God? What does this mean for you?
7. What is your role in church and in ministry?
8. Would you say that you can deal with a crisis as a family together rather than alone?
9. What helped you most to cope well with stress? What helps you most to face difficulties?
10. Parenting style: Chores at home, time for free play, contact with children who are in camp school, giving security and protection, to be clear and consistent in what we do and say, express opinions?
11. What is it like for you to be a parent?

Youth Interview Questions

1. Are there special families you see in church you like very much, or you would like to belong to? How do you feel in your family in comparison?
2. How do you make family decisions, chores in household, how to spend money?
3. Do you have special family rules? Can you give one example?
4. When you are older, would you also like to live and serve like your parents? If yes, why?
5. What do you remember best about your life in the camp? What do you remember from transitions and what do they mean for you today? What are good memories? What events and situations? And stories in the camp?
6. What do you enjoy most when you are together with your friends?
7. Do you have a role in your church youth group?
8. Are there leaders in your church or people you really like? Do you want to become like them?
9. Who encourages you to pray, to read the Bible? Does the church help you with that?
10. Did you ever have any event or moment when you felt very close to God?
11. Does feeling close to God make you wish to do something for others? To help others? In what types of community service are you involved? Can you describe them?
12. How is school for you? In class, do you like working with numbers or with languages?
13. What is your favorite subject?
14. What do you really like to do? What do you feel very attracted to? Art, literature, music, sports?
15. What does family worship time mean for you?
16. What of all your day-to-day activities do you enjoy most?
17. Are you sometimes separated as a family and what is it like?
18. When you think about the Bible stories of Moses, Joseph, Daniel, Ruth … Which one do you like most? What do you like most about this story? Can you draw a picture of what you like most? What specific scene especially appeals to you?
19. What activity in life do you like most? Can you illustrate that?
20. Can you illustrate your most ideal family? (Drawing, craft work)

Note: The above questions include a broad range and variety of topics. Depending on the research context, questions should be carefully chosen. The most important task is to find access to the interviewee, so that responses will contribute to answering the first two main questions.

Works Cited


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Introduction

The Global Mission Issues Committee dedicated its 2004 meeting to developing “an additional fundamental belief entitled ‘Growing in Christ’” (Bauer 2007:179). This was a mission-driven move in that the new doctrine aimed at enabling every person that comes to know Jesus to claim His victory over sin and evil. The need for this new fundamental belief was further supported by the fact that 70% of the world’s population believes in visible and physical manifestations of evil spirits (Editor 2004:21). The proposal of the new Fundamental Belief was voted by the 2004 Annual Council and then adopted by the delegates of the 2005 General Conference Session. Considering the complex Adventist praxis in the formulation of a fundamental belief, one can be assured that the Holy Spirit’s leading was undeniable in this process (20).

The purpose of this article is to explore the missiological implications of the new fundamental belief “Growing in Christ” for Seventh-day Adventists ministries and to articulate some suggestions as a way forward.

Growing in Christ and Adventist Mission

Summary of the 28th Fundamental Belief

The official summary of the newest fundamental belief of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is as follows:
By His death on the cross Jesus triumphed over the forces of evil. He who subjugated the demonic spirits during His earthly ministry has broken their power and made certain their ultimate doom. Jesus’ victory gives us victory over the evil forces that still seek to control us, as we walk with Him in peace, joy, and assurance of His love. Now the Holy Spirit dwells within us and empowers us. Continually committed to Jesus as our Saviour and Lord, we are set free from the burden of our past deeds. No longer do we live in the darkness, fear of evil powers, ignorance, and meaninglessness of our former way of life. In this new freedom in Jesus, we are called to grow into the likeness of His character, communing with Him daily in prayer, feeding on His Word, meditating on it and on His providence, singing His praises, gathering together for worship, and participating in the mission of the Church. We are also called to follow Christ’s example by compassionately ministering to the physical, mental, social, emotional, and spiritual needs of humanity. As we give ourselves in loving service to those around us and in witnessing to His salvation, His constant presence with us through the Spirit transforms every moment and every task into a spiritual experience. (1 Chron. 29:11; Ps. 1:1, 2; 23:4; 77:11, 12; Matt. 20:25-28; 25:31-46; Luke 10:17-20; John 20:21; Rom. 8:38, 39; 2 Cor. 3:17, 18; Gal. 5:22-25; Eph. 5:19, 20; 6:12-18; Phil. 3:7-14; Col. 1:13, 14; 2:6, 14, 15; 1 Thess. 5:16-18, 23; Heb. 10:25; James 1:27; 2 Peter 2:9; 3:18; 1 John 4:4.)

As a Seventh-day Adventist from Africa, I personally praised God for the adoption of the new fundamental belief in 2005. Before the official adoption of the doctrine, the subject of evil spirits and how Seventh-day Adventist Christians in Africa could have victory over them was taboo in most public discussions. Some pastors in Africa avoided any public discussion on the topic of evil spirits on the ground that it was not part of the then 27 SDA Fundamental Beliefs. However, since “true doctrine calls for far more than mere belief—it calls for action” (Ministerial Association 2005:ix), one may wonder about the real difference the “Growing in Christ” doctrine has made in the lives of harassed, oppressed, and even demonized Seventh-day Adventists around the world.

“Growing in Christ” As a Solution to Some Challenges in Mission

Prior to 2005, a dynamic dialogue was initiated in various venues regarding the relationship between the way Adventist Fundamental Beliefs are formulated and their impact on the church’s mission in cross-cultural settings (in Bauer 2007:1-97). Jon Dybdahl argues that “action in life is tied to teaching about God” (2007:86), which is important in expanding God’s mission. According to him, the Seventh-day Adventist Church should not
focus only on “church unity” but also on a careful consideration of ways our basic beliefs are taught and practiced in the two-thirds world—the 10/40 window where the majority of Muslims, Buddhists, and Hindus live and where the Seventh-day Adventist Church is rapidly growing (81, 82).

Like Dybdahl, other Adventist scholars (Børge Schantz 2007:63-80 and Bertil Wiklander 2007:1-6) have critically engaged in the formulation of Seventh-day Adventist fundamental beliefs and their impact on cross-cultural outreach. Wiklander (2007:1-6) suggests several concerns he believes are challenges for Adventist mission in cross-cultural settings. He points out that “Adventist theology faces some challenges in the practical aspects of doing global mission” (1).

Two of his major concerns are as follows: (1) “There are reasons to believe that we are not as successful in cross-cultural mission as we could be” (1) and (2) the statements of the fundamental beliefs do not say “anything about how the Fundamental Beliefs are to be used, or how they are to be translated and applied” (3). Wiklander then makes the following five recommendations for a way forward: (1) because of the organizational role of the fundamental beliefs they have to be “a well-worded, theological, and theoretical statement;” (2) any new statements should “incorporate some of the growing knowledge about cultural differences that the global mission’s work is bringing, and make it a truly global statement;” (3) missiological issues should drive the process of revision; (4) the fundamental beliefs should have some “practical application to the individual lives in some dynamic interaction; and (5) “it must be necessary for front line workers to act under the Spirit’s guidance and adapt the words of the Fundamental Beliefs, drawing on the Bible, as the Spirit leads, in order to assist people as they grow into an experience of conversion and then to continue discipling them” (5).

Schantz expressed similar concerns. He was concerned that: (1) “the Fundamental Beliefs stressed belief in God and the Bible more than guidelines on how to live out these convictions in one’s daily life” (2007:63, 64) and (2) the wordings of the fundamental beliefs “are too often based on a “Western” theological understanding” (75). For him, “initially Seventh-day Adventists, in their prophetic interpretation and understanding, envisioned that their call and main task was to call other Christians to come out of their “fallen” Christian denominations and join “those who obey God’s commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus” [Rev 12:17] (2007:63).

Schantz believed that it was this perspective that led Seventh-day Adventists to express their fundamental beliefs using vocabulary that assumed a literate audience with a Christian background (63). As a result, he argued that Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs were
developed and adopted to dialogue with Protestant Christians and clarify for them the similarities between Adventist and Protestant beliefs and the differences that might exist between them (63). Schantz concluded that this perspective contributed to the irrelevant formulation of some of the SDA fundamental beliefs in cross-cultural mission (75). As a way out, he recommended that: (1) the fundamental beliefs should reveal “an outward, visible lifestyle more than an inward experience with God and Jesus Christ” (73); (2) the SDA Church needs to move “towards a meaningful, and practical angelology” (74); and (3) “the all-important teaching in Adventism that Jesus triumphed over and subjugated all demonic powers should be convincingly emphasized in detail” (75).

Dybdahl also suggested that the wording of the fundamental beliefs has not been “carefully considered” (2007:326). In line with his concerns, he recommended that the church find appropriate ways to state its fundamental beliefs “in the context of the world religions” (333) and also that “spirits, evil angels, and Jesus’ power over them, as well as the church’s ministry to addicted people” be included in baptismal vows (334).

From the above considerations, one can say that the proposal for a new fundamental belief was initiated because of missiological issues. Nyaundi (2007:27) argued that the 28th fundamental belief provided Adventists in Africa with a doctrinal position to express how Seventh-day Adventists understand God’s power gives victory over the powers of Satan and demons. He asserts that “with the Adventist organization aware of this challenge, what remains now is to observe how Adventists in Africa will use the guidelines outlined in “Growing in Christ” to help believers in their Christian experience (28).

