Marketing and Mission: Applying Marketing Principles to Seventh-day Adventist Mission in the Virgin Islands

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ABSTRACT

MARKETING AND MISSION: APPLYING MARKETING PRINCIPLES TO SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST MISSION IN THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

by

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Title: MARKETING AND MISSION: APPLYING PRINCIPLES OF MARKETING TO SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST MISSION IN THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

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Problem

In many Christian circles, marketing management is viewed as irrelevant and irreligious because of the misconceptions that exist among Christians regarding this business discipline. There is, therefore, a very urgent need to clear up these misunderstandings and to create an awareness among Christians as to how marketing principles may be applied to the work of Christian mission and ministry, without violating the spiritual platform on which they stand. The purpose of this project, therefore, is to show how religious institutions can maximize their effectiveness by incorporating market-oriented thinking, planning, and action into their task of fulfilling the mission of God in the world. In order to accomplish this, the project focuses on the
work of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the United States Virgin Islands—showing how a responsible application of the principles of marketing management can assist the church in conducting a more holistic, viable, and successful mission outreach to the people of that region.

Method

This project approaches the topic of mission from a marketing perspective. The study begins by showing how some current trends contribute to the ongoing discussion about the applicability of marketing tools to the operation of nonprofit organizations and religion, in particular. After discussing some of the major criticisms leveled against marketing by religious thinkers and organizations, the section ends by showing how marketing relates to mission and ministry. It does so by portraying biblical images of a few core marketing concepts, supported by the writings of Ellen G. White.

Next, a brief survey of Adventist mission in the Virgin Island is presented, and the implications that Adventists’ self-understanding and claim to "remnancy" have for the present and future mission of the church in the region are explored. Then, the challenge of adjusting the typical Seventh-day Adventist mind-set in the Virgin Islands is investigated, and a biblical basis for shifting Adventist mission paradigm to a more strategic, need-centered orientation is outlined. Growing out of this, I show how the strategic marketing planning process can assist the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Virgin Islands in coordinating its operations and activities to effectively accomplish its mission objective.
Conclusion

Even though marketing can be a very useful tool for mission and ministry, it must not be handled as a panacea to all the challenges facing the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Virgin Islands. Its application, in most cases, will be limited to organizational efficiency and effectiveness, creating points of contact for mission and ministry, and developing a mental framework that focuses on people and their needs—i.e., physical, spiritual, social, and otherwise.
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A Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
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July 9, 1999
TO

ther, for her spiritual nurture and prayers,

and

In memory of James Edmeade,

my spiritual mentor
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In his article "What Business Can Learn from Nonprofits," Peter F. Drucker stated the following:

Twenty years ago, management was a dirty word for those involved in nonprofit organizations. It meant business, and nonprofits prided themselves on being free of the taint of commercialism and above such sordid considerations as the bottom line. Now most of them have learned that nonprofits need management even more than business does, precisely because they lack the discipline of the bottom line. The nonprofits are, of course, still dedicated to "doing good." But they also realize that good intentions are not substitutes for organization and leadership, for accountability, performance, and results. These require management and that, in turn, begins with the organizations' mission.

This insightful observation by Drucker clearly reflected the posture of most nonprofit organizations during the early and middle sixties. However, during the latter part of that same decade another new development was taking place that was also going to heavily impact the nonprofit sectors of society. The idea of applying the concepts of marketing to nonprofit organizations was beginning to evolve among such leading marketing thinkers as Philip Kotler and Sidney J. Levy. In an effort to formulate and disseminate their ideas, Kotler and Levy made the very poignant observation that

marketing is a pervasive societal activity that goes considerably beyond the selling of toothpaste, soap, and steel. Political contests remind us that candidates are marketed as well as soap; student recruitment in colleges reminds us that "causes" are marketed. Yet... no attempt is made to redefine the meaning of product development, pricing, distribution, and communication in these newer contexts to see if they have a useful meaning. No attempt is made to examine whether the principles of "good" marketing in traditional product areas are transferable to marketing of services, persons, and ideas.¹

It is extremely difficult to read such a cogent statement without honestly admitting to its veracity and practicality. The truth is that many of the above-mentioned activities are already at home in nonprofit circles, but they are carried on under the guise of different labeling. Nonetheless, the observation made by Kotler and Levy needs very honest, thoughtful consideration by leaders of nonprofit (and more so religious) organizations, who would otherwise prefer to turn a deaf ear at any attempt to link the discipline of marketing management to the practice of religion.

Therefore, it is rather reassuring to note that there have been many positive changes toward management and marketing in the nonprofit sector during the last two decades. These changes have come about because of many forces shaping social behavior in modern society. Tim Wright² has done a good job in identifying some of these forces as shifting paradigms: the shift (1) from rural to urban development, (2) from group goal orientation to individual goal-setting, (3) from an industrial to personalized


economy, (4) from people serving institutions to institutions serving people, (5) from standardization to innovation, (6) from mass marketing to niche marketing, (7) from traditional family life to alternative families (from verbal/written communications to visual communications), (8) from left brain to right brain—i.e., truth is a matter more of experience than of facts, (9) from denominationalism to congregationalism—i.e., from a one-size-fits-all religion to customization based on congregational needs, (10) from religion to spirituality, and (11) from "Christendom" to "secularity."1

Two other major factors that have had a telling influence in helping nonprofit organizations to consider the marketing option in their daily operations were: (1) growing competition among volunteer communities, which have impinged upon the availability of funds from benevolent donor organizations; and (2) individual contributors becoming more picky in deciding where they were willing to offer their support (time, money, and influence, etc.). Added to this, many churches are moving away bit by bit from product-driven marketing ("This is what we have to sell—take or leave it") toward a more balanced approach that listens to the community. Moreover, other major issues are facing contemporary Christians today. Douglas Webster sums them up in the following questions:

How do we present Christ to a consumer-oriented, sex-crazed, self-preoccupied, success-focused, technologically sophisticated, light-hearted, entertainment-centered

1See George G. Hunter III, How to Reach Secular People (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992); Loren B. Mead, The Once and Future Church: Reinventing the Congregation for a New Mission Frontier (Washington, DC: Alban Institute, 1991), for a more detailed treatment of this trend.
culture? How do we strategize, as Jesus did with the disciples, to distinguish between popular opinion and Spirit-led confession? How does the confessional church, as a community of Christian disciples, engage the world?¹

These very complex issues cannot be satisfactorily dealt with by offering pat answers or ad-hoc solutions. Webster appears to provide an avenue of approach to the situation by providing two suggestive questions:

If we’re in the business of reaching people for Christ, why not take marketing strategies that have proved successful among baby boomers and use them to help motivate this powerful and influential target audience to buy into the Christian faith? If polls and surveys tell us what turns Americans on, what’s wrong with using that knowledge to turn the keys of the kingdom?²

However, in spite of these adaptations among nonprofit organizations, there still remain some negative, residual attitudes within some religious communities towards incorporating principles of marketing management in the life and work of the Church. This is partly because many people have the wrong perception of what marketing is all about. In an effort to clarify the issue George Barna explains that

marketing is not about a new way of perceiving the Lord Jesus Christ; it’s about coping with change, competing against the world’s attractive alternatives and making the gospel responsive to today’s consumer. It involves taking the essentials of the ancient faith and contextualizing them to speak to the needs of modern man.³

¹Douglas Webster, Selling Jesus (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 21-22.

²Ibid., 21.

The purpose of this project to show how religious institutions can maximize their effectiveness by incorporating market-oriented thinking, planning, and action into their task of fulfilling the mission of God in the world. The writer hopes to accomplish this purpose by focusing on the work of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the United States Virgin Islands\(^1\)—showing how a responsible application of the principles of marketing management can assist the church in conducting a more holistic, viable, and successful mission outreach to the people of that region.

Justification

1. In many Christian circles marketing management is viewed as irrelevant and irreligious because of the misconceptions that exist among Christians regarding this business discipline. There is, therefore, a very urgent need to clear up these misunderstandings and to create an awareness among Christians as to how marketing principles may be applied to the work of Christian mission and ministry, without violating the spiritual platform on which they stand.

2. Despite the fact that mission is a spiritual enterprise, God uses frail earthen vessels, characterized with needs and wants and the baggage of sin, to accomplish His mysterious purpose. Ethical ways and means must therefore be devised to keep God's

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\(^1\)The United States Virgin Islands are a group of islands in the Northern Caribbean, 1770 km. southeast of Miami and 65 km. east of Puerto Rico. In this project the territory is referred to as the Virgin Islands or abbreviated USVI.
heritage motivated and focused as they carry out their assigned task, as well as to call the attention of a busy, secular, post-modern world to the radical claims of Jesus Christ. This pluralistic religious environment makes marketing the untainted gospel of Jesus Christ an absolute necessity.

3. Even though the work of the Seventh-day Adventist Church has been very successful in the Virgin Islands, this success has been skewed in one direction—among migrants of African descent from other non-American Caribbean Islands. Strategic marketing management will go a very long way in helping to develop programs that would target and reach specific ethnic, social, and religious groups in the island territory.

4. The Seventh-day Adventist Church has a most unique product, in terms of message, to "sell" to the Virgin Islands community and the world. However, in many cases, people have not been attracted to or readily embraced it because, among other things, the Church falls short in areas of consumer analysis, product packaging, and efficient utilization of its channels of distribution. This situation creates a very urgent need to equip church leaders and gifted members with basic marketing tools that could enhance their ability for creative ministry and vibrant church growth.

Definition of Terms¹

Because this project seeks to address the task of mission from a marketing

perspective, it is valuable to define the following terms so that they are clearly understood in the context of this presentation.

**Customer:** Anyone (including believers) who is in any way, shape, or form affected by the ministry of the church or congregation.

**Market:** A set of actual or potential individuals or groups who might engage in any voluntary exchange with the church or any of its members.

**Marketing Management:** The process involving the analysis, planning, implementation, and control of carefully formulated programs to bring about voluntary exchange and relationship with specifically targeted markets or customers for the purpose of achieving the organization's mission objective.

**Marketing Mix:** The skillful blending of the elements of product, price, place/s of distribution, promotion, and personalization (customer service) for strategic advantage and maximization of profitability.

**Market Segmentation:** The process of identifying and describing different groups of individuals whom the church or organization may wish to target. It involves identifying bases for segmentation, developing segment profiles, and assessing segment attractiveness.

**Niche:** Having a narrowly defined area of advantage in serving and meeting specific needs of a targeted non-member or group of non-members.

**Positioning:** The act of designing the church's image and value offer so that its customers understand and appreciate what the church stands for in relation to its
competitors. Its purpose is to achieve a desired spot in the minds of the church's audience and potential audience.

**Price:** Anything and anyone real or imaginary that a person has to give up in exchange for the services offered by the church or for any claim presented by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

**Product:** Any good, service, or idea (theology and teachings) offered by the church for which members and non-members will exchange money, time, talent, or something else of value to them.

**Service:** Includes everything done or offered by the church to reach actual or potential members with the claims of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

**Target Marketing:** The act of selecting one or more market segments and developing a positioning and marketing mix strategy for each.

**Limitations**

This study does not attempt to make a wholesale application of all the principles of marketing management to the life and work of the body of Christ, for the author is not so naive to believe that such an application will not violate the high sense of moral integrity and spiritual fervor that accompanies the sacred task of proclaiming the gospel and incorporating believing men and women into the Kingdom of God. The project is limited to an attempt to examine and transfer key marketing principles, concepts, and strategies to the marketing of services, persons, and ideas in a religious context. This will involve a redefining of meaning and application of commonly used marketing terms so
that they can find relevance and acceptance and in a religious setting. Thus marketing management will be used only as a tool for leveraging and enhancing the resources available to the witnessing Christian community to fulfill the Missio Dei in the world.

Second, even though the marketing principles and strategies explored can find general applications in different religious contexts, this study focuses primarily on the work of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Virgin Islands. It is very important to note that this study is not designed to be a standardized manual for using marketing techniques in the fulfillment of the task of Christian mission. Instead, it is a genuine attempt to stimulate and encourage Christian church leaders and their communities to look at the mission challenge from a different perspective, and also to provide a framework within which some degree of creativity, innovation, and experimentation can take place. As such, it is very important to realize that this study is only a small part of ongoing research and exploration in an area that was traditionally considered as forbidden territory by established religions, but which, in recent times, is gaining acceptance even among mainline denominations. Finally, no attempt is made to field-test the suggestions, strategies, or ideas that emerge from this study, since the overall research methodology is more descriptive than prescriptive in nature.¹

¹For information on the requirements for Project II in the Doctor of Ministry program, see Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary Bulletin 1994-95 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1994), 60-61.
Methodology

This project approaches the topic of mission from a marketing perspective. As applied to the church setting

marketing activities can be viewed as those activities designed to achieve a mutually satisfying exchange of value between the church and the population it serves. That is, the goal of church marketing activities should be to facilitate and expedite the flow of value to people (in terms of meeting their spiritual, social, and other personal needs), while also facilitating and expediting the flow of value to the church itself (in terms of societal/congregational acceptance of church teachings, participation in church functions, monetary contributions, etc.).

George Barna describes church marketing as "the performance of both business and ministry activities that impact the church’s target audience with the intention of ministering to and fulfilling their spiritual, social, emotional, or physical needs and thereby satisfy the ministry goals of the church".

With this initial understanding, the study divides into five chapters: Chapter 1 contains the elements of general introduction. Chapter 2 is an investigation of the idea that there is a measure of harmony between mission and the discipline of marketing management. It first deals with defining the Missio Dei and marketing, and then discusses some of the major criticisms leveled against marketing by religious thinkers and organizations. Following this, the chapter shows how marketing relates to mission

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2Barna, Marketing the Church, 41.
and ministry by portrays some biblical images of a few core marketing concepts, supported by the writings of Ellen G. White.

Chapter 3 gives a brief survey of Adventist mission in the Virgin Islands, showing approaches, growth patterns, success, and challenges. It also explores the implications that Adventists' self-understanding and claim to "remnancy" have for the present and future mission of the church in the region. Chapter 4 seeks to deal with the challenge of adjusting the typical Seventh-day Adventist mind-set in the Virgin Islands and to provide a basis for shifting Adventist mission paradigm to a more strategic, need-centered orientation. Growing out of this, chapter 5 proposes workable marketing principles and strategies that will help to enhance the Church's resource management; and to stimulate the interest of church leaders, pastors, and members with alternative approaches for doing mission. It also provides an example of the strategic marketing planning process to illustrate how the Church in the Virgin Islands region can coordinate its activities to effectively accomplish any mission objective. Chapter 6 gives the general summary and conclusion of the project.
CHAPTER 2

MARKETING AND THE MISSIO DEI

What Is the Missio Dei?

The Missio Dei embraces all the divine-human activities involved in carrying out God's salvific purpose in all the world, and has as its ultimate objective the complete reconciliation and restoration of the earth and the human race. Mission was born in the heart of a loving God who, in His divine wisdom and foreknowledge, devised a plan from the foundation of the world (Rev 13:8), to take care of the catastrophic emergency of sin. Our God is a missionary God! Yet, while the well-spring of the Missio Dei was divine love, the catalyst for that mission was man's utter lost-ness and dire need of a Saviour.

Ellen White said that "the Son of God, heaven's glorious Commander, was touched with pity for the fallen race. His heart was moved with infinite compassion as the woes of the


2Ellen White is considered by Seventh-day Adventists to be the Lord's messenger to the church. Her ministry and writings have been a continuing, authoritative source of comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction for the church, and make clear that the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested. See Fundamental Belief 17 in Seventh-day Adventists Believe... (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1988).
lost world rose up before Him."¹ And in the mysterious counsel of peace (Zech 6:13), Christ offered up Himself as man’s substitute and sacrifice before the foundation of the earth was laid (Rev 13:8).

The Missio Dei, then, was born out of man’s disobedience, downfall, and impending doom. The fall of man created an urgent need throughout the universe, and Christ embarked upon a mission to the death in order to fill it; for it took one equal to God to pay the enormous price for man’s redemption. From the moment man sinned, the missionary God left the glories of heaven and came down to the benighted planet, seeking after him: "Adam where are you?" (Gen 3:9 NRSV). It was in the context of this very first mission enterprise that God declared His mission statement to Adam and Eve, Satan, and the on-looking universe: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Gen 3:15 KJV).

This prophetic declaration was to accomplish at least two things: (1) to plant a seed of resistance (enmity) in the heart of man so that he would not be under the complete dominion of Satan, and (2) to guarantee the success of the mission enterprise through the prophetic Seed of the woman (Jesus Christ). Ellen White² declares that, left to themselves, people would have formed an alliance with the devil to lead a rebellion.


against the God of heaven. However; in His infinite wisdom, mercy, and love, God specially interposed to thwart the plan of the devil so that man, through cooperation with God, could successfully resist the sophistries of the evil one. This was a miracle of divine grace through which God was going to thwart the plan of the devil. Ellen White wrote:

It is the grace that Christ implants in the soul which creates in man enmity against Satan. Without this converting grace and renewing power, man would continue to be the captive of Satan, a servant ever ready to do his bidding. But the new principle in the soul creates conflict where hitherto had been peace.¹

In other words, God was preparing the soil of the human soul so that the prophetic 'Seed of the woman' can take root and bear fruit to His honor and glory. In the Seed of the woman was the foreshadowing of a long history of resistance against the hosts of darkness, as the redemptive purpose of God advanced in the earth. From righteous Abel to faithful Noah, the early patriarchs kept faith and hope alive as they called the attention of the then-known world to the divine purposes of God. Yet, this was not without resistance from the seed of the serpent (the wicked line of human beings who carry out the biddings of the devil). Ellen White revealed that

The murder of Abel was the first example of the enmity that God had declared would exist between the serpent and the seed of the woman—between Satan and his subjects and Christ and His followers. Through man's sin, Satan had gained control of the human race, but Christ would enable them to cast off the yoke. Whenever, through faith in the Lamb of God, a soul renounces the service of sin, Satan's wrath is kindled. . . . And wherever there are any who will stand in vindication of the righteousness of the law of God, the same spirit will be manifested against them. It is the spirit that through all the ages has set up the stake and kindled the burning pile for

¹Ibid., 506.
the disciples of Christ.¹

The people before the flood resisted the grace of God and His urgent appeal to turn from their wicked ways. Their alliance with Satan was so strong that "every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually" (Gen 6:5 NRSV). To save His mission enterprise, God had to make the painful decision to destroy these antediluvians and preserve a remnant, in Noah and his family, to continue His redemptive purpose in the earth.

The next great revelation of the Missio Dei was at the call of Abraham. The Lord said:

Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed. (Gen 12:1-3, emphasis mine).

As with Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, so now with His servant Abraham God made His intentions really clear. He was going to make Abraham the father of a great nation, and through Abraham’s line the Redeemer of the world would come to be a blessing to all the families of earth.² The call of Abraham gave birth to the nation Israel, which became the repository of God’s truth and channel of grace to the world. It was God’s purpose, through Israel, to expand and extend His redemptive mission to the ends of the earth. His plan was to multiply them, bless them, and produce the long-awaited

¹White, Patriarchs and Prophets, 77.

²Ibid., 125.
Seed of the woman (the Messiah) through them, so that redemptive healing grace could flow in copious abundance to lost sinners. However, Israel took all the blessings of God and hoarded them to themselves. Their cherished position as the chosen people of God filled the Jewish nation with boastful pride, blind bigotry, and blatant exclusivism. And the rich resource of truth, given them to bless the world, became a polluted reservoir of rituals and ceremonies that hedged up the way of salvation, by placing heavy, meaningless burdens upon the seekers after God.

However, when the Seed of the woman, the Messiah, came He stripped away the husk of human traditions and pharisaical teachings, and recovered the sweet kernel of the everlasting gospel of the Kingdom. Christ came not only as an extension of the Missio Dei, but also as its only Guarantee of success. He came to restore the mission of God to its rightful place, and to enlist the service of men to help carry out the same. Jesus’ vision of that mission was very clear. He said:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight of the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor. (Luke 4:18, 19 NRSV)

For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost. (Luke 19:10 NRSV)

Jesus realized that in order for the Missio Dei to survive and be able to accomplish its redemptive purpose, He could not work within the established Jewish system of religion. Therefore, immediately after His baptism (symbolic anointing) and victory over the Tempter, He went about the task of setting up His Church (Gr. ekklesia).

I do not believe it was at all coincidental that the first candidates for Jesus’ new
mission order, the Church, were fishermen; for, somehow, the sounding of the word that described their trade gave added focus to the central objective of Christ’s mission. After all, Christ came to seek and to save lost people, and it was in this context that He used the trade name of His first disciples to enlist them as missionaries for the Kingdom of God. His words to them were: ‘Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men’ (Matt 4:18 KJV). The call of the Church (Gr. ekklesia) to participate in the Missio Dei is a call to fish for people, to find people wherever they are and win them for the Kingdom of God. George Eldon Ladd writes:

When Christ had accomplished His redemptive work of death and resurrection, the divine purpose in history moved from Israel, who rejected the Gospel, to the Church—the fellowship of both Jews and Gentiles who accepted the Gospel. . . . The Church is "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation" (1 Peter 2:9); and it is in the present mission of the Church, as it carries the Good News of the Kingdom of God unto all the world, that the redemptive purpose of God in history is being worked out.¹

Where Israel failed in fulfilling its divine charge to extend the Kingdom of God in the world, God expects the Church, built upon the Rock (His Son and Our Saviour, Jesus Christ), to prevail against the kingdom of darkness and to accomplish His redemptive purpose in the earth. The divine mandate for the Church of Christ is very clear:

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age. (Matt 28:19, 20 NRSV).

It is very clear that with Christ’s command we also have the assurance of His

presence and His authority. Yet, it is only as the Church engages in Christ’s mission enterprise that these gifts are truly realized. The Missio Dei is not an option for the Church today, it is the raison d’être for its existence. The Church and all that is does (important as they are) are not an end in themselves; but always a means to God’s great end (the salvation of lost humanity). This fact must never be lost sight of; otherwise the Church would be in grave danger of becoming dysfunctional, obsolete, and irrelevant to the redemptive purpose of God and the salvific needs of lost mankind.

Many are the challenges that face the Church of this present post-modern, secular age, but it cannot, and dare not, relinquish its task as the only citadel of hope for the perishing world. Although modern society does not look to the Church as the source of authority today, its voice must be clearly heard above the din and cacophonous distractions of relativism, narcissism, secularism, and whatever else is attempting to shape the thoughts and lives of lost men and women. Since the Church of the Living God dare not abandon its charge to fish for people in this corrupt and confused age, the church must develop creative ways to engage them and present them with the good news of the gospel of salvation. I find the following quotes from Ellen White very insightful in relating to this situation. She said:

In the cities of today where there is so much to attract and please, the people can be interested by no ordinary efforts. Ministers of God’s appointment will find it necessary to put forth extraordinary efforts in order to arrest the attention of the multitudes... They must make use of every means that can possibly be devised for causing the truth to stand out clearly and distinctly.1

Let every worker in the Master's vineyard, study, plan, devise methods, to reach the people where they are. We must do something out of the common course of things. We must arrest the attention. We must be deadly in earnest. We are on the very verge of times of trouble and perplexities that are scarcely dreamed of.¹

In this regard, I have suggested, in my introduction to this paper, that the application of marketing principles to the mission and ministry of the Church is a viable option worthy of exploration by members of the Christian community in meeting the present mission challenges facing the Church.

What Is Marketing?

So what is marketing? No one definition will suffice, since marketing is a broad term that encompasses all of the activities that lead up to an exchange of equally valued goods [services, or ideas] between consenting parties. Activities such as advertising, public relations, strategic planning, audience research, product distribution, fund-raising and product pricing, developing a vision statement, and customer service are all elements of marketing. When these elements are combined in a transaction in which the parties involved exchange items of equivalent worth, the marketing act has been consummated.²

The American Marketing Association defines marketing as "the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion, and distribution of goods, services, and ideas to create exchange with target groups that satisfy customer and


organizational objectives.¹ According to Shawchuck and others, and in the context of
the church;

marketing is a process for making concrete decisions about what the congregation is
going to do, and not do, to achieve its mission. It is not selling, advertising, or
promotion—though it may include all these. It is the analysis, planning,
implementation, and control of carefully formulated programs to bring about
voluntary exchange and relationships with specifically targeted markets for the
purpose of achieving the organizational mission objectives.²

This is one of the most comprehensive definitions of marketing that I have come
across in my research, and it embraces several very important themes.³ First, marketing
is a managerial tool for effective and efficient decision-making—analysis, planning,
implementation, and control. Second, marketing is characterized by carefully formulated
programs, and not just ad hoc activities to achieve a desired end. Marketing involves a
whole range of activities before a product, service, or idea is finally sold, and it is very
easy to isolate one of these activities and make it define the whole marketing process, as
is often the case. Third, marketing seeks to bring about voluntary, mutually beneficial
responses. It represents the philosophical alternative to force, guilt, or fear, and operates
on the basis of value-exchange, forged in the context of a voluntary, mutually satisfying
relationship. Fourth, marketing involves the selection of target markets, instead of the

¹"AMA Board Approves New Marketing Definition," Marketing News 1 (March

²Shawchuck, and others, Marketing For Congregations: Choosing to Serve

³Ibid.
futile attempt of trying to be all things to all men. With the scarcity of resources facing most religious organizations, target marketing may be their best option for the most efficient use of those resources. Fifth, the purpose of marketing is to help the organization ensure its survival, through efficient and effective analysis of all its operational processes, mission objectives, goals, and accomplishments. Sixth, marketing helps to enhance the organization's offerings by tailoring and positioning them in terms of the needs of the target market, rather than in terms of the organization's personal tastes.

Shawchuck and others clearly point out that effective marketing is user-oriented, not seller-oriented. This does not imply, however, that one's theology is adjusted to meet a market's demand. It does mean that the process by which a congregation presents its core doctrines, ministries, and programs should be developed by considering the prospective user's perspective, rather than the seller's perspective, of what constitutes value in the offering.¹

Seventh, marketing utilizes and blends a set of tools called the marketing mix—product design, pricing, promotion, place (i.e., distribution system), and personalization (i.e., after-sale service and support) to develop and deliver the best possible product and benefits to the target market or customer.

Applying marketing to a church setting, Stephen W. McDaniel says that marketing activities can be viewed as those activities designed to achieve a mutually satisfying exchange of value between the church and the population it serves. That is, the goal of church marketing activities should be to facilitate and expedite the flow of value to people (in terms of meeting their spiritual, social, and other personal needs), while also facilitating and expediting the flow of value to the church itself (in terms of societal/congregational acceptance of church teachings, participation in church activity).

¹Ibid., 47-48.
functions, monetary contributions, etc.). Both parties should benefit.¹

In more recent times, marketing has been expanded to include a social process in which societal needs are identified, expanded, and served by a set of institutions. Stidsen and Schutte say that "the role of marketing in society is to match supply and demand, and to provide an informational basis for responsible decisions by marketers, consumers, and government."² It is also rather interesting to note that, more recently, marketing professionals are increasingly shifting their focus away from achieving short-run sales, to cultivating long-run rewarding relationships with customers. This sort of focus is of very important benefit to both the business and non-business sectors of society, and is very much in harmony with the spirit of membership cultivation in religious organizations.³

"Marketing [then], is much more than just an isolated business function. It is a philosophy that guides the entire organization."⁴ McKenna places the icing on the cake with his unequivocal definition and explanation of what marketing is and is not. He declares:

Marketing today is not a function; it is a way of doing business. Marketing is not a new ad campaign or this month's promotion. Marketing has to be all-pervasive, part


of everyone’s job description, from the receptionists to the board of directors. Its job is neither to fool the customer nor to falsify the company’s image. It is to integrate the customer into the design of the product and to design a systematic process for interaction that will create substance in the relationship.¹

Supporting the integrity of marketing as a discipline, Kotler states:

Marketing works well when the objective of both parties is fairness and mutual satisfaction. Fairness means that the exchange is completed with full disclosure by both parties, and that both parties are pursuing a reasonable deal. Mutual satisfaction is generally achieved by attempting to understand and fulfill the needs of the other party, while seeking some response from the party that will fulfill your needs.²

In order to create a balanced understanding of marketing management, it is better to examine it in the light of the different organizational approaches to the marketplace. Kotler and Andreasen³ suggest that four competing orientations evolved over the last hundred years in the business sector that have had significant impact on the nonprofit organizations: product, production, sale, and customer or marketing orientations. Later on, Shawchuck and others⁴ added the philosophy of societal marketing orientation.

1. Production Orientation holds that success will come to those organizations that have the lowest cost and most efficient production and distribution systems. This orientation grew out of the industrial revolution when companies focused their attention on perfecting their manufacturing techniques because demand for goods exceeded the


³Kotler and Andreasen, 40-53.

⁴Shawchuck and others, 64.
Although times and market conditions have changed, there are still some organizations that continue to focus their attention on the production process, even if human needs must be bent to meet the requirements of the process. In this type of organization, the system requirements come first, often ahead of employees and customers alike. It is driven by market demand and productivity, in the business environment, and more by tradition and policy in nonprofit organizations.

2. **Product Orientation** holds that consumers will favor those products that offer the most quality, performance, or innovative features. Managers in these product-oriented organizations focus their energy on making superior products and improving them over time. These managers assume that if they offer the marketplace a well-made product that customers will beat a path to their doors. Product-oriented companies, says Kotler, often design their products with little or no customer input. This orientation leads to "marketing myopia," a focus on the product rather than on the customer's needs.

3. **Sale Orientation** holds that success will come to those organizations that best persuade customers to accept their offerings rather than competitors' or rather than no offering at all. This orientation grew out of the post-industrial era, when the depression of the 1930s ate away at strong consumer demands for products. Manufacturers, then, believed success lay in outselling the competition. The question they asked was not

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1Bovée and Thill, 13.

"What does the customer want?" but "How can we get them to buy what we make?"

Thus, the driving forces of that era were product advertising, promotion, and distribution.

The selling orientation is still very pervasive today in many organizations, especially where there is overcapacity or where the organization produces "unsought goods or services." Nonprofit organizations use this orientation for fund-raising, recruiting new organizational blood, and for political campaigning. Productive overcapacity often places companies in the selling mode, where the goal is to sell what they make rather than make what the customer wants. Thus, prospects are bombarded by all available media from every possible angle as advertising agencies and sales representatives try to induce them to buy something, even anything. As a result, the people tend to identify marketing with hard selling and advertising, and are very much surprised when they are told that the most important part of marketing is not selling!

The big risk with the selling orientation is that many customers end up with products they do not need or like, and, as a result, use their word-of-mouth influence and pen-power to denigrate the reputation of the guilty (and sometimes innocent) companies.

4. Customer or Marketing Orientation holds that success will come to that

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1Bovée and Thill, 13.

2Overcapacity exists when a company produces more of a product than is necessary to achieve its target profit.

3These are goods and services that consumers do not normally think of buying, such as insurance, encyclopedias, some church-related literature and programs, etc.

organization that best determines the perceptions, needs, and wants of target markets and satisfies them through the design, communication, pricing, and delivery of appropriate and competitively viable offerings.

The 1950s were the start of the marketing era, during which, companies began to practice marketing as we know it in the current form. Consumers became wealthy, more sophisticated, very picky, and less willing to settle for just anything the market tried to persuade them to buy. They became sovereign and ultimately determined what was to be produced and when transactions were to be made. This led companies to form marketing departments that paid very close attention to customers’ wants and needs. In other words, companies developed a customer or marketing orientation.

According to Kotler, this marketing orientation concept rests on four main pillars:¹

1. Target Market—since no company can operate in every market and satisfy every need. Business organizations must be able to define their target market and design a marketing strategy that would effectively reach and satisfy it.

2. Customer Need—which is the driving force behind company operations. The organization must be able to not only understand customer needs, but be able to fill them better than the competition.

3. Coordinated Marketing—since the various marketing elements must be coordinated among themselves, and marketing must be coordinated with other company

¹Ibid., 18-23.
departments. Therefore, companies must carry out external as well as internal marketing.

d. Profitability—since organizational goals must be met; but profit must come as the by-product of doing the job well.

Bovée and Thill bring this theory together in one terse statement: "The marketing concept combines functional integration with customer satisfaction and long-term profitability."1 This sort of focus creates a marketing process that works from the outside in, and not the inside out. Effective and efficient marketing begins with the customer and not with the organization. It is a world where the organization exists for the customer, and not so much the customer for the organization.

5. Societal Marketing Orientation holds that the main task of the organization is to determine the needs, wants, and interests of target markets and to adapt the organization to delivering satisfactions that preserve or enhance the consumer's and society's well-being on a long-term as well as short-term basis. This marketing orientation developed because many marketing professionals and ethicists have questioned whether the marketing concept is an appropriate philosophy to speak to major societal issues such as environmental deterioration, world hunger and poverty, explosive population growth and resource shortages, and neglected social services.2 In this regard,

1Bovée and Thill, 14.

Kotler asks the most crucial question: Are companies that do an excellent job of satisfying individual consumer wants necessarily acting in the best long-run interest of consumers and society? These concerns form the grounding for a new enlargement of the marketing concept, which challenge marketers to ethically balance consumer wants and interests with company profits and long-term societal welfare in their market planning. A direct result of this enlargement is a rising diffusion of marketing consciousness in almost every sector of society. Professional service providers, such as physicians, lawyers, accountants, and architects, are now taking an increasing interest in marketing. Various government and private nonprofit agencies are also launching social marketing campaigns to discourage cigarette smoking, excessive drinking, hard-drug usage, and unsafe sex practices. Even multinational companies are investing heavily to improve their global marketing skills.

In support of societal market orientation, Shawchuck and others conclude:

Adherence to a societal marketing orientation is consistent with the biblical "Golden Rule" of concern for the long-term welfare of others. If profit and nonprofit organizations alike were to practice a societal marketing concept, it is likely that our quality of life would improve. The quality of life includes the quality, quantity, availability, and cost of goods; the quality of cultural environment; the quality of our spiritual lives and how that affects our relationship with God and with each other.

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1Kotler, Marketing Management, 28.