Adventist Mission After 2005

Cameron and Duce argue that “action and reflection are inseparable” (2013:xxviii). According to them, every action is shaped by an idea and every idea will result in an action (xxviii). Is that true of Adventist mission since the adoption of “Growing in Christ” in 2005? Below are some perspectives on the applicability of the “Growing in Christ” fundamental belief.

Ángel M. Rodriguez on “Growing in Christ”

Rodriguez’s reflection on “Growing in Christ” offers a solid theological foundation for an Adventist understanding of the theological depths of Christ’s death on the cross. He notes, “Christian theology should never ignore or overlook the fact that on the cross Christ defeated once and for
all the cosmic evil powers” (2007:17). Thus, he argues, “Christ’s victory over principalities and powers enabled His followers to cast out demons in His name” (17). For Rodriguez, Mark 16:15-17 calls believers to confront, in the name of Jesus, any supernatural forces that interfere with the fulfillment of the gospel commission (2007:19). He acknowledges that even though Jesus Christ had victory over Satan and his hosts, they have not been “totally divested of their power” (19). This implies that evil forces still seek to control humanity redeemed by Christ and they still tempt, harass, oppress, and torment even believers (19).

Rodriguez suggests a three-step process toward a full theological understanding of “Growing in Christ.” First, all believers need to understand and appropriate the reality of Christ’s victory over all evil powers in preparation for the final confrontation between good and evil. Second, much greater effort must be made to stop dual allegiance wherever it is practiced because Christ’s victory is absolute. Third, believers are to use their freedom in Christ to “grow, through the power of the Spirit, in grace and love” (20).

**African Scholars and “Growing in Christ”**

The Biblical Research Institute teamed up with several African scholars to publish in 2011 *The Church, Culture and Spirits: Adventism in Africa* as a way of starting a public discussion on the subject of evil powers among believers on the continent of Africa. Ángel Manuel Rodríguez who was then the Director of the Biblical Research Institute had hoped that the book would not only help Africans with the issue of spiritualistic manifestations and practices—a “culturally important phenomena” (2011:ix), but would also help other cultures where spiritualism is also present in a variety of forms (x). Because spiritualism “is a global phenomenon whose influence will continue to grow as we approach the closing of the cosmic conflict” (x), *The Church, Culture and Spirits: Adventism in Africa* “could be of help to the world church” (x).

Kwabena Donkor, the editor of the book, also makes similar assertions. He writes that *The Church, Culture and Spirits: Adventism in Africa* will address the current issue of the popularity of deliverance ministries which “has made the question of demons and demon possession, witchcraft, magic, curses, and other such related spiritualistic phenomena a rather acute problem for the Seventh-day Adventist Church” (2011:4). Donkor asserts that when some of the above spiritualistic elements are not addressed, some Adventists “may seek the charismatic experience from Pentecostal churches or even abandon the traditional church altogether” (4).

In 2012, the fourth quarter Sabbath School study guide dealt with the “Growing in Christ” fundamental belief. Kwabena Donkor was the author of the study guide. He admitted that the new fundamental belief, voted in 2005, “in and of itself, didn’t add new or previously unknown teaching; rather, in response to needs in certain parts of the world, it helped to clarify the church’s understanding of God’s power to give believers in Christ victory over the forces of evil” (2012:3). He added that Seventh-day Adventists have always referred to the battle between Christ and Satan as “the great controversy” (3) and there are conditions to be met in order to benefit at a personal level from Christ’s victory over satanic powers and evil forces (32). Some of these conditions include “Hope of Victory” (41), “Arming for Victory” (46), “Praying Always” (51), “The Church: Rites and Rituals” (60-66), and “The Christian Life” (74-80).

Need for More Theological and Missiological Consciousness in Adventist Mission

Insights from Jon Dybdahl

Jon Dybdahl has repeatedly called for a paradigm shift in Adventist mission (2005). For that to happen, he believes that Adventist mission needs a “consciousness change” (2005:20). To reach a “missiological consciousness” which is the consciousness needed in 21st century mission, most Seventh-day Adventists need to move first from a “historical consciousness to a “theological and missiological consciousness” (21, 22). Dybdahl argues that while it is easy to move from “self-consciousness” and “other consciousness” to “historical consciousness” through an exposition of religious education, “the movement from historical consciousness to theological consciousness and missiological consciousness is problematic” (21, 22). He explains that because “the human heart naturally sees its own understanding as valid, clear, and unbiased,” it will take God’s grace to see that “one’s own way of seeing things is incomplete and biased by culture” (21, 22). Dybdahl points out that a beginning of such movement to theological and missiological consciousness started in the Adventist Church in the 90s with Global Mission in 1993, the formation of many study centers around the world (2005:19), and the creation of the Women’s Ministries department in 1995 (Dias and Kuhn 2015a:53). Thus, according to Dybdahl the acceptance of the new fundamental belief in 2005 at the St. Louis General Conference Session marks the beginning point of a “revised theology” for Seventh-day Adventists (2005:19). Therefore, he encourages
Adventists to continue the process of doing theology with more zeal while doing “God ordained mission” (19).

Meeting Needs

I believe that meeting needs is the core of any outreach approach. Ellen White clearly spelled it out in her statement that has become the Adventist cliché in terms of mission strategy. She argues that Christ’s method alone will give true success in mission. “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’” (1905:143).

Among the 10 trends Marcelo Dias and Wagner Kuhn hope Adventist mission pays special attention to in the coming years, two are particularly associated with both “the shaping of the message to reach different audiences” (2015b:23) and “being able to articulate the Adventist faith across generations, ethnic groups, languages, and geopolitical borders” (25). Those two key important trends—intentional cross-cultural communication and wholistic mission—are essential in articulating a Seventh-day Adventist approach to spiritualistic concerns prominent in some cultures, which the new fundamental belief is meant to address.

Andrews University’s Mission Conferences

The 2015 Mission Conference on “Spiritual Warfare and the Occult” organized by the Department of World Mission at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University was another proof that Adventist mission has made some progress and moved forward on the issue of setting people free from demonization. From a theoretical fundamental belief, Seventh-day Adventists are now addressing freedom in Christ from demonic power from a more practical perspective (Bauer 2015:iv). Bauer argues that the 2015 conference was put together to respond to the void on the topic of demonization and spiritual warfare in Adventist education and theological training (iv). That is why “the conference had a good mix of biblical, historical, and practical presentations on the occult and spiritual warfare” (iv).

Insights from Ellen G. White

I believe we have reached a time in Adventist Church history where the warnings of Ellen White are more compelling than ever. Her rhetorical question, “Have Seventh-day Adventists forgotten the warning given in
the sixth chapter of Ephesians?” (1903:3329), is an outstanding one. White comments on her question with urgency in these terms: “We are engaged in a warfare against the hosts of darkness. Unless we follow our Leader closely, Satan will obtain the victory over us” (3329).

Seventh-day Adventists, from the inception of the church as a movement, have stressed the importance of closely following the Lord Jesus Christ. Preaching, teaching, and healing like Jesus Christ are trademark components of our movement and denomination. However, this paper argues that in this end-time period the need of a more wholistic healing ministry that deals with illnesses caused by demons and evil forces (see Matt 9:32-34, 17:14-21; Mark 9:14-29; Luke 9:37-43, 13:10-17) is becoming more and more obvious.

Through His servants, God designs that the sick, the unfortunate, and those possessed of evil spirits shall hear His voice. Through His human agencies He desires to be a comforter such as the world knows not. The Saviour has given His precious life in order to establish a church capable of ministering to the suffering, the sorrowful, and the tempted. A company of believers may be poor, uneducated, and unknown; yet in Christ they may do a work in the home, in the community, and even in “the regions beyond,” whose results shall be as far-reaching as eternity. To Christ’s followers today, no less than to the first disciples, these words are spoken: “All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations.” “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” Matthew 28:18, 19; Mark 16:15. (White 1905:106)

Christ’s disciples were among the earliest agents of setting captives free from Satanic and demonic bondage. As Christ’s disciples today, Seventh-day Adventists believe they have the same mandate to be agents of deliverance with the same power over unclean spirits through faith in the name of Jesus-Christ (Miyayo 2011:169, 170). This is the certainty developed in the new fundamental belief.

**Some Practical Considerations for Adventist Mission**

Could it be that Seventh-day Adventists have reached the time when the world church needs to consider the creation of a new department that will focus on addressing the reality of demonic harassment, oppression, and control in the lives of Seventh-day Adventists around the world? My hope and prayer is to see that become a reality. Just as the church voted full department status to Women’s Ministries in July 1995 in order to meet the need of women in the church, it is also important that the Adventist
Church seriously considers the creation of a new department that will develop an Adventist practical response to demonic manifestations among its members and in the surrounding communities.

Seventh-day Adventist radio stations regularly receive calls from desperate people seeking freedom from demonic harassment in the form of sexual abuse from spiritual entities the people believe are demon. Unfortunately, they often go without receiving any help because of the void and lack of such a ministry in the church. Conrad Vine, president of Adventist Frontier Missions, and I were asked during a recording session at an Adventist television station if “it was possible for demons to abuse humans sexually.” Sadly, the answer is yes, and many Seventh-day Adventists or baptismal candidates are looking for deliverance and freedom from such spiritualistic abuses.

The Global Mission Issues Committee wrote that “while Seventh-day Adventists have a strong biblical theology on good and evil spirits, the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs does not compile the biblical evidence but rather relies heavily on an Adventist cultural understanding” (2007:181). The Committee goes on to say that “cultural understandings, when at some distance from the process used to establish a biblical truth or practice, can take on dimensions that extend well beyond the Adventist garden of theology” (181).