4Shawchuck and others, 64.
Indeed, the evolution of marketing over the last hundred years informs us that people will continue to search for ways and means to improve the quality of life through need satisfaction. McKenna sees marketing as a major tool to help people do just that:

In a world of mass manufacturing, the counterpart was mass marketing. In a world of flexible manufacturing, the counterpart is flexible marketing. The technology comes first, the ability to market follows. The technology embodies adaptability, programmability, and customizability, now comes marketing that delivers on those qualities.1

Dealing with Criticisms

In order to make marketing the gospel an acceptable practice among Christian communities, however, it has become extremely important to reduce and, if necessary, eliminate the cognitive dissonance created in the minds of many whenever attempts have been made to marry the disciplines of marketing management and religion. Therefore, in this section, it seems rather appropriate to first deal with the criticisms most often raised in religious communities against the use of marketing principles in a religious context. I also seek to explore the critical views of marketing professionals against the use of marketing concepts in what they describe as the non-business sectors of society.

4McKenna, 65-79.
Norman Shawchuck and Others

In their book *Marketing for Congregations*, Shawchuck and others suggest five major areas of criticism that are commonly advanced against the use of marketing principles in Christian ministry and mission:

1. **Marketing wastes money given to God.** Marketing can be very costly, but religious organizations can opt to select low-cost approaches in the implementation of their marketing strategy. However, this does not negate the fact that proper market research should be conducted in order to effectively assess the needs of the organization's target market, and generate intelligent and reliable managerial decision-making. On the other hand, some religious organizations waste a lot of money in supporting structures and systems that have outlived their usefulness due to changes in demographics or in social and environmental factors. Effective marketing management can assist these organizations and cut these losses by offering quality leadership in such areas as strategic planning, cost-benefit analysis, new opportunity recognition, and organizational restructuring.

2. **Marketing is intrusive.** In an attempt to understand the needs of the people they serve, marketing researchers and salespersons often have to call on the homes of prospective clients, but, in some cases, indiscrete marketers have been known to impinge upon the privacy of potential customers. Religious institutions are not innocent in this regard, since they too conduct high-powered door-to-door campaigns, telethons, and the

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1Shawchuck and others, 38-41.
like, to raise funds, to sell or advertise literature, or to promote evangelistic outreach.

Many unchurched or secular people often take a very dim view of organized religion because of the pretentious attitude of many religious adherents who approach them to sell their faith, literature, or program. Their approach generally says to the prospect: "What I have to offer you is much more important than whatever you are doing right now, so you need to stop, look, and listen very carefully, until I am through with you." C. Merle Crawford makes a very salient point that gives balance to this issue of unnecessary intrusion on public privacy:

Marketing research must be carried on to learn the needs and wants of people and their attitude toward the congregation's current offerings so that it can deliver greater satisfaction to its target publics. At the same time, congregations, and other religious organizations, must show a sensitivity to the public's desire for privacy.1

3. Marketing is manipulative. This argument is advanced mainly by those who do not really understand what marketing is all about. Rather than being manipulative, the marketing process seeks to facilitate mutually beneficial and often ongoing exchange between the marketer and the targeted prospect. It is oriented towards customer value and satisfaction. However, since both marketing and Christian witnessing attempt to influence people's behavior, and since there is such a fine line between influencing and manipulating, discretion and good ethical conduct are needed by both marketers and Christians. Religious leaders must always guard against compromising their faith or exploiting their audience in order to gain some favored advantage.

4. **Marketing works against the spirit of leadership.** Shawchuck and others argue that if one interprets marketing as the act of responding to the needs and interests of one’s congregation, it would put him/her, as a leader, in a response mode rather than a leadership mode.¹ Leaders would constantly seek to address the felt needs of people by tailoring their programs and preaching in an attempt to satisfy those needs. This response mode is especially necessary since the Church is comprised, for the most part, of a volunteer community, which, in recent times, has become more selective and need-oriented in its approach to volunteer work. According to Douglas W. Johnson,

> Volunteers today are more selective in what they do. The church has competition for the time and energy of volunteers. Volunteers choose where to give their time. They do not confine their expression of Christian commitment solely to the church, but choose the place or places where they can grow and express themselves through volunteer activities.²

Marketing, therefore, does not nullify the spirit of leadership, but rather strengthens it with creativity, focus, and flexibility. It brings to leadership a very strong people perspective.

5. **Marketing desacrilizes religion.** It is not without reason that marketing is regarded with such negativity by religious people. To a large degree, these people have associated marketing with selling and advertising, and many of them have been the victims of unscrupulous sales people, and have also witnessed unethical promotional gimmicks within religious circles. Sidney Levy believes that marketing is most

¹Shawchuck and others, 41.

stigmatized among the management disciplines because it is associated with the many frustrations of wanting and giving—with material things and guilt over the desire for them, with money and its deflection of direct interest in providing goods and services—leading to the projection of these frustrations on marketing and marketers, and to the synecdochic equation of the whole [marketing] field with its worst manifestations.¹

It is, therefore, necessary to distinguish marketing as an ongoing mutual-exchange process from the sometimes objectionable use made of any segment of that process.

Marketing Is at Odds with the Biblical View of Reality

In a very balanced editorial article written in Christianity Today, Craig Parro evaluated the church-growth movement through the eye of church marketing.⁲ While Parro honestly outlined five needed perspectives a marketing orientation brings to church growth—of people focus, stewardship focus, outreach focus, focus on church-based ministry, and focus on the inclusiveness of faith—he also presented four areas where a marketing orientation posed a threat to the Biblical view of reality

View of Persons

Parro believes that marketing's reductionist view of persons merely as customers, defined simply by their "felt needs," robs them of their dignity and value as human beings created in the image of God. He contends, and rightly so, that "many are totally blind to


their greatest needs—forgiveness and a relationship with God. One 'unfelt need' is for transcendence. While it appears that marketing uses jargons that seem reductionistic in approach, there is nothing endemic about the discipline that restricts its focus to satisfying felt needs. The goal of religious marketing is never to reduce or restrict the definition of persons to "felt needs," but to use the satisfaction of those felt needs to create bridges that will facilitate ongoing exchange of values between the organization and those individuals it is trying to reach with its offerings—be it message, services, programs, or ideas. The focus here is to lead people from the point of their felt needs (immanence—bringing the Living Christ into their everyday life situation), to the realization and satisfaction of their unfelt needs (transcendence—a dynamic personal relationship with the God of the universe). The end result in this approach is not just customer satisfaction, but also customer transformation. When Jesus encountered the woman at Jacob's well (John 4), He engaged her first at the point of her felt need (water). Once He had won her attention and confidence, He offered her something better—forgiveness and freedom from her guilt-ridden past. It is rather interesting here that Jesus used a thing as simple as water to reach an adulterous woman with the gospel, and through her, an entire village. This woman was one of the few people in Jesus' ministry to whom He revealed Himself as the long-awaited Messiah. What transcendence! Ellen White wrote:

1Ibid.

2Bruce Wrenn, "Can (Should) Religion Be Marketed?" Quarter Review 14, no. 2 (Summer 1994): 117-134.
The Prince of teachers, He sought access to the people by the pathway of their most familiar associations. He presented truth in such a way that ever after it was to His hearers intertwined with their most hallowed recollections and sympathies. He taught in a way that made them feel the completeness of His identification with their interest and happiness. His instruction was so direct, His illustrations were so appropriate, His words so sympathetic and cheerful, that His hearers were charmed.1

View of the Message

Parro argues that since the consumer ultimately defines the product, a market-driven church will be sorely tempted to compromise its message in content and tone. He portrays marketing as solicitation, wooing and entertaining on the one hand, and the gospel as confronting on the other. While the temptation to compromise the gospel message is an everyday reality not just for market-driven churches, but for all churches, one must remember that marketing, like money, is only a tool that can be used for good or evil, to bless or curse. All depends on the moral integrity of the user. Shawchuck and others reassure us that marketing does not require that a religious body alter its theology, doctrines, or mission to meet market demands. Rather, marketing helps to communicate and persuade people of the worth of religious experience, and to demonstrate the value of religion in their lives and of the beneficial consequences of their active involvement with an organized religious institution.2

Parro also portrays marketing as solicitation, wooing, and entertaining on the one hand, and the gospel as confronting on the other. I believe that the gospel is not only confronting, but wooing and soliciting as well. The Holy Spirit confronts, captivates, and


2Shawchuck and others, Marketing for Congregations, 51.
even slays, but the Holy Spirit also woos, entreats, and pleads with sinners. A careful examination of the ministry of Jesus Christ will show that His stance toward sinners and the preaching was not always confrontational. As a matter of fact, Jesus was more confronting with the scribes and pharisees than He was with sinners. Ellen White clearly portrays Christ's posture as He presented the gospel to the people of His day:

In Christ is the tenderness of the shepherd, the affection of the parent, and the matchless grace of the compassionate Saviour. His blessings He presents in the most alluring terms. He is not content merely to announce these blessings; He presents them in the most attractive way, to excite a desire to possess them. So His servants are to present the riches of the glory of the unspeakable Gift.¹

View of Truth

Parro asserts here that marketing is empirical by nature, and takes a reductionistic approach to research, distilling communities, lifestyles, and attitudes into summary statistics. He also implies that marketing research tends to focus on 'the what' about the subject and not the why. In a very quip answer to this assertion, Wrenn responds:

To view marketing as merely a data-driven management science is to ignore a major field of marketing—commonly called consumer behavior—which is constantly seeking to answer the question "Why do people behave as they do?" The use of statistical summaries of a community's demographic and lifestyle composition is no substitute for understanding the processes by which people arrive at choices. Marketers do use statistics, but effective marketers always understand the people and personalities those statistics represent.²

¹Ellen White, Desire of Ages (Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1940), 826.

²Wrenn, 117-134.
Source of Trust

Parro expresses a legitimate concern that, because of the gains churches may achieve by incorporating a marketing orientation in their ministry, there may be a tendency to place more confidence in marketing techniques than to rely on the almighty arm of Jehovah for success. Clearly, this is not a statement to refute because the impending danger of giving God a backseat to human devising and techniques is very real. However, religious marketers are very well aware that marketing can play only a supportive role to ministry, and should never be treated as an end in itself. Again, Wrenn articulates this idea very well:

Marketing is not enough for an effective ministry. More important than marketing, or any management approach, is the spirit of the congregation and the spirituality of the leaders and workers. The best marketing plan in the world cannot compensate for spiritual lethargy or confusion, so that none are able to listen in the silent closets of the heart where God awaits to communicate with us. Nor can a marketing plan counterbalance a lack of vision. Spirituality, vision, discernment, the pastor’s integrity—marketing cannot provide these.¹

Admittedly, Parro presented a very fair case for the role of marketing in the church-growth movement. Even though he had some concerns over some major issues a marketing orientation will raise in the Christian arena, Parro concluded his article by positively stating that "churches that are both Bible-driven and market-sensitive leave ample room for God’s surprises. Marketing is one tool of many that God may use for his glory. If he does, we can humbly thank him for his goodness."²

¹Ibid.
²Parro, 19.
Marketing Seen as Consumerism,\(^1\) Selling, and Promotion

A very popular view of marketing within the religious community is that it is preoccupied with pleasing the consumer, and it reduces the sacred calling of the gospel to the selling of faith for a pecuniary price. This outlook has engendered very strong, vociferous reactions, especially among evangelicals who are currently in crisis over the extensive abuse of marketing concepts in many of their mainline churches. Among the heralds for reforming evangelicalism is Michael Horton, who has made some very scathing remarks against his fellow evangelicals, accusing them of "advancing the exploitation of God and man—exchanging the Creator-creature relationship for that of Producer-consumer."\(^2\) He describes American Evangelicalism as being overtaken by a spirit of consumerism and greed, sacrificing the jewels of faith by bowing to the whims and fancies of the consumer-oriented audience. Over and over, in the third chapter of his book, Horton equates marketing with selling:

Selling a person on Jesus was similar to selling a person on a particular pair of shoes. The attractiveness of the pitch made the sale. Jesus was the product, the sinner was the consumer, and the evangelist was the packaging and marketing agent. In this scheme, humans are buyers instead of debtors.\(^3\)

On p. 65 he writes:

\(^1\)Consumerism is described as the promotion of the consumer's interests. Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, (1998), s.v. "Consumerism."


\(^3\)Ibid., 61.
Nevertheless, what we get from Scripture is that there is a real sense in which the gospel is not supposed to sell! If we succeed in making the gospel appealing to sinners on the basis of satisfying their consumer appetites, we have not succeeded at all. If unbelievers do not find Christianity offensive (that is, for the right reason), there is something wrong with our presentation. The Great Commission was a command to make disciples, not to establish franchises for consumers.¹

A few years earlier, another Evangelical, Gregory Lewis, wrote:

It is up to God through the Holy Spirit to "sell" himself. It is the Holy Spirit who brings regeneration, not our sermons and our songs. . . . The only way we will stop playing the Holy Spirit is when we permit the Holy Spirit to empty us of all our sales mentality and methods in order that we might be filled with the mind of Christ and his methods.²

He also said that "believers are called to be witnesses not salespeople. To sell is to call people to our church and its programs and organization and financing. To witness is to call people to Christ, 'the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world' (John 1:29, TNIV)."³

It is very important to point out that both Horton and Lewis are writing from a traditional evangelical background, with a very strong polemic against what they perceive as a major crisis of faith and practice among American evangelicalism. They are not alone in this assault on evangelicalism. Other leading evangelical lights⁴ joining the fray

¹Ibid., 65.


³Ibid., 71.

are Os Guinness and John Seel;¹ and Charles Colson, J.I. Packer, R.C. Sproul, and Alister McGrath.² Even though there may be some legitimacy to what Horton and Lewis are saying regarding the abusive use of marketing techniques by some evangelicals, their zeal for change has stirred them to make some very broad, dogmatic, and inaccurate statements about a discipline they seem to know very little about. Even fellow evangelicals have taken issue with Horton’s editorial comments regarding the approach his authors take in dealing with the evangelical crisis. Says the author:

In an almost playful introduction to his volume, Michael Horton warns us that his authors "are painting with wide brushes – in places, brooms – in order to make a point!" Fair enough. But painting with wide brushes and brooms is also an old, often very destructive, evangelical pattern of argument. The issues raised in these essays will not be dealt with effectively unless we are all willing to attend to the finer details. Brooms are simply the wrong instrument for performing the delicate task to which we are called.³

For Horton and Lewis to define marketing as selling is tantamount to defining Adventism as the Sabbath or Pentecostalism as Tongues. Taking a part of something to describe the whole is grossly misleading, and especially so when an objectionable practice of the part is indiscriminately applied to the whole—as is the case with marketing and selling. Sidney Levy refers to this as the synecdochic mechanism:


All group prejudice is a form of over generalizing, or fallacy of composition. To identify it here, the way a part of marketing is taken for the whole is called the synecdochic mechanism. A synecdoche is a rhetorical device wherein the singular is substituted for the plural: here the disapproved marketer is being used to define the category, substituted for those others who strive to make a fine product, offer an excellent service, price fairly, sell helpfully, and communicate honestly.¹

It is therefore necessary, at this point, to clarify the misunderstandings regarding selling and marketing so that both these concepts can stand in their true light.

**What Is Selling?**

In many Christian communities, there is the prevailing notion that selling is associated with the abandonment of moral principle and ethical responsibility. When we couple this notion with the perception of marketing as selling, we can quite easily see why many Christian leaders are very quick to raise red flags whenever marketing is associated with the ministry of the church. Webster’s New World Dictionary offers several meanings to the word sell.² However, as a marketing function, selling, in and of itself, is not immoral, unethical, or evil. In its simplest form, it is the process of persuading or convincing someone to make a desired decision regarding an idea, an object, a person, or a service. Selling facilitates the exchange of value between two or

¹Levy, 577-581.

²1. to exchange good, services, etc. for money or its equivalent. 2. to have or offer regularly for sale: as, this store sells radios. 3. a) to deliver a person to his enemies or into slavery, etc. b) to betray a country, cause etc. 4. to give up one’s honor, etc. for profit. 5. To promote the sale of: as, radio sells many products. 6. a) to establish faith or belief in: as to sell an idea. b) to persuade a person of the value of: as, I’m sold on the idea. 7. [Slang] to cheat; dupe; hoax. Webster’s New World Dictionary of the American Language (1966), s.v. “sell.”
more persons. Of course, in the hand of an unscrupulous, unethical human agent, selling can be anything other than what it really is. Herein lies the crucial element that determines what selling may turn out to be—i.e., the character and integrity of persons involved in the selling process. It must be made clear that selling is not marketing. One of the most prolific modern management gurus, Peter Drucker, explains:

There will always, one can assume, be need for some selling. But the aim of marketing is to make selling superfluous. The aim of marketing is to know and understand the customer so well that the product or service fits him and sells itself. Ideally, marketing should result in a customer who is ready to buy. All that should be needed then is to make the product or service available.¹

Thus selling, instead of being what marketing is, is only the tip of the marketing iceberg, and must be preceded by a whole range of marketing activities—need assessment, market research, product development, pricing, and distribution²—in order to be effective. Theodore Levitt draws a perceptive contrast between selling and marketing when he writes:

Selling focuses on the needs of the seller; marketing on the needs of the buyer. Selling is preoccupied with the seller’s need to convert his product into cash; marketing with the idea of satisfying the needs of the customer by means of the product and the whole cluster of things associated with creating, delivering and finally consuming it.³


Needless to say, however, most churches engage in selling under the guise of promotion and sometimes donation or love gifts. The tele-evangelist who offers his audience a free videotape but stipulates a minimum love gift of money to receive it is engaging in selling. Many churches and preachers use promotional strategies to sell ideas and programs to their congregations and the community they serve. Wayne Kiser writes:

When you ask a neighbor to come to church, you engage in promotion. When you write a letter to tell a friend about the church, you are promoting. You may not like the sound of the word promotion, but every day the majority of the people who attend your church are promoting it to the community in some way. . . . Promotion builds more than attendance. It creates an image that your church is accomplishing something. People are pleased to be there, and God is blessing you and the people you reach. . . . If we fail to promote the church and the Lord we worship, we may cut off the opportunity for many to come to Christ.1

Call it what you may—love gift, promotion, outreach strategy, announcement—selling in religious organizations is here to stay; but religious leaders must ensure that the highest spiritual and ethical conduct guides the entire process so that the credibility and integrity of the organization and its message are not jeopardized. Because we live in an information age, religious organizations must take advantage of the various communication media (television, radio, newspaper, internet, etc.) to sell their image, promote their programs, and proclaim their message in order to reach the masses with their offerings.