A mission president in West Africa told me in April 2017 that he could not relevantly use the current materials available in the Seventh-day Adventist Church on spiritual warfare. He explained that the available guidelines were not useful when they faced cases of demonic manifestations during one of their public evangelism series. The Global Mission Issues Committee relates a similar experience with Global Mission pioneers when it writes that “occasionally when Global Mission Pioneers are asked by interested people how the new religion they proclaim would affect the evil spirits that controlled their lives, the answer has not been what would have been expected” (2007:181). Therefore, “we must do all we can now to prepare the world” (182) for Satan’s final deception which Ellen White ties directly to spiritualism (1894a:8, 9).

In the May 28, 1894 issue of the Signs of the Times, Ellen White wrote an article entitled, “Satan’s Delusion for the Last Days.” In June 4 of the same year, she wrote how satanic delusions will increase at the end of time. She specifically wrote that “spiritualism is about to take the world captive” (1894a:2). Ellen White comments, “There are many who think that spiritualism is upheld through trickery and imposture; but this is far from the truth. Superhuman power is working in a variety of ways, and few have any idea as to what will be the manifestations of spiritualism in the future” (1894b:8). The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a large growing church;
however, another reality of that growth is that the church now has a good number of people from cultures where many are “traditionally controlled by evil powers” (Global Mission Issues Committee 2007:182).

Thus, demonic oppression and the need for people to be delivered from Satan’s oppression, is not an abstract concept. The need for such a ministry exists not only among non-Christians in the third world but also among Seventh-day Adventists in all parts of the world. Recently there has also been an increasing demand in the West for such a ministry among Seventh-day Adventists “whose lives carry a shadow from the occult” (Vine 2017). Vine argues and reflects on the situation in these terms:

Unfortunately, people under demonic oppression in the West are often ashamed or afraid to speak of their unique burden within their local church and that as a general rule (to which there are always exceptions), local pastors tend to shy away from ministry to such individuals. As a result, such individuals seek deliverance from charismatic or Pentecostal pastors, and often stay with such congregations from then on. But those who remain in the church suffer in silence “unable to rid themselves of demonic harassment, uncertain of who to approach, and afraid to speak up.” (2017)

I have made recommendations on how to address this situation in a previous article (Badé 2015:136); however, I believe it is also important to share a number of Adventist Frontier Missions (AFM) suggestions on the subject.

1. To host an annual conference for Adventist Deliverance Ministry Advocates in order to better equip existing practitioners.
2. To develop an association for practitioners for professional and spiritual nurture in this key ministry area.
3. To develop a mentoring program in several key divisions where overt occult activities occur and where AFM missionaries are already receiving requests to equip pastors in this area.
4. To accept only new members in the association who are recommended by their employing organization.
5. To develop and agree on a set of ethical guidelines, ministry standards, and accountability protocols for all those involved in such a ministry.
6. To prepare a rationale for the need of such a ministry and agree on an association field manual for use by those involved in such a ministry.
Conclusion

There is one urgent missiological implication growing out of the new fundamental belief “Growing in Christ” that is important for Seventh-day Adventist mission: That “every person might come to know Jesus and claim His victory over sin and evil” (Editor 2004:21). Victory over sin and evil has to be in one’s everyday life experience. Paul Hiebert argues that “the most successful missions have provided some form of Christian answer” for everyday problems (1985:223-224).

While the new fundamental belief “Growing in Christ” has some strong statements on demonic activity in the world, it unfortunately falls short on addressing how to deal practically with demonic harassment, oppression, or demonization. Consequently, many Seventh-day Adventist ministers and lay workers in cultures where demonic manifestations are a daily occurrence are left without clear guidelines for a practical ministry to Satan’s victims (Badé 2015:119, 120).

Dybdahl argues that in the 10/40 Window people “live much closer to the world of the New Testament than” do Westerners (2007:87, 88). He also points out that “if we fail to speak to this area, reversion to cultural norms or visits to healers or shamans and the use of amulets and spells is almost inevitable” (88). Furthermore, he asserts that “doctrinal truth is important, but biblical faith is always a lived-out/experienced faith” (Dybdahl 2006:20) and “if doctrinal truth and biblical faith don’t go together, many young Adventists [will] . . . not see Adventism as an experience of God” (20).

Fortunately, “Growing in Christ” touches the theme of freedom from evil and satanic oppression—a topic with universal appeal and special relevance to many cultures. In this article I have argued that for Adventist mission to succeed cross-culturally, the following new perspectives need to be taken into consideration. First, as we near the close of cosmic conflict, the missiological perspectives demand special attention for the achievement of God’s mission (Kim 2013:127). Second, Adventists are called to “reveal the true character of God to the world as manifested in a unique way in His Son, calling everyone to worship Him as Creator and Redeemer” (122). This requires from Seventh-day Adventists a greater sensitivity to demonic activity in the lives of Adventists and community people. A sympathetic and practical response utilizing power encounters and deliverance ministries to meet those needs will go a long way in furthering the outreach and mission of the Adventist Church.
Works Cited


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The Adventist Church has been criticized for keeping silent in the face of social injustices in many contexts in the past, especially under totalitarian regimes such Nazi Germany, Communist Russia (Plantak 1998), the apartheid regime in South Africa, and the genocide in Rwanda. While there seems to be a renewed interest in social justice advocacy worldwide and within the Adventist Church, divergent views and theological arguments clash on whether the church should be involved in social justice advocacy and what this involvement should look like, while remaining faithful to Scripture and its prophetic mission. This article explores the concept of social justice in the social sciences, in Scripture and in Adventism, setting the stage for further study that can evaluate contemporary Adventist leaders’ theological and missiological perspective on social justice.

Exploring Social Justice in Social Sciences

The United Nations defines social justice as “the fair and compassionate distribution of the fruit of economic growth” (United Nations 2006:7). The United Nations definition also states that “social justice is not possible without strong and coherent redistributive policies conceived and implemented by public agencies” (6). David Cohen views social justice advocacy as the act of pleading, not for one’s own interests, but for the respect and protection of human rights, the respect and preservation of the “dignity of all people from abuse, violence, and humiliation” resulting from acts or policies implemented by “communities and institutions including government, international financial institutions, and multinational corporations” (Cohen, de la Vega, and Watson 2001:7, 8). Social justice advocates, Cohen adds, are concerned with all situations that may lead to “violence and loss of dignity.” Those situations include “harassment and
threats to advocates’ lives and safety, second class citizenship, disrespect for a person’s humanity, disrespect for a person’s or community’s identity or expression of their culture” (7, 8).

Human Rights and Social Justice

The concept of rights has become a dominant way of speaking of justice in the 21st century, even though there still exist a variety of definitions, warrants, and applications of the term. The importance of the concept of rights lies in the fact that they were the anchor of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which the United Nations issued in 1948 as a “reaction to dehumanizing policies of the Nazi and fascist governments during World War II” (Stackhouse 2011:689). The preamble of the UDHR stipulates that the “recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace in the world” (689). The UDHR recognizes that all human beings have “the right to life, liberty, and security; to freedom from slavery, cruel punishment, and arbitrary arrest; to freedom of religion, thought, and association, and to marry, work, and have access to education” (687). Unlike civil rights, “which are those rights found in a system of traditional practices or establish in codes of a particular civil order,” human rights are “principles of justice understood to stand over every cultural, social, or governmental institution” (688).

However, after the adoption of the UDHR, two broad worldviews clashed regarding its implementation, leading to the adoption of two international covenants and several conventions. This is not surprising considering that “cultures define rights differently. Some focus on individuals, others on communities” (Figueira-McDonough 2007:32). Depending on the underlying philosophy, “specific institutional mechanisms vary across countries and affect the practice of social justice in their own ways” (32). In the domain of civil and political rights and social and economic rights, the democratic West emphasizes the liberties that the state should guarantee to each citizen, while the socialist West stresses the responsibility of the state to provide for each citizen (Stackhouse 2011:689). In either case, “the search for social justice presupposes a functioning government” (Figueira-McDonough 2007:31). Yet, in liberal democracies, the role of government is minimal, while individual freedom is central. The United States, a prototype of liberal democracy, pursues the ideals of freedom and democracy. In the early years of the nation, European philosophers and Scottish and English thinkers such as Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832), Adam Smith (1723-1790), and David Hume (1711-1776), as well as political theorist John Locke
(1632-1704) and populist idealist Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), influenced the American Founding Fathers in the implementation of these ideals. Thus, the American ideology comprises five core values: individual autonomy, work ethic, family ethic, community autonomy, and limited government (Figueira-McDonough 2007:32-35). She analyzes the tensions within liberal democracies over the right to freedom and the right to equality.

Privileging liberty tends to constrain equality. Conversely, giving priority to equality can restrict freedom. Laissez-faire societies often produce great social inequality, as happened toward the end of the nineteenth century. And democratic societies committed to equality are prone to develop an unwieldy, ‘all thumbs’ apparatus of central control. (35)

Thus, theories of social justice vary depending on the specific cultural, ideological, and historical context. A primary issue for social justice theorists “revolves around justifications for, and criticisms of, the precedence of one principle over the other” (37). Therefore, social justice advocates need to understand and take into consideration the culture and ideology within which they operate.