Horton concludes the third chapter of his book with this opening statement:

Products must be trivialized if they are going to sell well and widely. Mass marketing almost always reduces the quality of the product. To stand out among other

1Wayne Kiser, Promotion Strategies for the Local Church (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), ix-xiii.
competing wares, Christianity is reduced to relying on quick, catchy, attractive packaging.... We are not selling a product to a consumer, but proclaiming a Savior to a sinner.¹

Again, in an effort to redirect the thinking of his fellow evangelical whom he sees as corrupting authentic evangelicalism,² Horton makes another broad, indiscriminate use of a marketing concept. It is not a "given" in marketing management that products must be trivialized in order for them to sell widely and well. On the contrary, product quality and service must be so clearly defined that customers can perceive the product value in terms of its ability to meet their needs. The truth of the matter is that there is no one factor that makes a product sell in marketing; but if there were one, it would not be product triviality. Rather, it would be product value as seen through the eyes of the customer. Bruce Wrenn writes:

Effective marketing appeals will arrest the attention of the listener; they should be correctly perceived in terms of the issue at hand, and they may therefore ultimately influence a person's behavior. Even calls to repentance and commitment need to be communicated effectively. Marketing can and should do that without stripping away the spiritual nature of the message. Again, we should avoid confusing the tool with the use to which it has been put. Marketing is about affecting behavior and meeting needs; it is not about entertaining or trivializing the subject or the message.³


³Wrenn, 117-134.
I am of the opinion that Horton's reference to triviality and reduction in product quality is colored by what he sees happening in American evangelicalism. Instead of allowing the marketing discipline to inform what he sees, Horton uses what he sees occurring among evangelicals to inform his understanding of what marketing really is. The buzzword in marketing today is not triviality, but total quality management or improvement\(^1\) (TQM & TQI), and many religious organizations are latching on to this concept. Walt Kallestad and Steve Schey of the Community Church of Joy in Glendale, Arizona, write:

Total Quality Management ranks among the greatest tools in use today for increasing the quality of products and services in the corporate world. Implementing the principles of Total Quality Management pays great dividends in customer satisfaction, employee satisfaction, product and service design and quality; and it ultimately shows up as a positive influence on the bottom line. One of the thrusts in Total Quality Management is zero defects. Good enough is no longer good enough.\(^2\)

Horton suggests that Christians are not called to sell a product but to proclaim the gospel. But are proclamation and selling (in the true meaning of the word) diametrically opposed to each other? In my view they are not. Proclamation, in the biblical sense, is not just telling or heralding the good news, but also persuading people to make a decision to receive the Christ as Savior and Lord of their lives. "The gospel is to be presented, not

\(^1\)Total Quality Management (sometimes called Total Quality Improvement) is a philosophy and management system that bases everything an organization does on the pursuit of quality. In this sense, quality is not only a production function, but a service and managerial function as well. It is the very essence of the organization. Bovée and Thill, 729.

as a lifeless theory, but as a living force to change the life."¹ The preaching or
proclamation of the gospel deserves a response, and the God who ordained preaching
expects results. "He would have us bear testimony to the fact that He cannot be satisfied
until the human race are reclaimed and reinstated in their holy privileges as His sons and
daughters."² In the parable of the great dinner (Luke 14:16-24 NASB), Jesus' message is
very clear. God not only wants us to tell or invite sinners to the feast, He commands us to
"go into the highways and hedges [wherever sinners are found] and compel them to come
to the feast so that his house may be filled." The word compel (Gk. anagkazo) is
translated to mean "by importunate persuasion."³ The Great Commission authoritatively
charges us: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the
name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I
commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matt 28:19,
20 NASB).

Making and baptizing disciples do not simply come from proclamation but also
through persuasion and conviction. It involves the listening audience making decisions
about the messenger and the message he proclaims—e.g., Is the messenger trustworthy? Is
the message the truth? How does this message relate to what is going on in my life? The

¹Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, 826.
²Ibid.
³Spiros Zodhiates, ed., The Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible (NASB)
(Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 1990), s.v. "compel."
fact remains that if men and women are to believe and obey the gospel, they must be sold on what the gospel offers and requires of them.

Many Christians will readily admit that proclamation involves persuasion, but they are not so enthusiastic about identifying the art of persuasion as a form of selling. Carnegie Samuel Calian made the observation that "within the ranks of professional ministry, most of us do not want to admit that we are in the business of selling—whether promoting the church’s program, recruiting able candidates for leadership positions, or raising the annual budget."\(^1\) Ironically, however, proclamation may be more hard-selling in the Christian community than what selling itself is in the world of marketing, since the goal of marketing is to make selling (in terms of persuading consumers to buy) unnecessary.\(^2\) In traditional Christianity, proclamation begins with the message to be proclaimed and with the assumption that everyone needs it. No overt attempt is made to analyze the varying needs of the audience, since the priority is placed on the certainty, truthfulness, and urgency of the message. The preacher’s task, therefore, is to convince or persuade the members of his listening audience that the message is not only true and applicable to them, but that each one needs to believe, accept, and practice whatever the message dictates. Dan Day writes:

Evangelism, it can be argued, is typically structured along a selling concept too. It is assumed that the nonbelieving public doesn’t really want to hear what the evangelist has to say. So massive advertising campaigns are inaugurated and the whole church is


\(^2\)Drucker, Management: Tasks, Responsibilities, Practices, 64-65.
organized to invite friends and neighbors. Appeals from the pulpit are used to "inspire" the membership to extend themselves in bringing potential customers to hear the evangelist.¹

This is the approach that has characterized traditional evangelistic preaching for decades, and reflects what professional marketers call the product-orientation approach to the marketplace. This orientation basically states "that success will come to those organizations that bring to market goods and services they are convinced will be good for the public,"² even if the public may have second thoughts. The focus, here, is on the intrinsic value of the product in the eyes of the marketer. A very classic example of this can be seen in John O'Shaughnessy's review of Moore's book—Selling God: American Religion in the Marketplace of Culture. He states:

Early in the nineteenth century, to stop what was considered to be a steep decline in "moral and religious seriousness" and to stem the loss of clerical authority, religious leaders of most of the Protestant denominations sought to activate the latent desire for religion among the American masses. Direct selling via revivalist meetings became the order of the day, . . . .³

Clearly, Protestants were missing the target with the American masses, and resorted to hard-selling in a desperate effort to restore character and respectability to the work of the church. The key point to remember in this entire scenario is that the very


²Kotler and Andreasen, 40.

nature of the product-oriented (or message-centered) approach lends itself to hard-selling (or to use a more Christian phrase, very strong promotion). Bruce Wrenn writes:

Evangelization, as done in many churches today, is a form of marketing in the selling sense. Many congregations have a doctrine which they want to persuade others to accept. This is *sales-driven marketing*. The product exists, and it will not be altered in any fundamental way to meet the needs of the customers. Rather, the customers' needs must be bent towards the existing product.¹

Since the message-centered approach may not resonate with the needs of the audience, there is a greater emphasis on selling in an effort to convince the audience that the message is relevant to them. If the audience rejects the message, or fails to produce the desired response, the tendency is to lay the fault with them (even labeling them as being gospel-hardened) and not with the presentation of the message. Philip Kotler describes this outcome in the following way:

Churches, department stores, and the post office all assume that they are offering the public the right product and wonder why their sales falter. These organizations too often are looking into a mirror when they should be looking out of the window.²

In other words, their focus is on themselves and what they have to offer and not on their customers and what their customers' felt needs are.

**Marketing Concepts Are Extended Too Far**

One would have expected this criticism regarding the expanded role being given to marketing concepts to arise in the religious arena, but on the contrary, this position was

¹Wrenn, 117-134.

adopted and heralded by such experienced business professionals as David J. Luck\(^1\) and Johan Arndt.\(^2\) Luck’s basic position focused on two major points and emerged as a reaction to an article written by Philip Kotler and Sidney Levy.\(^3\) First, marketing must be restricted to its traditional boundaries, strictly within the business context; and attempting to stretch its definition to make it almost universal will make marketing lose its identity. His second point was that marketing must be characterized by buying and selling, and if there is no market transaction—purchase and sale of a product or service—then the act is not a marketing act, regardless of its nature.

It would appear to me that Professor Luck is preoccupied with the fear that marketing may lose its identity as a business discipline if marketing concepts were broadened to serve the non-business sectors of society. He also appears rather contradictory when he rules out churches, political parties, and nonprofit organizations from the realm of marketing on the one hand; yet he says that marketing may be conducted by nonbusiness institutions if marketing specialists choose to lend their talents to those organizations. Kotler and Levy give the all-important rebuttal to this


\(^3\)Kotler and Levy, “Broadening the Concept of Marketing,” 10-15.
contradiction with the comment: "What are these talents if not a *prima facie* case for the existence of marketing problems and opportunities in welfare, politics, and religion."

However, in their overall response to professor Luck, Kotler and Levy contend that there are severe limitations with Luck’s restrictive view of marketing, two of them being: (1) Students of marketing will deny their expertise to the most rapidly growing institutional sectors of the society—i.e. nonbusiness; and (2) Business marketing, per se, will forego the enrichment that comes from examining the same processes practiced in other contexts. If the current definition is not expanded, both the business and nonbusiness marketing will be restricted in their growth.

Both Kotler and Levy based their position on the fundamental awareness that marketing-like activities take place in nonbusiness organizations as well as in business organizations. Churches, schools, and museums all engage in product development, pricing, distribution, and communication for the purpose of serving the needs of their "customers." In regard to Luck’s idea of restricting the definition of marketing solely by the market transaction, Kotler and Levy had this to say:

Any institution can, in principle, arrange to sell its services in such a way that it resembles market transactions: that is, one can buy tickets to enter a church for holiday services, or buy educational services directly instead of paying for them

1Kotler and Levy, “A New Form of Marketing Myopia: Rejoinder to Professor Luck,” 53-63.

2Ibid.

3Ibid.
through taxes. The fact that spiritual and educational service are usually paid for in other ways than outright purchase reflects convenience and tradition.\footnote{Ibid.}

Moreover, in recent times, business marketers have re-defined the aim of marketing to be the satisfaction of consumer wants at a profit. The emphasis of this profit is not the sale of particular products or services in the short run, but on cultivating long-run rewarding relationships with them. According to Kotler and Levy, this approach is in keeping with the spirit used by schools to cultivate their alumni, and churches to cultivate their membership. The form in which these products and services are paid for is less relevant than the exchange relationship itself. In recognition of this new trend in business marketing, Regis McKenna writes:

Technology is transforming choice, and choice is transforming the marketplace. As a result, we are witnessing the emergence of a new marketing paradigm—not a "do more" marketing that simply turns up the volume on the sale spiels of the past \textit{but a knowledge- and experience-based marketing that represents the once-for-all death of the salesman.}\footnote{McKenna, 65-79.} (italics mine)

Although Johan Arndt\footnote{Arndt, 101-103.} does not seem to have a problem in applying the marketing techniques and concepts to nonbusiness areas, he questions whether such extracurricular applications should be treated as an integral part of the marketing discipline. Although Kotler and Levy made a very good case for broadening the concepts of marketing, it is not the purpose of this project to put forth a case to make the
application of marketing principles to religious organizations an integral part of the
marketing discipline. This project is simply an attempt to show how an application of
those principles—and selected ones at that—can enhance Christian ministry and mission in
the world.

Arndt also contends that while exchange may be a fruitful abstraction of the
marketing function, not all exchanges are marketing exchanges, especially those that do
not resolve the economic needs and wants of society. While the main thrust of
nonbusiness organizations is not economic, they do depend on financial support from
donor members and organizations to keep them running. Therefore, economics do play a
supportive role in keeping non-business organizations in operation, and in many cases,
these organizations have to market or promote themselves in order to keep their sources
of funding committed to their services, ministry, and programs.

Another issue that occupies the front burner of the marketing discipline is that of
extending marketing concepts to deal with social issues. While many business
professionals can identify with the relevance of marketing as a very beneficial tool to help
advance social causes, they have expressed very serious concerns regarding the possible
ethical ramifications and, to a lesser degree, marketing confusion caused by the process.¹

The overriding issue raised was whether or not the marketers, and the organizations they

¹See research done by Gene R. Laczniak, Robert F. Lusch, and Patrick E. Murphy,
“Social Marketing: Its Ethical Dimensions,” Journal of Marketing 43 (Spring 1979): 29-
36; also David J. Luck, “Social Marketing: Confusion Compounded,” Journal of
represent, would be socially and ethically responsible in marketing "legitimate" social causes. Can they really accomplish this without succumbing to the temptation of manipulating popular opinion poll through "red herring" propaganda in order to produce a desired result? The vast majority of respondents, in a survey conducted by Laczniak and others on the ethical dimension of social marketing, agreed that marketers who assist others in diffusing social issues or ideas should be held strictly accountable for their actions. It seems quite clear to me that the main concern here is not whether or not marketing concepts can be applied to causes, but whether or not any control mechanism can be imposed on marketers to ensure that they do not abuse their position of power. However, while social marketing presents a very interesting forum for discussion, it goes beyond the scope of this paper and will not be addressed beyond this point.

In spite of this broadening of the applications of marketing concepts to nonbusiness areas of society, Michael L. Rothschild and Elizabeth C. Hirschman have raised some issues that challenge the scope of the applicability of these concepts.

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1 Legitimate in the sense that it would be difficult to separate the ethics of applying marketing techniques to social ideas and programs from the ethics of the ideas themselves. See research done by Gene R. Laczniak et al., 29-36.

2 Something used to draw attention away from the real issue; also connotes distortion of facts with the intention to deceive.

3 Laczniak and others, 29-36.


Rothschild contends that it is very difficult for marketing communications to have an impact on the nonbusiness sector because of

the intangibility of the nonbusiness products, the nonmonetary price of purchase, the extreme lack of frequency of purchase, the lack of behavioral reinforcers, the need to market to an entire but heterogeneous society/market, and the extreme levels of involvement varying from very low to very high.¹

While these observations by Rothschild are true, he does not completely rule out the possibility for the transference of marketing principles from the business to the nonbusiness sector, but simply underscores the complexity of this transference. Proponents for the expansion of the marketing concepts to nonbusiness organizations do acknowledge this transference complexity, but refuse to allow this difficulty to deter the use of marketing principles to enhance the marketing-like activities² that occur in the nonbusiness sector. For example, while Christians may not be able to sell brotherhood as soap, they still have to represent a Kingdom and promote a lifestyle in an attempt to win a predominantly non-Christian world. Communication strategies may be different and diverse when compared to that of the business sector, but the goal is the same—to convince and win the loyalty of the customer/sinner.

¹Rothschild, 11-20.

Unlike Rothschild, Elizabeth Hirschman proposes that, as a normative framework, marketing concepts are not applicable to artists and ideologists because of the personal values and social norms that characterize the production process in their work. Artists, she says, generally create their work out of their own need for self-fulfillment, and is, therefore, intrinsically motivated. On the other hand, ideologists view their work as intensely personal, self-revealed knowledge and derive great satisfaction from the construction of well-integrated formulations of this knowledge. Using concepts from Kotler and Stidsen, Hirschman points out:

The marketing concept holds that products should be created in response to the latent or expressed desires/interests of their consuming public(s). The assumption of consumer primacy is the central normative point on which marketing turns as an applied discipline.

Though there is much validity in what Hirschman is saying, she is very careful to make room for some exceptions, since marketing principles have already been applied to the ideological products of political campaigns and social causes. Moreover, many religions are now turning to the field of marketing to spread their ideologies to the

1An ideologist may be defined as one who puts forward an integrated set of positive and normative statements that describe what the world is and what it should be. Michael Polanyi, Personal Knowledge (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958). Hence, ideologists formulate beliefs about the nature of reality and values regarding desirable states of reality. Hirschman, 45-55.

2Hirschman, 45-55.

masses. While these ideologies were not developed in response to the latent or expressed desires/interest of consuming publics, they are being packaged or tailored to speak to public concerns in order to win adherents. Granted that the work of artists may be intensely personal and intrinsically motivated, but none would debate the fact that artists often put their work on display to attract buyers of one kind or another. In this sense, they may be more sale- or product-oriented than customer-oriented to the marketplace. While the customer may not incite their creativity to produce a work of art, artists work with the hope that others would appreciate their final product as much as they themselves do.