Social Development and Social Movements

For Susan C. Mapp, social development “can be defined as encompassing interventions and programs to improve social conditions” (2007:10). Mapp highlights the fact that social development is proactive rather than reactive, seeking to empower people, mainly at the macro-level, to prevent problems rather than alleviate their effects. She notes, however, that “when social development is too focused on economic development, it leads to distorted development (10). By distorted development she means a situation in which certain populations within a country are left out of social development due to discrimination, poverty, and/or lack of access to education. They have limited access to life sustenance, self-esteem, and freedom, which, according to economist Goulet, social development should offer. She adds, “These barriers make it difficult for these people to make basic decisions as where to live, whom to marry, how to earn a living, and with whom to engage in sexual relations. The barriers can lead to social problems such as AIDS, refugees, and slavery” (15).

According to Gemma Edwards, “Social movements are those collective efforts oriented toward social change that points to circumstances in which creative human action shapes and alters social structure, rather than being shaped by them” (2014:1). Edwards identifies four conceptual distinctions of social movements largely accepted in the field of social movements study: (1) they are collective, organized efforts at social change, rather than
individual pursuit of change, (2) they occur over a period of time, rather than being “one-off” events, (3) their members have a collective identity, rather than just working together, (4) they pursue change by employing protest (4, 5). Edwards challenges the “conceptual distinction made between individual and collective efforts toward change.” He argues that all individuals, whether or not they are part of an organized movement, “have the ability to react to social and political injustice” (248).

Robert K. Schaeffer notes three developments resulting from social movements: “the rise of republic, the democratization of republic and the expansion of citizenship in the republics” (2014:1, 2). However, while social movements have caused an expansion of liberty, inequality still persists. Cohen highlights the reality of “ordinary people” who continue to suffer from contemporary colonialism, and the breakdown of society caused by laws such as apartheid, abusive behavior by institutions, harassment and threats, second-class citizenship, disrespect for a person’s humanity, and disrespect for a person’s or community’s identity or expression of their culture (Cohen et al. 2001:7).

Schaeffer developed a model to explain how social change occurs. He identified three types of social movements: aspiring, altruistic, and restrictionist. Aspiring social movements are orchestrated by the people on the margins, as they aspire to societal changes that will improve their situation. Historically, they constituted the multitude, living at the bottom as “subjects in dynastic states and colonial settings, by denizens and subjects in republic” (2014:157). They have been at the forefront in the human rights movement, and are credited for the “ascent of slaves, women, and youth” (158). Since people on the margins are not always successful in pursuing their goals, they are described as “aspiring” social movements. However, due to lack of legal standing, educational, political, and financial capacity, low status aspirants are unable to act on their own and make their voice heard. They need “altruistic” groups with the means to support their causes. Altruistic social movements support and assist the change process. Restrictionist movements resist the change. In history, they are those who rejected “popular sovereignty, championed oligarchy, and defended inequality” (157-159).

Addressing Global Social Injustices: Two Different Approaches

There are two significant theories that attempt to explain the origin of inequalities among the nations and how to solve these inequalities. Modernization theory, which emerged during the 1950s, emphasizes internal causes of poverty such as lack of education, technology, and entrepreneurship. The theory is qualifiably optimistic because it believes progress and
development will happen through the application of a recipe—educate the population, boost technology, build infrastructure, democratize the political system, provide access to free market, etc. (Mapp 2007:10). Modernization theorists believe that “private property and private commerce go hand-in-hand with personal freedom and human rights” (Easterbrook 2003:252). The theory is also ethnocentric, believing that the West’s model of development is the ideal and needs to be exported to the developing world. Easterbrook made a prediction, “But as regards to resources at least, it seems possible that eventually, everyone will live like Americans and Europeans, with the world containing billions of passenger cars and detached homes, huge numbers of big-box retail stores, and truly, utterly frightening numbers of fast-food restaurants” (253).

On the other hand, dependency theory emphasizes external causes of poverty, global interactions between nation/states, mainly colonialism, and the exploitation of poor countries by the wealthier countries. Unlike modernization theory, dependency theorists, are pessimistic and consider it impossible to break out of underdevelopment without addressing the power imbalances among the nations (Mapp 2003:10).

Summary

Social justice is about respecting every person’s humanity and dignity, and protecting human rights. However, implementing social justice is challenging considering that every culture has its own definition of rights, depending on the dominant philosophy, ideology and historical context. In liberal democracies, two views of social justice co-exist, one prioritizing freedom and the other emphasizing equality. Social justice advocates must study carefully the society where they work.

Exploring Social Justice in Scripture

Social Ethics in the Old and New Testament

The following discussion of Old and New Testament social ethics is based on Scott B. Rae’s book, Moral Choices (2000). Rae notes that the social ethics in the Old Testament (OT) were upheld by the law, which mandated individual behavior, and in doing so, structured the society. The key function of the civil law was to govern social relationships and established institutions that would ensure order and maintain justice within the society (Exod 20:12-17; Lev 18-20, 25; Deut 19-25). Further, the prophets developed the social dimension of OT ethics, acting like “social justice” advocates, frequently accusing Israel of oppression, perversion of justice, and
exploitation of the poor (Amos 4:1, 5:11-13; Mic 2:2; Hab 1:4). In their writings, the prophets looked forward to the consummation of the kingdom which includes social dimensions of ethics. The forthcoming kingdom of God, ruled by the Servant of the Lord, would bring a rightly ordered society as well as a people who worship God appropriately (Isa 42, 49, 50, 53).

In addition, the social dimension of OT ethics was reflected in institutions and laws such as the Sabbatical year (Lev 25:1-7), the Year of Jubilee (25:8-24, 35-46), the law of redemption (25:25-34, 47-55), the law of gleaning (Lev 19:9-10), prohibition of usury (Exod 22:25; Lev 25:35-37), moving boundary stones that delineated a person’s property (Deut 19:14, 27:17), and perverting the legal system by showing bias, accepting bribes, or committing perjury (Exod 23:1-2; Deut 18-20).

The New Testament (NT) does not emphasize “institutional morality and social ethics” as much as the Old Testament. It focuses more on “a morality for the church,” rather than on society at large (Rae 2000:26). Scott Rae has observed that, although the NT church was not interested in implementing social institutions, contemporary Christians have established institutions such as hospitals, orphanages, churches, and seminaries, because they are deemed necessary for the advancement of the gospel (27). In the NT, ethical principles and rules are intended for members of the kingdom of God, blending together ethics and discipleship as “little distinction is made between the moral and the spiritual life, except that the former deals mainly with the believer’s responsibility to the church and the world, while the latter relates to one’s worship of God” (29). NT ethics leaves a special place for the poor. They will always exist in society (Matt 26:11), they are the special recipients of the gospel (Matt 5:11; Luke 4:18), and they are blessed (Luke 6:20). The church should care for the poor and treat them with esteem (Rom 15:26; 2 Cor 8:1-7, 9:1-15; Jas 2:1-13).

For Rae, love is the “central focus” of NT ethics, arguing that “Jesus and the apostles take the central command of the Law, ‘Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength’ (Deut 6:5), and develop an ethic of love” (30). The parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37 and Paul’s summarizing “the entire Law under the heading of love” in Rom 13:8-10 and Gal 5:14 exemplify and reinforce the idea that love fulfills the Law.

However, Richard B. Hays argues that love is not the “unifying theme for New Testament ethics,” although love is “a distinctive element in the Christian life” (1996:200). Hays surveys the books of Mark, Acts, Hebrews, and Revelation, and concludes that “a synthesis of the New Testament’s message based on the theme of love drives these texts to the periphery of the canon” (202). He adds, “The image of community, cross, and new creation more adequately bring these texts into focus along with
the rest of the canonical witnesses” (202). One reason Hays gives to deny love as a focal image is because many have trivialized the term and used it to “cover for all manner of vapid self-indulgence.” Hays cites Stanley Hauerwas who has observed, “The ethics of love is often but a cover for what is fundamentally an assertion of ethical relativism” (202). Love has often been used as an argument against “disciplines of economic sharing or sexual fidelity,” and as a pretext to condone “sexual relations outside of marriage or the use of violence.” Hays reminds us that “authentic love calls us to repentance, discipline, sacrifice, transformation (200).” On this last comment, Hays and Rae agree, because the latter acknowledges the NT ethics as an ethic of virtue, emphasizing the development of the character and virtue, made possible through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ being the model (Rae 2000:31).

Scot McKnight brings another perspective to the topic of social ethics. He links the Atonement to social justice. Studying the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55), the Benedictus (vv. 67-79), along with the inaugural sermon (Luke 4:16-21), Jesus’ answer to John the Baptist (7:21-23), and the Early church (Acts 2:42-47, 4:32-35), McKnight concludes that “Jesus’ kingdom vision and atonement are related; separating them is an act of violence” (2007:13). He also states that the “atonement creates the kingdom” (13), understood as a society where God’s will is fulfilled in terms of “equality, social justice, economic availability to and liability for one another, and fellowship” (14).

Social Justice Advocacy in Scripture

God repeatedly called advocates to denounce oppression, injustices, and wickedness in earthly political regimes. God sent Moses to Pharaoh to advocate for the deliverance of Israel from an oppressive system. Queen Esther, pushed by her uncle Mordecai and concerned for the survival of the Jewish community, went to meet king Ahasuerus, risking her life and advocated for the life of her people, forcing the king to suspend and replace an edict that doomed the existence of the Jews (Falk 2015:293).