The above criticisms may not cover all that could be raised in regard to the application of marketing concepts to nonbusiness organizations, and religion in particular; but I believe that the broad survey of issues addressed can provide a good framework for further investigation. Because of the rapid changes in technology and the growing number of ways for people to satisfy their needs and wants, the nature of marketing will continue to evolve to keep pace with the changing society. However, in order to successfully apply marketing concepts in the realm of religion, it is necessary to clarify the fact that it is not the religious experience itself (the mystery of God’s revelatory communion with humanity) which needs marketing. Rather, it is the religious organization (a collectivity of human agents with common goals and a structure established to achieve them) which could benefit from using marketing as a means to achieve the desired ends. Therefore, while religion [i.e., the religious experience] shouldn’t be marketed, religious organizations can be and, given the current turbulent environment, should be.¹

²Wrenn, 117-133.
In this context, marketing functions more like a bridge not only to connect people to the community of faith, and through the community, to Christ, but also to keep people connected and alive in committed service. This bridging concept is discussed in the next section.

**Biblical Images of Marketing Concepts**

Long before such marketing management gurus as Kotler, Levy, Drucker, Barna, and others formulated their marketing theories, and brought together the various marketing elements as an organized discipline, many of these concepts existed in principle and practice in the realm of religion—as with other areas of life. While the Bible does not espouse a marketing worldview or use marketing terminology to portray the play and counter-play between the Divine and human in salvation history, its pages are filled with scores of marketing concepts that are worthy of our notice in the light of this. This should not be surprising for two simple reasons: (1) The exchange of goods and services (for money or kind) between men and nations is as old as the human race, and (2) just as every profession or every culture has its own terminologies (or jargons) for some common everyday practices or objects, so does the Bible. For example, what a client is to the lawyer, the customer is to the marketer. When Jesus said to His disciples: "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt 5:16 KJV); or "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12: 32 KJV), He was commissioning His disciples to make advertising pitches for the Kingdom of God. If this was not a call for *advertising* or
then I do not know what else is. The crucial point, here, is that although the form of expression is different, the meaning is the same.

If we begin with the plan of salvation, we will see that Scripture postures it in a need-satisfaction framework. The gospel always begins from the point of man’s desperate need and God’s gracious desire to meet and satisfy it. As a young Christian, one of the very first ways I learned to present the gospel to the unsaved was by a simple acronym called the ABC of Salvation. Allow me to illustrate:

A - "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23 NASB); and "the wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:23 NASB).

B - "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29 NASB).

C - "Come unto me all who are weary and heavy-laden and I will give you rest" (Matt 11:28 NASB).

The initial focus of this acronym is on the human condition which is completely need-centered; then on God’s provision of the need-satisfier (Jesus the crucified Lamb); and finally the call for a response. It is very important to note that the call for response never precedes need recognition, or need satisfaction. It is only when people recognize their utter sinfulness and helplessness (sense of need) and drawn by the power of God’s provision on the cross (satisfaction), that he can intelligently respond to the love that will not let them go. Dan Day has rightly said "God’s message to us is a need-satisfying message. To the degree that we don’t couch it in those terms when we communicate it to others, we’re confusing people and doing the Lord a disservice". ¹

¹Day, 16.
One area in which it is possible to see a measure of compatibility between marketing and the mission of the church is in their related goals. The goal of marketing is to create, build, and maintain a beneficial exchange relationship with the targeted group or audience, for the purpose of achieving the marketer's mission objectives--"the ultimate objective being to influence behavior."1 Regis McKenna enlarges on this concept by stating that

the real goal of marketing is to own the market—not just to make or sell products. Smart marketing means defining what whole pie is yours. It means thinking of your company, your technology, your product in a fresh way, a way that begins by defining what you can lead.2

When this goal is compared to the goal of mission, there is not an element of discord, but rather one of harmony. The goal of mission is also not only to influence human behavior, but to radically change it. God’s intention is not to win a soul or two, a city or two, a country or two, a continent or two. God is going after the whole pie; He wants to reclaim a lost world, with lost people who once belonged to Him. God does wish that none should perish but that all should come to repentance.3

Mission finds its focus in the divine mandate found in Matt 28:19, 20, which requires Christians to go into the whole world and make believers of every people group (Gr. ta ethne). Christians are called not only to be proclaimers but also persuaders or change agents, and as such, they are engaged in some form of marketing whether they

1Kotler and Andreasen, 38.
2McKenna, 65-79.
3See 2 Pet 3:9 and also John 3:16, 17.
understand it or not. Men and women are not only to be presented with the claims of the gospel, they are to be persuaded to believe the gospel and be changed by it. Salvation is an ongoing transaction (exchange based on relationship) between the Living Christ and the converted sinner, in which beneficial exchanges take place that require both tangible and intangible costs. In the context of marketing, the Christian witness approaches a potential candidate hoping to facilitate some exchange by presenting the prospect with the claims of Christ. What is the exchange in this encounter? The prospect has committed time to hearing the gospel. If that person decides to accept Christ as Savior, worldly freedom and a sinful nature are given up, and there is an agreement to commit to following Jesus Christ. These form a part of the prospect's costs, and they are very real. Marketers and economists may refer to this cost as opportunity cost.¹ How does Jesus express this cost in the context of salvation?

If any man would come after me let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me, for whosoever shall save his life shall lose it, but whosever shall lose his life for my sake shall save it. (Matt 16:24, 25 KJV)

Whosoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be my disciple. For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost, to see if he has enough to complete it? (Luke 14:27, 28 NASB).

In return for his sacrifice, the prospect claims the assurance of eternal life with God.

¹Opportunity cost is defined as the alternative(s) one has to forego in making his final choice about something. Bovée and Thill describe opportunity cost as the value of sacrifices customers are asked to make when choosing among available alternatives. Bovée and Thill, G-9.
According to the Gospel of Matthew (and also Rev 14:6), this gospel is to be proclaimed to every person, in every culture, on every continent and island. This means that the gospel proclamation involves not only segmentation\(^1\) and targeting,\(^2\) but also implies the effective implementation of strategies to reach every targeted people group with a unique presentation of the gospel. This clearly implies a flexible and relevant packaging (very much like contextualization) of the gospel to meet the needs of every target audience. Jesus was the classic model of a target marketer. When He sent out His twelve disciples on their first mission, He specifically said to them: "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as you go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt 10:5-7 KJV).

The target was very clear: Jesus was directing His kingdom message to a specific people group—"the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Even more intriguing was the way Jesus targeted the publicans and sinners, and the pharisees and scribes in one setting. When the sinners and publicans drew near to hear Jesus, the scribes and pharisees accused Him of receiving sinners and eating with them (Luke 15:1). In a very classic response, Jesus targeted His answer to the despised and the despisers with three parables:

\(^{1}\)Segmentation is the process of classifying the population into groups with different needs, characteristics, or behaviors that will affect their reaction to a religious program or ministry offered to them. Shawchuck and others, 167.

\(^{2}\)Targeting is the act of selecting one or more market segments and developing a positioning and marketing mix strategy for each. Kotler and Andreasen, 167.
1. The lost sheep targeted the publicans and sinners who knew they were lost but could not find their way home; so Jesus, the Good Shepherd, found them.

2. The lost coin targeted the scribes and pharisees who were lost in the house of Israel and did not even know they were lost, just like a lost coin is ignorant of its lost condition.

3. Then in a master stroke Jesus brought both groups together in the parable of the Prodigal Son. The picture of the younger son targeted the publican and sinners, and the stay-home son targeted the pharisees and scribes who were just as lost as the sinners they despised.

Marketing cannot get closer to mission and ministry than this; and even though some religious practitioners would deny this obvious relationship, they consistently employ marketing principles, under different labeling, in order to accomplish their mission objectives.

Even though the Bible never uses the term marketing, its pages are replete with examples of marketing concepts. For example, God instructed Moses to take a census of His people Israel so that He could clearly identify and extract a segment of the national Israel in order to build Himself an army (Num 1:2, 3). Before Ezra could begin the task of restoring the Temple in Jerusalem, he had to do some research in order to ascertain his resources and the skills of the available people (Ezra 1 & 2). Moses also sent twelve spies into the land of Canaan to do the same before the Children of Israel went in to possess it (Num 13). Barnabas successfully tackled a tough marketing or public relations assignment when he pacified the early disciples' fear of Paul, convincing them that he
was no longer a persecutor of the church (Acts 9:26, 27). And "word of mouth"—the world's most effective form of advertising—helped spread the word about Jesus Himself (Mark 1:28). The apostle Paul had a remarkable marketing strategy that highlighted the inestimable value of the human soul, and the ultimate purpose of the gospel:

For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are without law, as without law, . . . that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak. . . . I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you. (1 Cor 9:19-23).

Paul's basic philosophy was to meet men and women where they were and package the gospel of Jesus Christ in wrappings that were familiar and appealing to them. Earl P. W. Cameron suggests that

Paul's usage of the Greek word (pantos), in verse 22, expressing the meaning, "by all means," seems to suggest that he was willing to adjust to the customs, habits and opinions of all classes of people in order that he might save some. By doing so, he himself personally shared in the blessings of communicating the gospel and seeing others come to Christ.¹

In this regard, Paul was following the supreme example of his Master, who used the familiar surroundings and customs of His audience to teach the precious lessons of the Kingdom of God. This was the key concept behind Jesus’ use of parables: to teach and reach people. As a matter of fact, the very incarnation of Jesus Christ is a classical example of the spirit of marketing. Even though God is eternal love, fallen human beings

need to know and experience this fact, since Satan had mounted, and continues to mount, a gigantic negative campaign ad against the Creator. Ellen White said that the enemy of good blinded the minds of men, so that they looked upon God with fear; they thought of Him as severe and unforgiving. Satan led men to conceive of God as a being whose chief attribute is stern justice—one who is a severe judge, a harsh, exacting creditor. He pictured the Creator as a being who is watching with a jealous eye to discern the errors and mistakes of men, that He may visit judgements upon them.¹

She also wrote:

Satan is constantly at work, with intense energy and under a thousand disguises, to misrepresent the character and government of God. With extensive, well-organized plans and marvelous power, he is working to hold the inhabitants of the world under his deceptions.²

In order to deal with this negative advertising and misrepresentation of His divine image, God sent His only Son into the world to position,³ once and for all, His steadfast love to men and angels. "It was to remove this dark shadow [negative satanic advertisement], by revealing to the world the infinite love of God, that Jesus came to live among men. The Son of God came from heaven to make manifest the Father."⁴ Since Jesus came to dwell with us, we know that God is acquainted with our trials, and sympathizes with our griefs. Every son and daughter of Adam may understand that our Creator is the friend of sinners. For in every doctrine of grace, every promise

²White, Patriarchs and Prophets, 78.
³Positioning is the act of designing the organization’s image and value offer so that its customers understand and appreciate what the organization stands for in relation to its competitors. Its purpose is to achieve a desired spot in the minds of customers and potential customers. See Kotler and Andreasen, 205.
⁴White, Happiness Digest, 2.
of joy, every deed of love, every divine attraction presented in the Saviour's life on earth, we see "God with us."1

This is the crux of the gospel: God positioning Himself in His Son, and through Him, drawing the world unto Himself.2 In Christ, God bared His heart for all heaven and earth to see who He really was, and is, and evermore shall be. What an act of love--God, packaging Himself in human wrappings in order to nullify the charges of Satan and, in most alluring terms, speaking to fallen humans His wonderful covenant of peace. Ellen White said:

At the cross of Calvary, love and selfishness stood face to face. Here was their crowning manifestation. Christ had lived only to comfort and bless, and in putting Him to death, Satan manifested the malignity of his hatred against God. He made it evident that the real purpose of his rebellion was to dethrone God, and to destroy Him through whom the love of God was shown.3

Everything about Jesus Christ was an exact fit of the image depicted by God's position strategy towards mankind. Hence, "the humanity of the Son of God is everything to us. It is the golden chain that binds our souls to Christ, and through Christ to God. This is to be our study."4 Moreover, Christ's approach to ministry followed the incarnational model in meeting men and women where they were. In support of this idea, Vinoth Ramachandra states that "since the heart of the gospel concerns God incarnate, it can only be communicated in an incarnational way. The good news of the saving love of

1White, Desire of Ages, 24.
2See 2 Cor 5:19.
3White, Desire of Ages, 57.
God was embodied in a human life, finding its climax in that life poured out in death."¹ Commenting on Jesus' approach to the Missio Dei, Ellen White reveals that "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'² She continues: "From Christ's methods of labor we may learn many valuable lessons. He did not follow merely one method; in various ways He sought to gain the attention of the multitude; and then He proclaimed to them the truths of the gospel."³ His ministry was one of assessing human need and uniquely, but adequately, responding to them. This is the essence of marketing.

Thus, marketing, as a process, does not run at cross-purposes with the mission of the church, but rather acts as its very handmaid. As a matter of fact, every born-again believer is an ambassador for the Kingdom of God. Through the power of the Spirit, we are to position Christ to the world, and facilitate the ongoing miraculous transaction (or beneficial exchange) between the Living Christ and the dead sinner. Like our divine/human Example, our living testimony must match our positioning strategy (i.e., our Christian confession and profession). Our witness must be so powerfully clear that

²White, Ministry of Healing, 143.
³Ellen G. White, Evangelism, 123.
we must be able to successfully controvert every negative image, every "red herring" propaganda, and every subtle innuendo that the arch-deceiver seeks to weave into the very fabric of society, in his unrelenting effort to defame the character of God and nullify the vicarious work of Christ in the earth. Allister E. McGrath says that "the Christian apologist should be able to present God in his full attractiveness so that his rivals in the world are eclipsed."¹ We, therefore, must be prepared to meet the competition (i.e., the devil) on every front and, by the grace of God and the power of His Spirit, beat him at his own game. Concerning marketing as an option for Christian endeavors, Margie Morris made this very fitting remark:

> We can continue to write our message on scrolls if we like. But if we're serious about church growth--about reaching our unknown neighbors, building faith-to-life connections and affirming individual gifts through service--then we'll explore marketing options that get results in today's world.²

The supreme challenge facing Christian marketers, therefore, is not analyzing whether the application of marketing principles is a viable option for Christian mission and ministry. Rather, this challenge is one of being constantly aware of the fact that while they apply the tools of marketing to the task of mission, that they are not only

¹Allister E. McGrath, Intellectuals Don't Need God and Other Modern Myths: Building Bridges to Faith Through Apologetics (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993), 178.

engaging with human subjects, beset by a very wide range of needs to be satisfied, but that they are also handling spiritual realities which must never be trivialized, compromised, or subjected to indiscriminate methodologies. Moreover, as ambassadors of heaven, Christian marketers must make ample room in their life and work for the Holy Spirit, who alone can give divine guidance and add eternal value in all their mission endeavors. We must constantly remember that both we and our discipline are simply useful tools in the hands of the omnipotent God and must never be used as substitutes for spiritual disciplines (like prayer, Bible study, meditation, etc.) or the work of the Holy Spirit.

Summary

We have explored, through this chapter, the viability of applying marketing principles to the task of mission. In light of the criticisms raised regarding such an application, we have seen that there is no outright denial of the relevance of the discipline to the mission enterprise. Rather, we see a greater concern about the ability for Christians to maintain moral and spiritual integrity while using marketing tools for mission and ministry. Although the Bible does not use marketing jargon, per se, there is clear evidence that its pages are replete with marketing concepts that obviously got positive results. Jesus, our Example, was a perfect illustration of a "Christian marketer" even though He never used the jargons of the discipline. We must, therefore, take time to study His methods for reaching men if we will accomplish His successes.
CHAPTER 3

A SURVEY OF ADVENTIST MISSION IN THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

Adventist Remnant Theology and the Shaping of Adventist Mission

The idea of the remnant\textsuperscript{1} is a major theological motif in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, one which forms the cornerstone of the church's identity and self-understanding, and gives force and direction to its mission. Throughout the history of the church, the term \textit{remnant}, or the phrase \textit{remnant church}, has been the definitive, self-proclaimed mark of Seventh-day Adventists, and whenever and wherever new members are incorporated into the body they are required to express the belief that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is the remnant church of Bible prophecy. There is no doubt that the doctrine of the \textit{remnant} is quite pivotal in the life, teachings, and future of this church. In this section of this paper, I endeavor to unearth some of the assumptions that underlie Adventists' claim to "remnancy," and show how they influence the mission practice of the church in the United States Virgin Islands (also Virgin Islands). I will give a brief historical sketch of the development of Adventist remnant theology; show how the

\textsuperscript{1}The Bible portrays the remnant as a small group of God's people who, through calamities, wars, and apostasy, remain loyal to God. This faithful remnant were the rootstock God used to propagate His visible church on earth. \textit{Seventh-day Adventists Believe}, 161.
mission enterprise in the Virgin Islands has been molded by its remnant self-understanding; and finally, give a few suggestions for the future mission of the church in the region.

At the 1980 General Conference session held in Dallas, Texas, the Seventh-day Adventist Church officially laid claim to the title of the "remnant," who keeps all God's commandments and the faith of Jesus. This claim was expressed as one of the church's twenty-seven fundamental beliefs in the following terms:

The universal church is composed of all who truly believe in Christ, but in the last days, a time of widespread apostasy, a remnant has been called out to keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. This remnant announces the arrival of the judgment hour, proclaims salvation through Christ, and heralds the approach of His second advent. This proclamation is symbolized by the three angels of Revelation 14; it coincides with the work of judgment in heaven and results in a work of repentance and reform on the earth. Every believer is called to have a personal part in this worldwide witness.¹

It is very important to note, however, that the term remnant has been with the Seventh-day Adventist Church long before the official pronouncement of 1980. From their early beginnings, Sabbatarian Adventists who survived the disappointment of the Millerite Movement referred to themselves as the "remnant," the "little remnant," the "scattered remnant," the "little flock," or the "scattered flock."² In 1846, Ellen White wrote an article titled "To the Remnant Scattered Abroad"³ to encourage the small band

¹Ibid., 152.


³Ellen White, "To the Remnant Scattered Abroad," Broadside, April 6, 1846.
of persecuted believers. This may have been the earliest use of the term. Later, on another occasion, she made the solemn appeal:

Let all be careful not to make an outcry against the only people who are fulfilling the description given of the remnant people who keep the commandments of God and have faith in Jesus, who are exalting the standard of righteousness in these last days. God has a distinct people, a church on earth, second to none, but superior to all in their facilities to teach the truth, to vindicate the law of God. Let all be found at last among those who have the patience of the saints, who keep the commandments of God, and have the faith of Jesus.¹

It would appear that even though the title remnant was in common usage among the battered group of leftover Millerites, Joseph Bates was among the first Sabbatarian Adventists to use Rev 12:17 to apply the title to Adventists. He said:

John saw in vision, that the remnant, (the last end) the disciples of Christ were persecuted by the dragon for "keeping the commandments of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ." -- Rev. xii: 17. Now mark! 1. These are the last portion of God's people, and they are keeping his law. 2. They are the disciples of Jesus, because they keep his "testimony."²

However, this connection did not occur as an isolated event, but grew out of an investigative climate in which a number of other theological truths were being hammered out from Scripture as Sabbatarian Adventists sought to develop their own self-understanding and role in salvation history. Pivotal among these truths was a broadening in understanding of the three angels' messages (Rev 14:6-12), the ministry of Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary (Dan 8 and 9), the Laodicean call for revival and reformation (Rev 3:14-22), and the call of God's people out of Babylon (Rev 17:5 and 18:1-4). It was the

understanding of these major bodies of truths that formed the theological framework for Adventist missions. The early believers saw and understood the connection between the three angels' messages of Rev 14, and considered themselves God's remnant people, appointed by Him to give His final call to a perishing world. It was around this time (1850's) that Ellen White made the observation that the three angels' messages formed a "perfect chain of truth" and that non-Adventists would embrace them in their order, and follow "Jesus by faith into the heavenly sanctuary. These messages were represented to me as an anchor to hold the body."¹ Joseph Waggoner and Uriah Smith made similar connections between the "third angel's message" (which embraces all three messages of Rev 14), the Laodicean message, and the remnant. According to Smith, "the third angel's message is the final message of mercy to a rebellious world, and the Laodicean message is the final message to a lukewarm church."² Writing to Smith a few weeks later Waggoner said: "The last warning to the world is the Third Angel's Message, and the last admonition to the church is the letter to the Laodiceans."³ As all these truths began to fit into one another, the Laodicean message became the rallying point for Adventist mission. This message functioned as a criterion for self-evaluation in the face of the lethargic, but triumphalistic spirit that characterized the Sabbatarian Adventists. In addressing the


³Joseph Waggoner to Uriah Smith, Review and Herald, December 25, 1856, 61.
spirit of the time James White wrote:

Our positions are fully sustained by an overwhelming amount of direct scriptural testimony. . . . But we, as a people, have evidently rested down upon a theory of truth, and have neglected to seek Bible humility, Bible patience, Bible self-denial, and Bible watchfulness, and sacrifice, Bible holiness, and the power and gifts of the Holy Ghost. . . . Hence it is said, "And knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked (Rev 3:17)." What a condition!

In another setting, James White referred to the Laodicean message of Rev. 3:14-22 as a special call to the remnant, directing the attention of believers to a work of preparation for the imminent judgment of the living, so that their sins would be blotted out before the completion of Christ's sanctuary ministry. He also stated that the church had to be stripped from its self-righteous views and feelings and had to experience a thorough repentance. He denounced the then-current attitude as hypocritical, for in living with the expectancy of the imminent Second Advent and God's judgments on those who disobeyed the third angel's message, "professed believers rushed on in their worldly pursuits, taking their entire energies in pursuit of this world as if there was no coming Jesus, no wrath of God to fall upon the shelterless, and no flaming Judgment-bar, where all deeds will receive a recompense."

It was stirring statements such as the above from the Whites and other stalwart leaders of the day that created the climate and set the tone for Adventist mission.

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1James White, "The Seven Churches," Review and Herald, October 16, 1856, 189.


According to P. Gerard Damsteegt, it was this keen self-awareness facilitated by the pointed testimony of the Laodicean message that brought about a shift in Adventists’ ecclesiological self-understanding from a triumphalistic to an anti-triumphalistic attitude, and provided a powerful incentive to awaken believers to participate in missionary activity even today.\(^1\) Another element that factored into Adventist understanding of the remnant and its mission was the attitude of the early believers to other religious organizations. In the year preceding the "great disappointment" there arose a surging wave of anti-Millerite sentiments in many of the mainline Protestant churches, who became seriously offended by the vociferous end-time proclamations of the Advent movement. These mainline churches began a wholesale disfellowshipping of the Millerites for their "strange" beliefs, and it was not long before leaders in the movement began to associate Protestantism with Roman Catholicism, characterizing them as Babylon. Foremost among those who were disfellowshiped was Charles Fitch, whose sermon, *Come Out of Her, My People*, set the pace for the development of a Babylon theology, which also became a very vocal part of the movement's mission theology. At the Second Advent Conference in Boston (January 28, 1844) William Miller is said to have made the following comment regarding the mother harlot and her daughter in Rev 17: "If the Roman church was the mother of harlots, then her daughters must be the harlots: and therefore that portion of the Protestant churches that imitate and partake of

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\(^1\) Damsteegt, 245.
the spirit of the old mother must be the daughters referred to."

This view was refined by Joseph Marsh, editor of the Millerite periodical the *Voice of Truth*, as follows:

There can be no question but that the "woman" is symbolical of the *church*, and as she is called *Babylon*, there can be no dispute but that the church is Babylon. What church? We can make no distinction no farther than the figure will justify. It is a *mother* and her *daughters*--a family of harlots [Rev 17:5]. We admit the *mother* represents the Catholic Church the eldest member of the family; and we believe her *daughters* symbolize the Protestant sects. If they do not, pray what do they represent? . . . We can see no resemblance between the "*mother,*" a *unit*, and a "*great city* [Rev 17:18]." But the "*whole family*" most strictly represents that city. Take the whole and the figure is perfect; leave out the *children* and it is imperfect.2

A few years earlier, in a letter written to Enoch Jacobs, a former Methodist minister and editor of the Day Star, James White made reference to the "organized churches", labeling them as Babylon.3 Organized religion became a real sore point of dispute for early Adventists; because these believers saw and experienced some of the evils meted out by mainline Protestant denominations, they were determined to put as much distance as they possibly could between themselves and the "system of Babylon."

However, because of the rapid growth in membership among Sabbatarian Adventists, the leaders in the movement saw the necessity to bring more order and organization to the work. This they eventually did, after much debate, at the Battle Creek Conference of

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3James White to Enoch Jacobs, *Day Star*, September 20, 1845, 26.
Sabbatarian Adventists in 1860, where they chose the name Seventh-day Adventist. Nevertheless the leadership and members were very careful and painstaking in their efforts to carve up an identity for the new church that was clearly distinct in faith and practice from the mainline Protestant churches from which they came. As a matter of fact, Ellen White saw the name as "a standing rebuke to the Protestant world." And commenting on its missionary significance, she wrote:

The name Seventh-day Adventists carries the true features of our faith in front and will convict the inquiring mind. Like an arrow from the Lord's quiver it will wound the transgressor of God's law, and will lead to repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.²

When all these historical events and theological issues are put together, it is not difficult to see why early Adventists took their unpopular position in salvation history as God's remnant people, those appointed by Him to declare the "third angel's message" as His final merciful call to earth's inhabitants. And even though this claim to "remnancy" sets Seventh-day Adventists in a position over against their Protestant neighbors, this self-understanding was instrumental in giving impetus and direction to Adventist mission from the time of its adoption on through to today.

**The Growth of Adventist Mission in the Virgin Islands**

The United States Virgin Islands (USVI) is made up of three major islands--St. Croix (STX), St. Thomas (STT), and St John (STJ)—that cover a total land mass of 136

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¹Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 1:223.

²Ibid., 224.
square miles. In 1980, four years after the birth of the North Caribbean Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, the population of the USVI was 96,569, with about 44.8 percent of the people representing indigenous Virgin Islanders, and the other 55.2 percent being immigrants, predominantly from the Lesser Antilles. Blacks represented 79.68 percent (or 76,951) of the population; Whites 14.79 percent (or 14,280); and other races 5.53 percent (or 5,338). See table 1 below.

TABLE 1

POPULATION DISTRIBUTION OF UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>General Population</th>
<th>Black People</th>
<th>White People</th>
<th>Other Races</th>
<th>Hispanic People</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>St. Croix</td>
<td>49,725</td>
<td>39,515</td>
<td>6,229</td>
<td>3,911</td>
<td>11,087</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Thomas</td>
<td>44,372</td>
<td>35,641</td>
<td>7,330</td>
<td>1,401</td>
<td>2,592</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. John</td>
<td>2,472</td>
<td>1,795</td>
<td>651</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total U.S.</td>
<td>96,569</td>
<td>76,951</td>
<td>14,280</td>
<td>5,338</td>
<td>13,735</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virgin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islands</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Figures taken from the 1980 Population Census of the United States Virgin Islands.

A common denominator among the racial mix was the number of persons of Hispanic origin. These represented people from all the racial groups, and formed 14.22 percent (or 13,735) of the entire population. At the time the population census was taken, the religious culture of the Virgin Islands was 91.43 percent Christian (Catholics &
predominantly Protestants) and 8.46 percent non-Christians. The non-religious (i.e. persons belonging to no religious persuasion) was 0.11 percent. Thus in terms of the North Caribbean Conference of SDA (NCC), the mission target is not just the nominal and practicing Christians who must be "carefronted" (not just confronted) with a clear presentation of the ‘Three Angels Messages’ of Rev 14:6-12, but also the people represented by the non-Christian religions and the unchurched who need to hear the gospel of salvation as well.

When the NCC assumed the full responsibility of evangelizing the USVI in January 1976 the church membership of the area stood at 2,894. By 1980 SDA membership in the Virgin Islands rose to 3,805, in eight churches—seven English-speaking, with a membership of 3,642, and one Spanish-speaking, with a membership of 163. This represented an increase of 911 members altogether. Among the general population, SDAs existed in a ratio of 1:25, or 3.9 percent of all persons in the Virgin Islands. By the end of the decade the church membership rose to 5,449, an increase of 43.25 percent (or 1,644 members). Of this figure, a large 96.5 percent (or 5,261) are English-speaking Blacks, in ten churches (an increase of 3). By contrast, a mere 3.5 percent (or 188) of the overall 5,449 are Spanish-speaking members, and church facilities remained at one. It is significant to note that while the English-speaking sector of the church grew by 1,619 members during the decade, the Spanish-speaking sector grew precious little—i.e. by 25. This growth picture can be traced by a close examination of table 2.
No doubt the work of the NCC of SDA in the Virgin Islands has experienced significant growth over the last decade and a half, even though this growth was predominantly among Black, English-speaking members of those communities. In 1980, the ratio of SDAs to the population was 1:25; by 1990, 1 in every 18 Virgin Islanders was an SDA. (See table 2 above) Whereas the entire Virgin Islands population grew by 5.4 percent (or 5,240) over the decade 1980-1990, SDA church membership grew 8 times faster, at a vigorous 43.2 percent, and the number of congregations went from 8 to 11. This presents a very pretty picture for Adventism in the Virgin Islands, one that would make any Seventh-day Adventist proud.

**TABLE 2**

GROWTH COMPARISON OF SDA CHURCHES AND U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS POPULATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Churches</th>
<th>1980 Figures</th>
<th></th>
<th>1990 Figures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Members</td>
<td>Population</td>
<td>Ratio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English-speaking</td>
<td>3,642</td>
<td>82,834</td>
<td>1:22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>13,735</td>
<td>1:84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3,805</td>
<td>96,569</td>
<td>1:25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Despite the successes that have attended the work of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Virgin Islands, there are reasons for great concern for the way it approaches the task of mission. Matt 28:19, 20 requires the Church to take the gospel to every person in the world, and in the context of the Virgin Islands, every Virgin Islander. During the last decade and a half, all of the Church's resources, personnel, and effort employed in mission evangelism have been directed to one particular sector of the Virgin Islands community — i.e. those who are Christians. This trend has been one of the major fallouts of Adventists' self-understanding as the "remnant church" of Bible prophecy. In essence, the remnant motif not only carved a mission identity for the Adventist Church, but has also created a mind-set that is uniquely Adventist. This mind-set manifests itself in many ways, but, in my view, it is largely characterized by four dispositions that have erected major stumbling blocks to Adventist mission in the Virgin Islands.

Denominational Superiority

Seventh-day Adventists in the Virgin Islands take great pride in the Adventist message, and will not hide or hesitate to show it. Great confidence abounds in the church's outstanding claim to be God's remnant people in these last days. However, it is the truthfulness and strength of the Adventist message, and the pride of our claim to remnancy, that often give a characteristic air of denominational superiority to many of our people. Relying on our remnant theology, many of our members behave as though we are God's favorites, and that all truths proceed from us, or through us, or it is no truth
at all. Adventist bias prevails from authors of religious literature to who is selling the vegetarian food or presenting the health lecture. If it is not Adventist, the tendency is to reject or ignore it. For example, a church member receives an invitation in the mail to attend a health lecture. She calls up the pastor to find out if an Adventist is giving the presentation. When she found out it was not, she decided that she was not going to attend the meeting.

The Virgin Islands church still seeks to define itself as doctrinally unique and different from all other Protestant churches. This particular stance results in the church finding itself existing today in a dynamic tension of trying to preserve a unique identity in the turbulent currents of secularism and post-modernism, while endeavoring to avoid the negative labeling of being exclusivistic, presumptuous, and self-righteous. Since perception appears as reality to the observer, Adventists have a reason to be concerned about the type of image their claim to "remnancy" creates in the minds of secular, post-modern thinkers, and other Protestants, who are prone to look very narrowly at any church that makes such a bold, authoritative claim as Adventists do.

Another reflection of denominational superiority mentality can be clearly seen in the condescending stance our members and pastors take toward the teaching and preaching of other Christian denominations in the Island region. It is rather difficult, nearing impossible at times, for our members to accept invitations to visit the service of a Sunday church. SDA church members in the Virgin Islands will not hesitate to express: “We are not going to visit your Church, because your minister has nothing to teach me.” The idea being conveyed is simply, “We have the truth, you don’t.” Seventh-day Adventists tend
to approach other Christians, or Christian dialogue, as teachers and not learners, and this arrogant posture has hurt the church's witness in the past, alienating us from the rest of the Christian community.

People Blindness

Another major implication of the Adventist mind-set on the mission of the Church in the Virgin Islands is that the missionary training given to ministers and members alike predisposes them to be people-blind. Because Adventists have been trained to deal with Christians of other denominations, they tend not to see, or to shy away from, people of non-Christian religions and the unchurched. Over the years the church has baptized scores of Christians from other denominations and boasts of its vigorous membership accession rate, but nothing is said of the Muslims, Hindus, Jews, Rastafarians, or the unchurched people who exist all over the Virgin Islands community. This phenomenon gives the unwitting impression that the Church's task is to point out the error of, and win over, Christians from other denominations, but at the same time, leave the conversion of the non-religious and unchurched to them (Protestant and Catholic churches).

Over the last decade the non-Christian religions have been steadily growing and will soon present a threat not just to Adventism, but to the entire Christian sector of the Virgin Islands. At the end of the last decade, Rastafarianism increased by 10 percent; they represent 3.9 percent of the population (i.e., over 4,000). Hinduism increased by 22 percent; Black Muslims by 20 percent; Muslims by 62.84 percent; Jews by 4.55 percent, and the unchurched by a strong 252 percent. These statistics do present a growing
concern since these non-Christian and non-religious groups form about 9.48 percent of
the total population, and will be 10.5 percent by the end of this decade if the trend
continues. (See table 3.)