The Prophet Isaiah spoke in a context marked by evil and oppression, absence of justice, widespread violence and wickedness. “For ye have eaten up the vineyard; the spoil of the poor is in your houses. What mean ye that ye beat my people to pieces, and grind the faces of the poor? saith the Lord GOD of hosts” (Isa 3:14, 15). Ellen White comments on the book of Isaiah saying:

Justice was perverted, and no pity was shown the poor. . . . The outlook was particularly discouraging as regards the social conditions of
the people. In their desire for gain, men were adding house to house and field to field. Even the magistrates, whose duty it was to protect the helpless, turned a deaf ear to the cries of the poor and needy, the widows and the fatherless. (1917:306)

Isaiah expressed God’s frustration and astonishment for the absence of intercessors or advocates: “And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore, his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him” (Isa 59:16).

God expected his servants to raise their voice in defense of the voiceless and the oppressed. God is heart-broken when there is no advocate. None of the prophets of the Old Testament—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Amos, etc.—remained silent in the face of injustices. They all understood that when the weak, the poor, the stranger, the fatherless, the widow are unjustly treated or when their rights are violated or not protected by the political authorities, it was their responsibility as God’s representatives to stand up and demand justice.

Social justice advocacy in the Bible is often overlapped with advocacy for righteousness. Respecting, protecting, and caring for individuals, regardless of their social, physical, economic, and racial status is both a matter of social justice and righteousness. Among many ethical and spiritual principles which the Bible emphasizes and which should be part of the Christian’s advocacy mandate was the defense of the widow, the stranger (alien), and the fatherless. Tom Evans calls these three categories of vulnerable people “God’s special trio” (2016:1) and highlights the specific instruction God gave concerning them: “His people were not to take advantage of them, such as depriving the foreigner and fatherless of justice or taking the cloak of a widow as a pledge (Deut 24:17)” (2016:1).

Summary

Social justice is a key theme in the Bible. The Old Testament provides an ethical framework for just and harmonious social relations in Israel based on the Law. OT prophets advocated the application of the social dimension of the Law, pleading the cause of the poor, the widow, the stranger, and the oppressed. The Sabbath, the Jubilee, the sabbatical year, and others, were all institutions aimed at guaranteeing social justice. The NT social ethics is primarily aimed at the followers of Christ, rather than social institutions, mandating the disciple’s relation to the church and the world, and to God. NT ethics stresses the importance of love, which is the fulfillment of the Law, calling for right conduct and virtuous character propelled by the dynamic of the Holy Spirit.
Exploring Social Justice in Adventism

Christian organizations and churches are often on the frontlines of promoting and defending human rights. Seventh-day Adventists are no exception. The Seventh-day Adventist Church was often silent concerning social injustices, and primarily focused on Jesus Christ’s Second Coming during its formative years (1839-1888). It eventually attended the immediate needs of its members and the community through welfare and disaster relief interventions (Schwartz and Greenleaf 2000:460-462). Towards the end of the 20th century, the church started displaying a prominent social interest (Plantak 1998:125). In 1984 the Adventist Church established the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) which, according to Wagner Kuhn, “has been chosen as a primary tool in the work of ‘exposing,’ ‘discrediting,’ and trying to address social distortions and depravation” (2013:202, 209). ADRA’s statement on social justice emphasizes “individuals rejected by society” and commits to “break down barriers of prejudice through community training and by promoting inclusive policies” (ADRA 2017b). In its development effort, ADRA attempts to “reach out to vulnerable communities around the world, helping them gain the strength to put their lives back together” (ADRA 2017b).

Charles Scriven wrote in 1992, “It’s a mistake to think that winning converts is the church’s only business. God’s wish is to heal all of life” (17). “He did not act as many of His fellow Jews expected the Messiah to act, He certainly condemned social and political abuses” (18). David Pendleton argues that separation of church and state does not forbid the believer to speak up in the public square, nor does it relieve him or her from “urging government to act with wisdom, justice, and righteousness. And it clearly should not bar personal involvement in matters of law and public policy” (2004:20). Joy Butler links advocacy for human rights to the search for peace by declaring:

The work of defending the rights of the weak and marginalized is peace work. Far from being a passive attitude, peace is active in breaking through the silence that perpetuates the violation of human rights on a daily basis. Christians must speak with the loudest voice and take the most daring steps to denounce any violation of the human being, made in the image of God. (2008:44)

Similarly, reacting to the Charleston church shooting in 2015, C. Wesley Knight exhorted the church to speak up and be mad like Jesus “in the context of social injustice and racial terrorism” (2015:17).
However, the change in Adventist thinking regarding social ministries has prompted concerns from many who fear that the spiritual strength of the church may be weakened as it happened in the World Council of Churches (Schwartz and Greenleaf 2001:462).

Following the 1983 WCC Assembly meeting in British Columbia and the next session in Canberra, Australia in 1991, Adventist writers observed that the spiritual strength of the WCC was weakened because it had defined evangelism in terms of its social implications rather than to save people from sin. Its goal was to promote a “just, participatory and sustainable society. Given this observation, Adventists may have questioned why ADRA and its predecessor, SAWS, became so involved in humanitarian and community projects. (463)

Kenneth H. Wood pointed to the “unique mission” the church has to perform—“to carry the message of salvation to all men in all lands” (1971:2). Wood stated this:

Christ’s kingdom is not of this world, hence the organized body of Christ must avoid entanglements with governments, and with efforts to bring in the kingdom of God by human legislation. The church must marshal all its resources and focus all its energies on the task of setting forth clearly the vital issues in ‘the great controversy,’ and of preparing the world for the imminent return of Christ. (1971:2)

Although the general tone of the editorial indicates a concern regarding “division, disunity and schism” that often result when church leaders are split over political matters, there is an implicit warning against involvement in social advocacy aiming at breaking down unjust systems and policies in governments. For C. Mervyn Maxwell, advocacy in the public arena is permitted only in the context of religious freedom. He recommends Adventists to “demonstrate to the world by our faith and action that we believe we have a far more effective remedy for its ills than mere human legislation and handout dollars” (1976:1).

In reaction to an article published by the Adventist Review, reporting the first Oakwood University Social Justice award given to U.S. Congressman John Lewis for his decades-long efforts promoting equal rights, Dwayne V. Turner wrote in the Adventist Review, “The fight for social justice has made its way into God’s Remnant Church, but let me be clear, it only happens when God’s counsels are ignored; not followed.” He particularly accused movements such as Black Lives Matters to be a form of “wrestling against the flesh” where our battle should be spiritual, according to Eph 6:12 (Turner 2015).

There is a certain ambiguity around the concept of advocacy in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, as it may mean different things.
depending on who you ask. Lenart Falk cites John Graz, former director of the Department of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty (PARL) for the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, who provides an official definition of advocacy: “Being the voice of the voiceless, the sign of the kingdom of God in the world” (2015:296). Among other roles, PARL, founded by the Adventist Church in 1901, “works in cooperation with other church departments to advocate public policy positions on issues in areas as diverse as health, education, peace issues, environmental protection, women’s issues, children’s issues, the rights of prisoners, and aid and development” (PARL 2017).

Falk notes that the social advocacy endeavor of the Seventh-day Adventist Church has been confined so far to position statements on chosen topics such as “violence, war, religious fanaticism, ecumenism, interreligious dialogue, or social issues like abortion or human trafficking” (2015:296). Those positions are usually reactive rather than proactive. Falk wrote that the position statements of the Seventh-Adventist Church “could be described as ‘information sharing,’ but they do not qualify as advocacy in the proper sense. Rather, they are a first step in a much longer process of advocacy” (286). Plantak adds that he sees inconsistencies and contradictions in Adventism’s dealing with human rights issues, with an emphasis on reaction rather than advocacy (1998:208).

In his book chapter entitled “Social Justice and the Adventist Dilemma,” G. Russell Seay compares Ellen White and Martin Luther King Jr.’s approaches to racial issues in the United States, and suggests that “a person’s perspective is shaped by his or her life context” (2017:56). Seay notes that they were both grappling with two opposing approaches on how to tackle the Negro’s plight in America. One approach, proposed by Booker T. Washington (1858-1915), “called negroes to abandon for the time being the push for political power so that they could concentrate on education and entrepreneurship” (55, 56). The goal was for black people to “earn the respect of whites by demonstrating their worthiness” (56). This approach’s ideal was to “cement the friendship of races and bring about hearty cooperation” (56). The other approach, proposed by W. E. B. DuBois (1868-1963), who “grew impatient with the gradualism inherent” in Washington’s strategy, called people “to fight for civil rights, voting rights, and education opportunities” (56). According to Seay, Washington and Dubois represent two persistent approaches to black betterment—accommodation, and self-determination.

Ellen White, on one side, was more inclined toward Washington’s position, for she “consistently and persistently counsels against actions and activities that would antagonize the social structures that perpetuate negro oppression in favor of activities that help transform the individual negro
into candidates for the heavenly kingdom” (56). Martin Luther King Jr., on the other side, aligned himself with Dubois’ self-deterministic approach, “insisting that negroes participate in direct activities to civil rights, voting rights, fair housing, and equal education opportunities” (56). Seay further notes that White and King’s positions were shaped, not only by their social location in terms of space and time, but also by their eschatology. The report on Evangelism and Social responsibility (1982), undertaken jointly by the World Evangelical Fellowship and Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, suggests that one’s understanding of the millennium affects the way one views the world (Plantak 1998:43). White was a pre-millennialist—“shaped by Jewish and Christian apocalypticism,” focusing on the urgency of Christ’s return, while King was a post-millennialist—“shaped by liberal reading of classical eighth-century prophets,” focusing on bringing about the “beloved community” and “correcting the social structures that perpetuate the cycle of racism, classism, and militarism” (Seay 2017:57). In face of the ‘Now, But Not Yet’ dilemma that the Adventist Church is grappling with in the early part of the 21st century, Seay recommends a combination of “the pre-millennial urgency with the post-millennial social activism in order to remain essential Adventists but also relevant to our contemporary context” (57).

Although White’s eschatology was preeminent, she seems to have understood the importance of dealing with social issues in her time. In his book Working with the Poor (2007), Rudi Maier has compiled selected passages from Ellen White on social responsibility. He regroups her statements under six broad strategies she proposed to fight poverty: (1) teaching self-reliance, (2) industrial training, (3) training to serve, (4) relieving necessities, (5) teaching discipline, and (6) practical training (2007:323-361). These solutions centered on the individual rather than the social and political system, and fit well within an accommodationist approach. However, when it came to slavery laws, Nicholas Miller notes that “White called for civil disobedience, the breaking of federal law, in order to protect the human rights of African Americans” (2017:24). Miller cites White’s Testimonies for the Church, volume 1, “the law of our land requiring us to deliver a slave to his master, we are not to obey” (1948:202) (in Miller 2017:24). Such a position clearly has a self-deterministic resonance.

The challenge for the Adventist Church in the 21st century is to find the best combination of approaches between silence, official statements, accommodation, and self-determination that enables the church to fulfill both its social responsibility and its prophetic mission. To this end, it is necessary to evaluate the four broad categories of approaches to social justice from a biblical and missiological perspective.
Summary

Adventists understand their mission to include both evangelism and social responsibility, although the focus in the beginning was on the Second Coming of Jesus as the primary remedy to the world’s problems (Schwartz and Greenleaf 2001:458). As social justice advocacy has become more prominent among Adventists since the second half of the twentieth century, opposing views have emerged that have divided the church on this crucial topic. One perspective favors accommodative solutions in direct support of victims of social injustices. Another perspective advocates a self-determination approach, which implies social and political activism by joining human rights movements. In between, a third perspective teaches that social justice advocacy is too political and too dangerous and urges the church to stay away from it. However, there has been no in-depth Adventist study of the biblical and missiological implications of each perspective.

Exploring Missiological Responses to Social Justice

Social Justice as an Integral Part of the Missio Dei

Plantak asserts that “the creation story is the primary basis for human rights” (1998:164). He cites Richard Harries who pointed out that “God makes man in his own image and respects the worth and dignity of what he has created. . . . Such is the value of human persons in the eye of their maker that he himself becomes a human person” (164). Accordingly, social justice advocacy, to the extent it aims to restore and uplift humanity’s God-given dignity and freedom, is both an expression of God’s character and a core strategy of the mission Dei. The church’s role in the context of the missio Dei includes walking in the footsteps of Old Testament prophets and Jesus by “cooperating with God in the call of all people always and everywhere, to justice, peace and the integrity of creation” as part of the “prophetic dialogue” (Bevans and Schroeder 2004:369).

Bevans and Schroeder define “prophetic dialogue” as a synthesis of three strains that “grounded mission theology in the last quarter of the twentieth century: mission as participation in the life and mission of the Trinity; mission as continuation of the mission of Jesus to preach, serve and witness to justice of God’s ‘already’ but ‘not yet’ reign; and mission as the proclamation of Christ as the world’s only Savior” (369).

In addition, Andrew Walls and Cathy Ross identify five marks of mission in the 21st century: (1) to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom, (2) to teach, baptize, and nurture new believers, (3) to respond to human
needs by loving service, (4) to seek to transform unjust structures of society, and (5) to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth (2008:xiv).

Regarding engagement in social transformation work in communities, David Korten, observed a continuum of what he terms “generation of practice.”

The first generation of practice response to crisis situation in the form of welfare and relief, here, the external agent, be it the church or non-governmental organization (NGO), plays the role of initiator. Second generation practice refers to what he terms ‘community development’. It takes the form of local development projects carried out in communities to meet particular needs such as poverty, unemployment, or lack of food security. Here, the external agent plays a facilitative role, engaging with community members in setting up the project. Korten, recognizing the limitations of these forms of engagement, has argued that for our work in communities to be truly transformative, there needs to be work at the level of changing policy and procedures (what he terms third generation practice), and at the level of mobilizing movements of people for social change (fourth generation practice). (in Walls and Ross 2008:81)

Evangelization and Social Justice

Craig Ott, Stephen J. Strauss, and Timothy C. Tennent point out that although Christians have always been known as compassionate people, toward the end of the 19th century various theologies contributed to the polarization of approaches to mission. On one side, “liberal groups relativized the message of the Bible and questioned the necessity of evangelism. The postmillennial social gospel emphasized inner-worldly improvements to usher in the kingdom of God” (2010:138). On the other side, the premillennialists—prominent among evangelicals—who were persuaded of Christ’s imminent return and ensuing judgement, stressed the “urgency of evangelism” at the expense of social programs (138).

J. F. A. Ajayi, in Dana L. Robert, writing on the work of evangelical missionaries in West Africa during 1706-1914, observed that evangelicals’ failure to “give some thought to the implications of foreign missions for the wider societies that would be affected, even transformed, by the activities of the missionaries and the resulting congregations of Christians” was due to ideological aversion to politics, and to “the assumption that such societies would be wholly transformed into ‘civilized’ Western societies that should be governed in the same way that Christian Western societies were governed” (Robert 2008:244, 245). For example, in 1902, Robert E.
Speer denounced as “mischievous doctrine” any proposal calling foreign missions to reorganize the social fabric. He defended the view that “missions should implant the life of Christ in the hearts of all people and leave the results to God” (Ott, Strauss, and Tennent 2010:138).

Ajayi studied the case of a community of Brass in Niger which became a Christian state in 1879 and highlighted the missiological harm caused by the missionaries’ non-intervention in socio-political matters. Brass, a compact and prosperous community before embracing Christianity, was now struggling due to the Royal Niger Company’s stifling trade and impoverishment of the local people. While “the missionaries were unable or unwilling to help, the Traditionalists gradually took over” (Ajayi 2008:245).

Evangelicals’ attitude toward socio-political involvement shifted around the 1960-1970s, although “the appearance of Carl F. H. Henry’s Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism in 1947 signaled an early shift in evangelical social ethics” (Ott, Strauss, and Tennent 2010:138-139). The conclusions of the Congress on the Church’s Worldwide Mission held in Wheaton in 1966 and the Workshop on Evangelicals and Social Concern held in Chicago in 1973 are evidence of that shift. One factor aiding the change in John Stott’s thinking was “his international travel in the 1960s and early 1970s to Majority World contexts where the reality of poverty and oppression were inescapable and could not be ignored by evangelicals committed to evangelism” (Stott and Wright 2015:41). In 1992, John Stott, on behalf of the Lausanne’s Theology Working Group, convened a consultation on the relationship between evangelism and social responsibility under the auspices of the World Evangelical Alliance. The report highlighted three types of relationships: (1) social action as a consequence of evangelism; (2) social action as a bridge to evangelism; and (3) social action and evangelism as partners. Stott underlines the third relationship as the most important:

They are like the two blades of a pair of scissors or the two wings of a bird. This partnership is clearly seen in the public ministry of Jesus, who not only preached the gospel but fed the hungry and healed the sick. In his ministry, kerygma (proclamation) and diakona (service) went hand in hand. . . . His words explained his works, and his works dramatized his words. Both were expressions of his compassion for people, and both should be of ours. . . . Indeed, so close in this link between proclaiming and serving, that they actually overlap. (Stott and Wright 2015:43, 44)

In Paragraph 5 of the Lausanne Covenant on “Christian Social Responsibility” there is a similar statement. “Evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty. For both are necessary
expressions of our doctrines of God and humankind, our love for our neighbour and our obedience to Jesus Christ” (42).

Timothy J. Keller, in Center Church, calls for a break in the liberal/conservative paradigm: “Rather than emphasizing mainly evangelism (as conservative churches do) or mainly social justice (as liberal churches do), we intentionally set out to give a very high emphasis to both—employing a holistic approach that connects the people in our church to the city through both evangelistic proclamation and ministries of justice and mercy” (2012:292).

Examples of Mission-Focused Responses to Social Justice

William Carey, the father of modern mission organizations, remains an inspiration for many due not only to his commitment to evangelism, but mainly for his relentless and successful dedication to social reforms (Kuhn 2013:124). Indian society was plagued with social evils such as slavery, infanticide, widow-burning or sati, and burning of lepers. Due to Carey’s advocacy efforts, a Regulation (VI of 1802) was passed and made unlawful the inhuman practice of infanticide. In 1829, after more than 30 years of missionary and social advocacy work in India by Carey, other missionaries, and native Indian reformers like Raja Ram, sati was banished by law (129).