**TABLE 3**

**GROWTH PATTERNS OF CHRISTIAN & NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religions</th>
<th>1980 No. of Persons</th>
<th>% of Population</th>
<th>1990 No. of Persons</th>
<th>% of Population</th>
<th>2000 No. of Persons</th>
<th>% of Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christians</td>
<td>88,293</td>
<td>91.43</td>
<td>91,789</td>
<td>90.16</td>
<td>95,285</td>
<td>89.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rastafari</td>
<td>3,600</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>4,400</td>
<td>4.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindus</td>
<td>2,847</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>3,500</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>4,153</td>
<td>3.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>522</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>850</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>1,178</td>
<td>1.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B/Muslims</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>1,100</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>1,150</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>1.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unchurched</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>635</td>
<td>0.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>96,569</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00</strong></td>
<td><strong>101,809</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00</strong></td>
<td><strong>107,049</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Figures were established by comparison of data taken from the 1980 & 1990 Census of Population and Housing of the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the annual reports of the Christian Council of the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The trend also shows that while these non-Christian and non-religious groups are increasing in relation to the rest of the population, Christianity is decreasing at a rate of 1 percent per decade. If the Seventh-day Adventist Church does not make a very sterling effort
to address the growing presence of the unchurched and non-Christian sectors of the Virgin Islands, it will have a real major challenge on its hands in the not-too-distant future.

Us Against Them

An unspoken, but very real, problem that forms a by-product to the Adventist mind-set is the 'us-against-them' mentality that characterizes the church's ministry in the community, and its relationship to people of other religious persuasions. Partnership in mission with other Christian denominations is not an option for Seventh-day Adventists, and appears as one of the unspoken rules of conduct for minister and members alike. Church leaders take great pains to ensure that Adventist labeling is attached to all church projects in the community, or that the Church is highly visible if interdenominational support is needed for any community enterprise. This Adventist stance has sometime hurt the witness of the Church, and has often been met with hostility and sharp criticism from the leaders and people of other denominations. Presently, the Church in the Virgin Islands has to deal with a growing anti-Adventists sentiment among other religionists, and this has adversely affected the church's ability to effect a compelling witness in the territory.

Message Above People

Last, but not least, is the fact that the Adventist concept of mission has created a mind-set among believers that practically deifies the Advent message at the expense of communal fellowship and sensitivity to the real needs of real people. A great deal of emphasis is placed on the functional aspect of community life, and very little on
communal experience. This has no doubt contributed to the high incidence of apostasy in the Virgin Islands region. Even though former members still believe in the authority and truthfulness of the "Third Angel's Message," many have expressed deep feelings of alienation from the body of Christ. We continue to preach about what people should do rather than listen to what is on people's minds and help them individually and collectively find their way. The Church at all levels is not only task-oriented and message-centered, but also organization-oriented as well. Everything the Church does centers around the message and the life of the organization. Alan Andreasen,1 in his attempt to outline measures to help nonprofit organizations determine and understand their operational focus, has aptly described conditions that are at home within the SDA church in the Virgin Islands. He suggested that the following are symptoms of a product-oriented organization:

1. Seeing the offering (in the Church's case, the message) as inherently desirable.

Seventh-day Adventist laity and ministry seldom entertain the thought that the potential prospect may not share their enthusiasm or values about the advent message. There is the tendency among Adventists to believe that the uniqueness and truthfulness of the message are sufficient to attract non-members. Pastors and church members sometimes express surprise, often bordering frustration, whenever there is a poor response (in terms of numbers deciding to join our ranks) to a presentation series of the Adventist message. The feeling expressed is: "The truth was so clear, why aren't these people accepting it?"

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What's wrong with them?"

2. The notion of consumer ignorance. Church leaders tend to ascribe lack of interest in the advent message to the fact that prospects are either gospel-hardened or do not fully understand or appreciate the high standards the message proclaims. There is also the general assumption that believers leave the Church because of this lack of understanding due to improper indoctrination, the notion being that if they really knew this message they would have never left the truth.

3. Overemphasis on promotion. Lay leaders have been schooled in trickle-down program promotion to meet set agendas of the higher organization, which are sometimes quite irrelevant to the local situation of the church. There is always some new program to be promoted, and quite often these programs do not start with the needs of the people they are intended to serve, but with individual or collective perceptions of church leaders. Thus, pastors and members have become more program friendly than people centered. Local church ministry generally takes it departure from a program to be promoted or sold to the congregation rather than from the perspective of congregational or community needs. Once the program is received from the higher organization, pastor and members spent a lot of time and energy promoting it in order to gain membership acceptance and support.

4. The secondary role of consumer research. The typical SDA church member in Virgin Islands assumes that the problem for the lack of interest in the Adventists' message is the public's ignorance, and the only solution for the problem is not doing research on people's needs, but a more vigorous and consistent proclamation of the message. There is
very little sense of the customers' perspective among Seventh-day Adventists, and if research is done at all it is mainly done to confirm Adventists' belief about the population under study. This lack of customer perspective has really hurt the church on the inside as well as the outside. On the inside, the needs of church volunteers (internal customers) are subservient to preset positions and programs; and on the outside instead of asking the questions to ascertain peoples' needs, we give answers to questions they are not asking. The advent message is treated as the generic solution to problems of non-members, who are generally called unbelievers and looked upon as being part of the system of Babylon.

5. **One best marketing strategy.** This most certainly applies to the evangelistic approach of the SDA Church in the Virgin Islands. Tent crusades and, sometimes, cottage meetings have become the standing norm for the mission outreach of the local churches. Even though this evangelistic approach seems to appeal to a certain class of people, it is becoming worn by extensive, repeated use. Andreasen\(^1\) attributes this one best strategy approach to administrators' monolithic view of society (people-blindness in our case), because they are so out of touch with changing societal needs. One best strategy is usually the easiest and fastest to put into action. Since pastoral ministry is generally driven by numbers orchestrated by the local Conference, the tent crusade has been the typical evangelistic tool of choice, since other approaches appear to be slower and less yielding.

6. **Ignoring generic competition.** The SDA Church in the Virgin Islands believes

\(^{1}\)Ibid.
that its message is second to none and cannot be successfully controverted by any other denomination. Even though this may be the case, church leaders and people have not been able to correctly identify their competitors, nor have taken any measures to ensure that the Church maintains a competitive advantage. There is the general assumption that our competitors are other Christian denominations in the territory, and there is absolutely no meaningful consideration given to the non-Christian religions, or the benumbing influence of the growing secular society. Every Sabbath morning and throughout the week church members are bombarded with so many alternatives (in the media and through communal interaction) than sitting down to listen to tame, traditional preaching, which many leaders assume is the only answer to the world's needs.

While we remain focused on what the other Christian churches are doing, and not doing, the devil is moving through our backdoors and securing the interest of our members in his ungodly, diabolical affairs. As far as I am aware, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Virgin Islands has not, up to this point, defined who or what is the competition in term of outreach (targeting the unsaved) and in-reach (membership conservation).

In addition to all this, the Church faces a growing challenge in trying to reach people whose Christian walk has been characterized by a high degree of emotional encounters. Often such people are very prone to overlook the doctrinal weaknesses of their denomination, and are rather unwilling to trade the emotional high they experience in the fellowship of their brethren for what they perceive as the overemphasized, doctrinal correctness and emotional low of Seventh-day Adventists. This mission challenge is also
accentuated by the fact that other Christian denominations in the Virgin Islands are no longer rolling over to the doctrinal onslaught of the Adventists' evangelists, but are really consolidating their efforts by working together in campaigns of their own.

**Other Major Challenges**

1. **Increasing secularization:** The increasing secularization of the Virgin Islands has also presented the Church with a great dilemma. The traditional proclamation of the Adventist message is becoming progressively irrelevant to the needs of the people of the Virgin Islands, particularly the younger generation. Jon Paulien suggests that "secular people don't normally come to faith as a result of intellectual argument but because of an encounter with the living God." The real issue for secular people is not just truth but relevance. The lay leaders and pastors face the challenge of finding new ways to appeal to their own young people who find themselves struggling against the immoral but compelling waves of a secular society.

2. **The growing number of un-churched people:** This obviously is the result of the impact of the increasing secular society. Many baby-boomers and generation-Xers are

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1Secularization means that a society is becoming more and more inclined to view life without reference to God or religion. There is a gradual erosion of belief in the supernatural, a perception that whatever happens is limited to this world and to sense experience. Religious values and practices are increasingly discarded. And the church, as an institution, declines in its influence on the larger society. Jon Paulien, *Present Truth in the Real World* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1993), 8.

2Ibid., 10.

moving away from traditional religion and are shopping around interdenominationally for a brand of Christianity that speaks to their concerns and needs. Wade Clark Roof writes:

Individuals are inclined to regard their own experience as superior to the accounts of others, and the truths found through self-discovery as having greater relevance to them than those handed down by way of creed or custom. Direct experience is always more trustworthy, if for no other reason than because of its "inwardness" and "withitness"—two qualities that have come to be much appreciated in a highly expressive, narcissistic culture.¹

According to Margie Morris, "these young adults look for quality packaging. They expect relevance, meaningful interactions, efficiency, a little glitz and a sense of humor."²

3. The growth of non-Christian religions: The Church in the Virgin Islands must rise up to face the ominous sleeping giant that is waking up in its own backyard. Over the last decade the non-Christian religions have been steadily growing and will soon present a threat not just to Adventism, but to the entire Christian sector of the Virgin Islands. At the end of the last decade Rastafarianism increased by 10 percent; they represent 3.9 percent of the population (i.e. over 4,000). Hinduism increased by 22 percent; Black Muslims by 20 percent; Muslims by 62.84 percent; Jews by 4.55 percent, and the unchurched by a strong 252 percent. These statistics do present a growing concern since these non-Christians and non-religious groups form about 9.48 percent of the total population, and will be 10.5 percent by the end of this decade if the trend continues. (See


²Morris, 20.


TABLE 4

GROWTH PATTERNS OF CHRISTIAN & NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christians</td>
<td>88,293</td>
<td>91.43</td>
<td>91,789</td>
<td>90.16</td>
<td>95,285</td>
<td>89.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rastafari</td>
<td>3,600</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>4,400</td>
<td>4.10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hindus</td>
<td>2,847</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>3,500</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>4,153</td>
<td>3.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>522</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>850</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>1,178</td>
<td>1.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B/Muslims</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>0.18</td>
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<td>1,100</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>1,150</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>1.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unchurched</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>635</td>
<td>0.60</td>
</tr>
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<td>100.00</td>
<td>101,809</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>107,049</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
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Source: Figures were established by comparison of data taken from the 1980 & 1990 Census of Population and Housing of the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the annual reports of the Christian Council of the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The trend also shows that while these non-Christians and non-religious groups are increasing in relation to the rest of the population, Christianity is decreasing at a rate of 1 percent per decade. If Seventh-day Adventists and the rest of the Christianity community do not wake up and do something positive to reverse this trend, they will certainly be faced with some major challenges in the not-too-distant future.

4. **Falling away of church volunteers**: It is becoming increasingly difficult for
pastors and lay leaders to recruit volunteers to staff church offices and run church programs. Volunteer time has become a real premium since economic demands are driving people to spend longer hours on their jobs, and stay-at-home mothers who once volunteered their services are going out to work or school in order to make ends meet. Volunteer burnout is also high because many of the same people are overworked year after year, with very little attention given to their needs and concerns.

**Summary**

For many years lay leaders and pastors have sought to meet the above challenges by following the traditional approaches to church management and ministry (these will be explored in more detail later). They have come to realize that filtered-down programs, canned approaches, and guilt appeals are not as effective as they used to be in securing decisions for Jesus Christ. I believe that church leaders can find viable alternatives for productive ministry if they are taught how to apply the principles of marketing management and strategic planning to their demanding tasks.
CHAPTER 4

CHANGING THE FACE OF ADVENTIST MISSION

IN THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

The current challenges facing Adventism in the Virgin Islands call for a re-examination and re-adjustment to the way mission and ministry are presently conducted in the region. This does not imply an automatic dismantling of the traditional methods of evangelism and ministry, but it does infer a refining and enhancing of the Church’s organizational structure and mission outlook for greater efficiency and effectiveness in the pursuit of organizational objectives. Times have changed and every day brings new challenges, not just to the Church as a body, but also to the individual members comprising the body. If the Church does not make organizational and functional adjustments to meet these challenges, it will not be able to perform ministry that resonates with the needs of society, and will be ingloriously left behind as an irrelevant source of authority for shaping modern life and thought. Barna writes:

Today, organizational survival requires the ability to evaluate the environment and adapt one’s style to keep pace with the changes. Survival does not require compromising one’s morals or vision, or the gospel. It does, however, necessitate a clear understanding of the territory within which an individual or organization will attempt to demonstrate those morals and convey that vision.\(^1\)

\(^1\)Barna, Marketing the Church, 27.
Kotler and Levy also make this very important statement:

For an organization to remain viable, its management must provide for periodic audits of its objectives, resources, and opportunities. It must reexamine its basic business, target groups, differentiate advantage, communication channels, and messages in the light of current trends and needs.¹

These are very timely statements, fitting quite easily with the current situation of Seventh-day Adventism in the Virgin Islands. In light of this, I envision marketing management as an excellent tool for overall organizational evaluation and strategic planning, since this business discipline is not only diagnostic but also analytical and prescriptive as well. However, in order to pave the way for implementing a marketing approach to mission and ministry in the Virgin Islands, it is of crucial importance to sensitize church leadership and members about the relevance and significance of market-oriented thinking and planning as they relate to organizational mission objective. To do so, the typical Adventist mind-set, which tends to be triumphalistic,² product-oriented (message-centeredness), and organization-centered, must be held in abeyance (so to speak), so that church leaders may have the opportunity to see the benefits of approaching mission from a different perspective. Instead of doing mission from the inside out, mission will be conducted from the outside in. Approaching from this angle, the primary focus of mission will not be the message or the organization formed to carry it out (even though these are very essential in themselves), but the people for whom the church and

¹Kotler and Levy, Broadening the Concept of Marketing, 10-15.

²Triumphalism is the doctrine, attitude, or belief that one religious creed is superior to all others. Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (1998), s.v. "triumphalism."
the entire mission process have been designed to reach. Bill Hybels states:

Authentic evangelism flows from a mind-set that acknowledges the ultimate value of people—forgotten people, lost people, wandering people, up-and-outers, down-and-outers—all people. The highest value is to love them, serve them, and reach them. Everything else goes up in smoke.¹

Adjusting the Adventist Mind-set

There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that there is an urgent need for modification of the Adventist mind-set that practically deifies the Advent message at the expense of communal fellowship and sensitivity to the real needs of real people. As I stated in chapter 3, this triumphantistic mind-set is characterized by attitudes and behavior patterns that portray (1) denominational superiority, (2) people blindness, (3) us-against-them mentality, and (4) an atmosphere where message has priority over people. In this first section, I show the flaw in each of these mental frameworks, and use the life and teachings of Christ to point out God's ideals for His people, as they relate to the fulfillment of His mission here on earth.

Denominational Superiority

Seventh-day Adventists claim to remnancy has, more often than not, given some church members a very false sense of denominational superiority. Traditionally, we posit ourselves as the religious elite and the bastion of religious truth, categorizing other Christian and non-Christian religious organizations as a part of the system of mystical

Babylon. As a direct outgrowth of this religious stance and the subtle inherent human desire for supremacy, there is the tendency among Adventists in the Virgin Islands to look condescendingly on what God might be doing in other religious communities. The attitude most often projected is that, if it does not happen here (i.e., within the Adventist church), then it is not authentic. From the pulpit and in the pew, Adventists have learned to discredit, minimize, and sometimes attribute to the powers of darkness, religious activities and supernatural occurrences in non-Adventist congregations. For example, the conversion experience and baptism of Christians from other Protestant denominations are generally held suspect whenever they convert to Seventh-day Adventism. These people are treated as though their walk with God, prior to their embracing the Third Angel’s Message, did not count for much. Thus, they are encouraged to be re-baptized as a symbol of their acceptance of the full body of truth as proclaimed by God’s Remnant Church. Another manifestation of this prejudicial discrediting and minimization is the general stance towards miracles occurring outside Adventist circles, especially in the area of healing. Even though miracles do not guarantee doctrinal correctness, or form the basis to test the genuineness of one’s Christian confession, the general assumption among Adventists is that these miracles are not authentic since these people do not teach or obey the truth. This mind-set forms the corollary of the experience of Jesus’ disciples in Mark 9:38-41:

John said to him, "Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us." But Jesus said, "Do not stop him; for no one who does a deed of power in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. Whoever is not against us is for us. For truly I tell you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ will by no means lose the reward." (NRSV)

The point here seems rather clear. John appears to be speaking on behalf of his fellow disciples and articulated the common feelings of the group. Obviously, the disciples felt that they were the privileged followers of the Messiah and the only true recipients of His miraculous power. It is also quite possible that the disciples were filled with jealousy since they were not able to cast the evil spirit out of the boy at the foot of the mountain, and could not bear the thought that God would bypass them and credit others with His healing grace.

This indeed was the case of the leadership of Israel when the magi, from the East, came to Jerusalem inquiring about the birth of the long-awaited Messiah. Ellen White comments that "these learned teachers would not stoop to be instructed by those whom they termed heathen. It could not be, they said, that God had passed them by, to communicate with ignorant shepherds or uncircumcised Gentiles."¹ These teachers of Israel believed themselves to be God's chosen channels of truth and revelation, and could not conceive of God stooping so low to reveal His hidden purpose to the unlearned and the uncircumcised. They thought they had God all boxed in and figured out, that they alone held the only patent on divine grace, but "while God was opening the door to the

¹White, Desire of Ages, 62-63.
Gentiles, these Jewish leaders were closing the door to themselves.\textsuperscript{1} This mind-set has some serious implications for Seventh-day Adventists living in the end time.