Carey’s strategy consisted of five elements: (1) prayer, (2) teaching the Bible, (3) research in order to know and document an issue, (4) publish, and (5) collaborate with other activists. Concerning prayer Kuhn wrote that “since his early years of life Carey had prayed earnestly for the abolition of slavery” (129). Carey taught the Bible, in one case, in order to combat child marriage. Carey sought to undercut the immoral roots of such a social evil through the teaching of the Bible (An Indian Christian 2017). Carey’s use of research can be demonstrated in the following example. Sati was one the worst evils that prevailed during Carey’s time. He collected data on sati and found that about 300 widows were burnt alive around Calcutta and 10,000 in all India within a short period of time (Haldar 2015:2). Carey made use of publishing in order to deal with sati as well. Carey also collaborated with other social advocates and public authorities in order to win the battle against the practice of sati. Carey worked collaboratively with Raja Ram Mohan Roy, who was also a great social reformer. He also maintained good relations with Governor General Lord Wellesley to whom he submitted the report on sati (An Indian Christian 2017). Kuhn found that Carey was not alone in his advocacy endeavor. “Other missionaries, as well as governors and Indian reformers, gave much needed aid in order that the practice of burning widows be forbidden” (2013:129).
A second example of best practices in missionary advocacy is the Temperance Movement in early Adventism. Adventist pioneers viewed alcohol consumption as the cause of much social harm—domestic violence, poverty, the rising prison population. They decided to promote both personal abstinence and public prohibition. Douglas Morgan reports on the strategy they used:

In addition to rallies, Adventists organized local temperance societies, distributed literature, and canvassed for signatures to a temperance pledge. Adventist young people were mobilized through the weekly publication, the *Youth’s Instructor*. Special temperance issues were published in the 1910s and the Instructor’s Temperance League formed with the goal of placing copies in every home. In the final drive for a Prohibition amendment, Adventist gave indefatigable support to the cause. (Morgan 2001:63).

A third example of best practices in social justice advocacy utilized by the Adventist Church is the *Enditnow* campaign to end violence against women. The goal of the campaign was to “raise awareness and advocate for the end of violence against women and girls around the world (ADRA 2017a). The main strategy of the campaign consisted in collecting 1,000,000 signatures from more than 200 countries, followed by a presentation of these signatures to General Secretary Ban Ki-Moon at the United Nations. The activities undertaken included women holding rallies in communities, going door-to-door, going to supermarkets in order to collect the maximum amount of signatures possible (Boyd 2015:280).

A fourth example of best practices in social justice advocacy is the work of the International Justice Mission (IJM), an agency which has been established to provide global ministries where field workers can entrust the stories shared with them by victims of social injustices. Field workers are expected to “develop the eyes to see and the ears to hear about injustice in their community” and “aid the victims of abuse by helping them to articulate their story” (Haugen 1999:185). Those field workers are in an ideal position to act as “responsible stewards of the burden that has been shared with them by passing it along carefully to those who might come to the victim’s aid” (185). Frontline workers are supposed to know people in the community—civic leaders, lawyers, or advocates—who have the authority, capacity, and resources to investigate the matter and help the one who is suffering abuse. Yet, in some instances, field workers may not know whom to turn to with the information, and in some situations turning to the wrong persons might have dire consequences; hence, the importance of International Justice Mission. The International Justice Mission “will consult with the ministry about where to turn, or will take on the matter
as a case referral and independently pursue an investigation and intervention on behalf of the victim” (Haugen 1999:185). It is worth noting that in any best practice of missionary advocacy, “social analysis, Bible study, and prayer should precede advocacy efforts” (Boyd 2015:283). Falk notes that the best advocacy efforts thrive in “an atmosphere of peacebuilding, trust, and negotiation,” rather than in a confrontational and ‘watchdog-like’ tone (Falk 2015:288).

**Conclusion**

Social justice is included in the mission of God to redeem and restore humanity. While in the early years evangelicals viewed social justice with suspicion, considering it subordinate to evangelism, since the second half of the 20th century, social justice has gained momentum among evangelical Christians who have become favorable to a more holistic approach to mission. William Carey had already set the tone in the 19th century as his work in India included missiological responses to social justice concerns. Other more recent and similarly mission-focused social advocacy work followed, such as the Temperance Movement in early Adventism, the ongoing *Enditnow* campaign to end violence against women and girls, and the work of International Justice Mission, just to cite a few. However, a mission-focused social justice advocacy must be based on clear principles and guidelines. For example, one of PARL’s methods or principles is this: “Just because we can say something, doesn’t mean we have something to say” (PARL 2017). “As we determine on an ongoing basis the issues we will focus on, we keep in mind our relevant expertise, the level of unanimity of our members on a given issue, the level of resources already invested on a given issue, and whether speaking publicly in a specific instance is the best means to accomplish our goals (PARL 2017).
Works Cited


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“I’m sorry,” said Larry, the window sales rep, “I can’t sell you these windows. You’re not in our territory; I will have to refer you to another store.”

Even though Larry had said this as nicely as possible and had pointed out all the benefits I would receive by buying windows from a sister store, I could tell that he was as uncomfortable with the policy as I was. Larry had already invested nearly two hours in answering my questions and educating me on the ins and outs of window design. Now, in this awkward moment, it was obvious that company leadership was more committed to protecting territory than to its primary reason for existence—selling windows.

Little did Larry know how familiar I was with this kind of thinking. He had provided a business example of what I had recently experienced in my own church. It happened when I received a letter from a conference president explaining how the conference was concerned “that Simple Church would feel free to enter our conference territory and set up house churches.” Although I knew this kind of thinking existed, it was the first time in seven years that I had seen it put into writing.

And it made my heart ache. Has turf protection trumped our mission to reach people, to extend God’s grace to anyone—wherever, whenever, and however the opportunities arise? Why are some church leaders more concerned about control and turf protection than about being artesian wells spilling forth God’s grace and invitations of salvation? I can see why this kind of thinking might exist in a secular business where money and control rule—but in the church, of all places! In my church! Why?

When Jesus walked on this earth he gave his disciples a “co-mission” to fulfill in cooperation with him and with each other, a Gospel Commission, backed by the full authority of God himself: “Go and make disciples of all nations.”
This Gospel Commission raises several fundamental questions that challenge current church assumptions and policies. I will focus on two. 1. To whom was the Gospel Commission given? 2. What is the territory of the Gospel Commission?

To Whom Was the Gospel Commission Given?

Having asked this question of over 400 church leaders—at the conference, union, division, and general conference level—in various parts of the world, I have found that all (with the exception of one individual) agreed that the Gospel Commission was given to the laity.

Ellen White agrees: “Those who stand as leaders in the church of God are to realize that the Savior’s commission is given to all who believe in His name” (White:1911:110, italics added).

The commission had been given to the twelve when Christ met with them in the upper chamber; but it was now to be given to a larger number. At the meeting on a mountain in Galilee, all the believers who could be called together were assembled. (White 1940:818, italics added)

Those who engage in it [the carrying out of the Gospel Commission] with sincerity of purpose will see souls won to the Savior, for the influence that attends the practical carrying out of the divine commission is irresistible. Not upon the ordained minister only rests the responsibility of going forth to fulfill this commission. Everyone who has received Christ is called to work for the salvation of his fellow men. (White 1911:110, italics added)

To every child of God whose voice the enemy of souls had succeeded in silencing, the question is addressed, ‘What doest thou here?’ I commissioned you to go into all the world and preach the gospel, to prepare a people for the day of God. Why are you here? Who sent you? (White 1943:172, italics added)

The Saviour’s commission to the disciples included all the believers. It includes all believers in Christ to the end of time. It is a fatal mistake to suppose that the work of saving souls depends alone on the ordained minister. All to whom the heavenly inspiration has come are put in trust with the gospel. All who receive the life of Christ are ordained to work for the salvation of their fellow men. For this work the church was established, and all who take upon themselves its sacred vows are thereby pledged to be co-workers with Christ (White 1911:822, italics added).
Ellen White is clear: the Gospel Commission has been given to lay people. Not only are lay people to be permitted a part in its calling; they are indispensable for its completion. And I would suggest that at this time in earth’s history, they are uniquely poised to accept it. God has provided an opportunity within the developing global culture to meet the need of the hour, an opportunity which uniquely favors lay ministry. It is a context so close to us that perhaps we do not see it—a cultural milieu rich with technology and social capital for the common person. This endowment is filled with missional potential.

As noted by Josh Packard and Ashleigh Hope, in their book, *Church Refugees: Sociologists Reveal Why People Are Done with Church but Not Their Faith*, and Barbara Kellerman in her book, *The End of Leadership*, people have much more social and cultural capital as they gain access to social networks (Packard and Hope 2015:11). The playing field between leaders and followers has been leveled, aided by the revolution in the use of technology (Kellerman 2012:xix). This new playing field is now giving lay people a host of options for accomplishing the Gospel Commission outside of church norms. They no longer need to ask permission, seek funding from the church, or earn approval from boards or church leaders (xvi; Packard and Hope 2015:27). Social networking provides both the opportunity and voice necessary for the laity to “go and make disciples of all nations.”

A logical outcome of this arrangement is that lay people who are not empowered by their church leaders in the fulfillment of the commission are instead empowered by social and cultural capital to bypass their leaders in fulfillment of it. This cultural shift may be frightening for church leaders, but it does not need to be; however it will require a different leadership paradigm. And for this, Scripture provides a solid model for church leaders today.

But one member, a Pharisee named Gamaliel, who was an expert in religious law and respected by all the people, stood up and ordered that the men be sent outside the council chamber for a while. Then he said to his colleagues, “Men of Israel, take care what you are planning to do. . . . So my advice is, leave these men alone. Let them go. If they are planning and doing these things merely on their own, it will soon be overthrown. But if it is from God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You may even find yourselves fighting against God!” (Acts 5:29-39, italics added)

Bill Knott, editor of the *Adventist Review*, invites church leaders to move from control-based leadership to empowerment-based leadership by describing what kind of changes will need to take place. “Christ intended that His church be one in which empowerment is handed out like
water to the thirsty, where good ideas find a great response of welcome and encouragement. Cheering should come naturally to those who have been caught by grace, for gifts and giftedness are clearly signs the Spirit has not left us” (2014).

Empowering should be the heartbeat of church leadership. Paul, in Ephesians 4:12, gives a very focused job description. Referring to leadership gifts, he says, “Their responsibility is to equip God’s people to do His work and build up the church, the body of Christ.” This empowerment must go beyond cosmetic platitudes.

If the Gospel Commission has been given to the laity, what about the question of territory? Are there to be territorial lines, turf to control or defend? We now turn our attention to this question.

What Is the Territory or Scope of the Gospel Commission?

Scripture is quite clear: “Go and make disciples of all nations.” When the Seventh-day Adventist Church was birthed, there were no phones, fax machines, Internet, E-mail, Skype, or GoToMeeting. In order to function, any business or organization—profit or non-profit—had to organize itself geographically in order to get things done. It was a good method. It worked. It served the needs of Adventist mission. This history has naturally ingrained itself into Adventist thinking. We know our territory, identify with our own conferences, unions, and divisions, take pride in area evangelism; and support local initiatives. It is easy to understand how many have begun to feel a territorial right of ownership—even a right to be defended.

But times have changed. Technology has become readily available. To organize geographically is no longer the only method to accomplish the Seventh-day Adventist mission. But the lines in our minds are hard to erase. Once necessary to accomplish the mission, they now often obstruct it.

How is it that we have subtly constructed a church culture across the face of Adventism in which new ministries must wait for approval—must hold their tongues and cool their fires until they get permission? Why does the onus lie on those in whom the Spirit burns to justify their plans and validate their loyalty? How did polarities so reverse that those who dream of enlarging God’s kingdom must now be cautious lest they step on turf already claimed by others? Why must the start-up funding needed by new strategies compete for anything that remains after “regular expenses” have been paid?

Such questions are, admittedly, uncomfortable. We wince to learn that caution, safety, and permission are more the watchwords of our movement than old men dreaming dreams and young ones seeing
visions (Joel 2:28). We douse the fires of inspiration with buckets of supposed practicality, content that nothing has yet gotten out of hand—not energy, not faith, and certainly not involvement. Fewer crises come our way, we say—and nothing not on the agenda will ever mar our peace. (Knott 2014, italics supplied)

Ellen White also confirms a non-territorial Kingdom expansion as Christ’s disciples go to all nations. “Thus Christ sought to teach the disciples the truth that in God’s kingdom there are *no territorial lines*, no caste, no aristocracy; that they must go to all nations, bearing to them the message of a Saviour’s love” (White 1911:20, italics supplied).

It goes against the Gospel Commission itself and the counsel of Ellen White to place territorial restrictions upon lay people who hear and accept God’s call. Notice how the Lord himself intends to empower those who respond and go: “As field after field is entered, new methods and new plans will spring from new circumstances. New thoughts will come with the new workers who give themselves to the work. *As they seek the Lord for help, He will communicate with them. They will receive plans devised by the Lord Himself. Souls will be converted*” (White 1948:6:476, italics supplied).

**What Matters Now?**

In the past there has been much appropriate emphasis on the laity’s posture of respect toward church leadership. But what matters now is an equal and proactive posture of respect toward the laity. As new methods and new plans spring forth from the laity, cooperation and mutual respect must also spring forth. The result will look and function like a peer relationship. In today’s developing culture, the onus will lie on church leadership to rid themselves of any turf control and instead develop skills of cheering, funding, and quickly embracing God-honoring lay ministries.

So, a call to smooth the way, abridge the long approval-giving, find start-up funding that will prove the Adventist Church still believes in taking godly risks. Speak well of newness in God’s church, for it is he who still proclaims, “Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?” (Isa 43:19, RSV) (Knott 2014).

**What Matters Most?**

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations.”
Works Cited


Milton Adams is the director/missionary at www.SimpleChurchAtHome.com, enjoys working with church leaders around the world, and helping common people start house churches to reach the nones and done—church refugees who will likely never walk into a conventional church.
Seventh-day Adventist witness among the nomadic peoples of the East Africa region is faced with a number of challenges. Although the Church enjoys relative success in reaching most communities, its growth and development appears restricted to locations occupied by the settled communities. Unfamiliarity with nomads’ cultural structures and values is a partial explanation for why missionaries have failed to effectively connect with the nomads thereby hampering the establishment of a more vibrant mission work in pastoral nomadic regions.

This qualitative research sought to describe the Pokot cultural worldview as a step toward understanding their socio-cultural context and identify barriers to effective mission. This is fundamental in developing missional bridges that would potentially close the gap between the Church and the pastoralists. Using an ethnographic approach, data collected using focus-group interviews, participant observation, artifact examination, and casual dialogue enabled the description of the Pokot cultural worldview and exposed their cognitive, evaluative, and affective assumptions of their culture.

The study reveals that although they are closely associated culturally with other Nilotic groups in East Africa, the Pokot are a distinct community with an exciting historical heritage and shared value systems. A high regard for communal life and rigorous religious practices and customs are among values characteristic of the people.
In their communal living, group-thinking and decision-making above individual pursuits is fundamental. Rather than focusing on the individual, the Pokot emphasize the development and maintenance of relationships with others. Life and thought are centered on the group rather than on the individual or things. Every member of the community is expected to demonstrate loyalty and respect to their parents, older siblings, elders, age mates, and friends. Among the benefits of communal living is the sense of belonging, respect for relationships, and cooperation and strength of the whole society against the outside world.

On the other hand, religion plays a key role in life among the Pokot. Each step of life, from birth to death (or even after death), is marked with some form of religious practice or ritual involving sacrifice, prayers, song and dance, or bowing in holy places. Worship in caves, on mountains, at river-banks, under trees, and at other sacred places where divine beings are presumed to inhabit is common. Their religious ceremonies are characterized by charismatic singing, dancing, chanting, jumping, and other forms of expressive passion that appease the deity.

The pacification of the supreme being, tororot, and his assistants: asis, who witnesses human activities on earth, ilat, the messenger of the deities to humans, and the ancestral spirits is commonly practiced to alleviate calamity in the form of drought, disease, or death. Prayers in the form of songs are offered, entreating divine intervention for the protection of livestock and people, for more healthy calves to be born, and for enemies and wild animals to be kept away from the land.

Other valued customs include acts of heroism, generosity, respect, trust, bravery, wealth, versatility, and high moral standards. From early ages, younger people are groomed and expected to be loyal, patriotic, respectful, brave, and morally upright members of the community. The concept of poghishyo (peace and harmony) requires that people should aspire to live united if blessings in the form of rain, health, and enough food is to be expected from tororot. Initiation of young people into various stages of life helps to train, educate, and test their bravery and loyalty to authority, which is essential for unity and survival of the Pokot people in the midst of a region marked with scrambling of scarce natural resources.

In response to these findings, a comprehensive model for mission was developed. The model examined seven key strategies to guide mission initiatives that will result in the formation and development of mature Christians whose faith and practice is biblically based and spiritually guided.

First, worldview transformation is a topmost approach. Forming mature Christians from unbiblical backgrounds who will be able to witness to others require that a biblical worldview be developed from the initial stages of witnessing. This helps to alleviate unorthodox practices such as
superficial surface-level conversion, minimal behavior modification, syncretistic practices, and dual allegiance, which are often results of improper witness related to a lack of worldview change. Through the development of strong social relationships with converts, providing Bible studies, communicating in culturally appropriate methods, and overcoming negative attitudes toward the nomads, missionaries are likely to win nomads’ trust, enabling the development of a Christian worldview.

Second, a contextualized ministry is vital. Contextualization requires that nomads should hear and respond to the Word of God in their cultural setting. This can only be possible if the communication of the gospel is done through the use of cultural methods such as stories, songs, proverbs, sayings, and riddles. A contextualized ministry should also involve the establishment of congregational structures that are compatible with a nomadic life. Since periodic migration is central to the pastoralists’ life, creating nomadic churches and training of missionaries who can provide ministry in nomadic contexts is imperative.

The third strategy is appropriate communication. Sharing the gospel in culturally appropriate ways is imperative for quality and fruitful Christian mission and ministry. Since meaning is often formed and largely influenced by how and what people communicate, the use of familiar methods of transmitting the gospel is necessary. Oral methods such as proverbs, stories, and songs, with which the pastoralists are familiar are vital avenues that will enable nomads to hear and respond to the gospel in what is now termed “heart language.” A specialized ministry that focuses on nomads is fourth. The study showed that nomadic contexts are unique in comparison to settled environments where Christianity is better established and from which most missionaries originate. Specialization will likely benefit ministry as it would enable the recruitment, training, and mobilization of a skilled workforce. It would also ensure that mission resources are better managed and channeled.

Fifth is the incarnational ministries. Response to felt needs among pastoralists is a significant approach that would help to create bridges for sharing the gospel. Since poverty, disease, and limited sources of water are among the many challenges nomads face, Christians can address these pressing needs through specific ministries such as initiating self-help projects, operating health centers, constructing wells, among other initiatives. These will provide needful solutions and empower the nomads in their daily lives.

Sixth, a prayer strategy is also of utmost importance. It is obvious that human efforts, without divine intervention, are insufficient when witnessing to people grounded in unbiblical worldviews. Mission workers will need to be guided and energized by divine power in order to know the
what, when, and how to share the gospel. The strategy also challenges those who are not directly involved to intercede for divine intervention on behalf of missionaries and their targets for success to be achieved.

Finally, there is need for a group-oriented approach to evangelism among nomads. Their communal thinking requires that missionaries must recognize nomads' social structures by approaching them as a group rather than as individuals. Since the community elders are the spokesmen of the community, those engaged in various mission initiatives should seek the elders' permission, or at least notify them of Christian projects in their community.

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