Commenting on the Jewish mental framework, Ellen White writes:

The Jewish people had been made the depositories of sacred truth; but Pharisaism had made them the most exclusive, the most bigoted, of all the human race. Everything about the priests and rulers—their dress, customs, ceremonies, traditions—made them unfit to be the light of the world. They looked upon themselves, the Jewish nation, as the world. But Christ commissioned His disciples to proclaim a faith and worship that would have in it nothing of caste or country, a faith that would be adapted to all peoples, all nations, all classes of men.\textsuperscript{2}

Could it be that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is repeating Jewish history? As God's chosen end-time people, called to proclaim a special message of mercy and warning to a soon-to-perish world, could we be projecting, by our attitude and behavior, that we are God's favorites, endowed with His special benefits and privileges? That we alone have the patent rights on the choicest blessings of heaven? Is God stuck with the Adventist Church? Or will He dare work out His purpose through other denominations, organizations, or people? God's dealing with His favored people in the past can give us a fairly accurate idea of what we can expect to happen in the future. Paul tells us, in 1 Cor 10:11, 12, that Israel's experience as God's chosen people is recorded for our instruction in the end time, and that we need to take heed lest while we think we are favored of God we may not be at all.

\textsuperscript{1}Ibid., 63.

\textsuperscript{2}Ibid., 819-820.
What Can We Learn from Israel?

In the book of Romans, chaps. 9 through 11, Paul portrays a brief, but tragic history of Israel as the chosen people of God. He laments:

I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom belong the adoption as sons and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and promises, whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen. (Rom 9: 1-5 NASB)

From the entire scenario that followed this sad introduction, several important points emerged that are very instructive for Seventh-day Adventists, since we consider ourselves as fulfilling a similar role to Israel, in the context of salvation history (1Pet 2:9-10).

1. Election is always based totally on God's grace and mercy, and not on human capability, uniqueness, or stellar accomplishments (Rom 9:11-16; Deut 7:6-9; 11:5, 6). So there is absolutely no room for boasting, favoritism, or claims of supremacy.

2. Election is always for a purpose—God's purpose and not the purposes or the fancies of the elected (Deut 7:8; Gen 12:1-3; see also 1 Pet 2:9).

3. Election is contingent on the fulfillment of God's purpose (Rom 11:7-12). God rejected Israel because they failed to fulfill the purposes for which they were called, and became a stumbling block to the very ones they were called to reach with the good news of the gospel.

4. God is not stuck with any people-Israel, Seventh-day Adventists, or any other.
Salvation history shows that His purposes supercede every earthly establishment or organizational agendas, and His will will be done on earth as it is in heaven, with or without the people He has chosen to help accomplish it (Rom 11:22-26 and 17-22). God is never short on options, and He will always find a way to fulfill His purpose.

In the economy of heaven, there is absolutely no room for a pedestal mentality or "better-than-thou" attitude. God bestows His special favor upon individuals so that they can use His blessing to serve others, not laud it over them. "From every one to whom much is given, much will be required" (Luke 12:48 NRSV), and Seventh-day Adventists need to be extremely prayerful (not boastful) here. Our special position in salvation history has nothing to do with an inherent value in us as a people, but everything to do with God's mercy and grace, and with the sacred task to which He has called us. In the message to Laodicea, which we have traditionally applied to ourselves, the True Witness bears straight and pointed testimony that challenges every visage of denominational supremacy, bigotry, self-sufficiency, and exclusivity. Ellen White says:

Here is represented a people who pride themselves in their possession of spiritual knowledge and advantage. But they have not responded to the unmerited blessings that God has bestowed upon them. They have been full of rebellion, ingratitude, and forgetfulness of God; and still He has dealt with them as a loving, forgiving father deals with an ungrateful, wayward son. They have resisted His grace, abused His privileges, slighted His opportunities, and have been satisfied to sink down in contentment, in lamentable ingratitude, hollow formalism, and hypocritical

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1See Rev 3:14-22.

2See Uriah Smith, 44; and Waggoner to Smith, 61.
Indeed, this message is a wake-up call and a sober reminder to an insipid, powerless, self-absorbed people, characterized with an altogether wrong mind-set. They perceive themselves to be in the driver's seat in the religious world, when, in fact, they are woefully self-deceived, misguided, and in desperate need. Based on the evidence of the True and Faithful Witness, there is an urgent need for mental adjustment among the people of God. The only antidote for this mind-set is to heed the counsel of the True Witness—seek out the heavenly merchantman, and buy from Him gold tried in the fire, white raiment, and heavenly eyesalve. Taken together, these represent the total mind and character of Jesus Christ, who says to us all: "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest unto your soul" (Matt 11:29 NASB, emphasis mine).

Richard Rice rightly suggests that as we seek to understand other religions, we should not approach them with an attitude of smugness or self-congratulation. Our confidence in the truth of Adventism, at best, may offer us a sense of security, but not one of superiority. With the right attitude we can engage in a real dialogue with members of other faiths. We can listen as well as speak.

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1White, Selected Messages, 1:357.

2Ibid., 358.

For many decades, Seventh-day Adventist evangelism in the Virgin Islands has been honing in on the Protestant and Catholic churches in the region, and this may be more by practice than by design. Traditionally, pastors and members of the Adventist Church have been trained to enunciate and defend the Church’s doctrinal position, and to call God’s people out of Babylon (which is often viewed as Catholics, Protestants, and other non-Christian religions). The evangelistic warpath has been trodden again and again under the uncompromising battle cry: "Come out of her my people!" (Rev 18:4 KJV). Clifford Goldstein writes:

The Adventist church does teach . . . that all other denominations are in some degree of theological apostasy, that Adventism alone possesses "the present truth," and that "through the remnant church He [God] proclaims a message that is to restore His true worship by calling His people out of the apostasy and preparing them for Christ’s return."\(^1\)

This philosophy is much in keeping with the position and image the early church pioneers tried to create in order to clearly establish an identity for the young church of Advent believers after the 1844 disappointment. This identity was to be distinct and separate from that of the other denominations of the day, so our pioneers placed a very strong emphasis on defining and enunciating church doctrine. However, though the Church has strongly established itself around the world, this posture or positioning strategy has not changed over the years. The Seventh-day Adventist Church still seeks to

\(^1\)Goldstein, 12.
define itself in terms of its doctrines and theological differences from other Protestant religions, and thus, its evangelism has taken on a more doctrinal approach.

Typically, Adventist evangelism presupposes that the targeted individual or audience has a Christian background or orientation, or at least believes in the authority of the Bible, since it would be rather difficult or well impossible to present the Third Angel’s Message without either of these basic frameworks. Thus, evangelism in the Virgin Islands tends to shy away from, or just simply ignore, the existence of non-Christian religions, or from people who have a very dim view of the Bible. As was pointed out in chapter 3, Adventist evangelistic success has occurred predominantly among Catholics and other Protestants, to the neglect of the Hindus, Moslems, Rastafarians, and the un-churched.

Because church leaders and members are not trained to work with the people from non-Christian religions, the secular-minded, or the un-churched, they tend to ignore them in their evangelistic planning and process. However, the growing presence of these people groups in the Virgin Islands is no longer an issue that can be easily glossed over, ignored, or wished away. As a matter of fact, ignoring any people group, when it has to do with the Missio Dei, is not a valid option for Seventh-day Adventists, since the divine call of the remnant mandates the preaching of the everlasting gospel to every person.

Lift up Your Eyes and See

The ministry of Jesus challenges us to take off the spiritual blinders and engage our thoughts to focus on and work for all classes of people, and especially those who
appear to be different from us. There is a tendency among many Christians, including Seventh-day Adventists, to focus their evangelistic ministries on individuals whom they think can fit into their fellowship circle. They just do not feel comfortable rubbing shoulders with people socially and culturally different from them. In a special issue of View magazine, titled "Movement--Is There Room for Me in Your Church?" César González wrote a very moving story of a teenage gangster who decided to visit an eXcite98 event, in a desperate attempt to ditch his past gang affiliation and to find a new life for himself. However, no sooner had he landed at this great youth event than he was accosted by a seasoned Seventh-day Adventist, who heaped on him a barrage of ‘holy’ insults, because of the tattoos that were imprinted on his face, neck, and arms. Fortunately, but very narrowly, the young man survived it and went on to have an enjoyable experience at the week-long event. Before he finally left for home, he had this message for the Seventh-day Adventist Church, through César, his new-found friend:

I would like to tell them [church members] that the Church is for sinners. I would tell them that the worse shape someone is in, the more help they need. I would tell them to be more forgiving and less judgemental. There is no need for that in the Church, that’s what cops and judges are for.²

How many more incidents like this occur in Christian communities on a regular basis? Christians allow non-essential, non-salvation issues to cloud their view of a sinner’s need for Christ and salvation. Bill Hull says that

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²Ibid.
we have erected unnecessary barriers between ourselves and the very ones we pray to reach. These barriers are usually cultural, not theological. We often communicate a legalistic attitude that says, "If you practice certain activities, you are not welcome in the Christian community." Therefore, the non-believer receives an inflexible, judgmental attitude from the very ones who should be accepting him. The Christian community must keep the unbeliever's view of salvation uncluttered with cultural biases.¹

When Jesus began His ministry among His people, He found them to be perpetrators of a most severe form of people blindness. Jewish prejudice, bigotry, and exclusivism had blinded the chosen people from seeing and relating to the needs of people who were ethnically and socially different from them. All non-Jews were considered heathen and, therefore, were excluded from the favor of divine grace. Jesus gave several lessons to His disciples, and often in the presence of the masses, to challenge this mind-set which is still very present in Adventist circles in the form of racism, and ethnic and cultural indifference.

In His ministry to the Syrophoenician woman (Matt 15:21-28), Christ showed that all barriers must be broken down so that the good news of the gospel could have free and complete access to all peoples of the earth, regardless of race, color, or creed. Ellen White says that "caste is hateful to God. He ignores everything of this character. In His sight, the souls of all men are of equal value."² There is absolutely no room for people blindness here; Jesus' actions completely nullify this mind-set.

¹Bill Hull, Jesus Christ, Disciple-Maker (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1990), 101.

²White, Desire of Ages, 403.
This act [of responding to the need of a Gentile woman] opened the minds of the disciples more fully to the labor that lay before them among the Gentiles. They saw a wide field of usefulness outside of Judea. They saw souls bearing sorrows unknown to those more highly favored. Among those whom they had been taught to despise were souls longing for help from the mighty Healer, hungering for the light of truth, which had been so abundantly given to the Jews.¹

Jesus launched another major attack on Jewish blind prejudice when He deliberately chose to make a detour through the land of Samaria, on His way to Galilee (see John 4). Although Samaria lies along the path that formed the shortest route from Judea to Galilee, the Jews generally chose other routes to avoid having to encounter the Samaritans. However, Jesus chose this route because He had a definite purpose in mind and a very important lesson to teach His disciples. His compassion for the lost constrained Him to choose the path of ministry and not the route of prejudical blindness and avoidance. In His encounter with the woman at Jacob’s well, He again illustrated the fact that there are absolutely no boundaries to inhibit the mission of God and the proclamation of the gospel. Jon Paulien observes that,

right from the start, the woman had three strikes against the possibility that she might develop a relationship with Jesus. She was a woman in a public place, she was a member of a hated race, and she was living in sin. No respectable Jewish man would have been caught speaking to her. But Jesus took the risk of reaching across all these barriers to provide for her the living water that He had come to give to whoever was willing to believe.²

Evidently, Jesus allowed none of the cultural, ethnic, or political issues that

¹Ibid., 402.

embroiled His race to cloud His vision or deter His ministry to a struggling sinner in dire need of rescue and salvation. The account says that through this adulterous woman, Jesus was introduced to an entire Samaritan village. Ellen White says:

She [the Samaritan woman] proved herself a more effective missionary than His own disciples. The disciples saw nothing in Samaria to indicate that it was an encouraging field. Their thoughts were fixed upon a great work to be done in the future. They did not see that right around them was a harvest to be gathered. But through the woman they despised, a whole cityful were brought to hear the Saviour. She carried the light at once to her countrymen.¹

How grossly people-blind these disciples were, and while they stood there, questioningly taking in the closing scene of Jesus' dialogue and the subsequent exodus of Samaritan villagers coming to hear Him, He challenged their Jewish prejudice with the words: "Do you not say, There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest" (John 4: 35 NASB).

These words of Christ were not limited to His disciples only, but they represent a call to every born-again Christian to take off the spiritual, cultural, ethnic, and social blinders; to lift up our eyes and look unto the fields that are white and ready for harvest. We need to lift up our eyes and see the multitudes of unreached people who are drinking from the broken cistern of this ungodly world, and tax our intellect and resources to find ways and means to reach out to them with the saving gospel of Jesus Christ.

We are called upon to lift our eyes to the "regions beyond." Christ tears away the wall of partition, the dividing prejudice of nationality, and teaches a love for all the

²White, Desire of Ages, 195.
human family. He lifts men from the narrow circle which their selfishness prescribes; He abolishes all territorial lines and artificial distinctions of society. He makes no difference between neighbors and strangers, friends and enemies. He teaches us to look upon every needy soul as our brother, and the world as our field.¹

There is absolutely no excuse for an attitude that is insensitive, blind, or unresponsive to needs of sinners caught up in the intricacies of the kingdom of darkness. The peoples of non-Christian religions, the secular, the gangster, and the profligate are all souls for whom Christ has died, and for whom heaven will expend its best gifts to save. Therefore, the Adventist mind-set that tends to overlook or shun these people needs to be completely aligned with the all-embracing, compassionate mind of Christ, so that the church can be true to its mission mandate to all the people of the Virgin Islands.

Us Against Them

As early as their pioneer days Seventh-day Adventists developed a polemic against the Catholic Church (whom Adventists believe represent ‘mystery Babylon the great, the mother of harlots’—Rev 17:3-6), and all other Sunday-keeping churches (whom Adventists designate as the daughters of the great whore).² This view was refined by Joseph Marsh, editor of the Millerite periodical the Voice of Truth, as follows:

There can be no question but that the "woman" is symbolical of the church, and as she is called Babylon, there can be no dispute but that the church is Babylon. What church? We can make no distinction no farther than the figure will justify. It is a mother and her daughters—a family of harlots [Rev 17:5]. We admit the mother represents the Catholic Church the eldest member of the family; and we believe her

¹Ibid., 823.
daughters symbolize the Protestant sects. If they do not, pray what do they represent? ... We can see no resemblance between the "mother," a unit, and a "great city [Rev 17:18]." But the "whole family" most strictly represents that city. Take the whole and the figure is perfect; leave out the children and it is imperfect.¹

This polemic was developed prior to the "great disappointment" in 1844, against the surging waves of anti-Millerite sentiments in many of the mainline Protestant churches, that became seriously offended by the vociferous end-time proclamations of the Advent movement. These mainline churches enforced a policy that disbanded members from their fellowship because of their affiliation and participation in the Millerite movement, which they thought promulgated some very strange beliefs. It was not long before leaders in the movement began to associate Protestantism with Roman Catholicism, characterizing both as Babylon. And since these believers saw and experienced some of the evils meted out by mainline Protestant denominations, they were determined to put as much distance as they possibly could between themselves and the "system of Babylon." From that time to this present day, Seventh-day Adventists have sought to maintain that distance and have made the ‘system of Babylon’ the pivotal focus of their evangelistic thrusts.

Even though Adventists' theological position, with reference to the fall of Babylon, is sound, it does not justify the spirit of antagonism and competitiveness that has characterized our relations with Catholics and Protestants over the years. We keep ourselves separate and aloft from them, and strain our efforts not to be associated with, or

¹Marsh, "Babylon," 58.
be counted as one with, them in any public forum. Church leaders and pastors have also contributed to this spirit of rivalry when promoting and conducting Adventist evangelistic campaigns. In the church and under the tent, we use phrases and labels that communicate to our members that non-Adventists, regardless of their profession, are on the other side of the religious track, and that we are up against them in winning souls for the Kingdom of God. This spirit has created unnecessary hostility toward Seventh-day Adventists in the Virgin Islands, and church members mistakenly attribute that hostility to "the dragon that is wrath with the woman and went to make war with the remnant of her seed" (Rev 12:17). However, there is absolutely no Christian virtue to be derived from hostility that is self-induced. Peter tells us:

> For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. (1 Pet 2:19, 20 KJV)

Ellen White counsels us:

> "Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves." Do not arouse the malignity of the enemy by making denunciatory speeches. Thus you will close doors against the entrance of truth. Clear-cut messages are to be borne. But guard against arousing antagonism. There are many souls to be saved. Restrain all harsh expressions. In word and deed be wise unto salvation, representing Christ to all with whom you come in contact.1

The sad truth is that while Seventh-day Adventists readily admit that we are not the only Christians proclaiming Christ to the world, we do, by our actions, relate to Protestants and Catholics as though they are not Christians. Hence, we refuse to work

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1White, *Evangelism*, 564.
with or be associated with them. It would appear rather easy, to the point of gratifying, for Seventh-day Adventists to think that since Babylon is fallen, it would be in their place to accelerate that fall by verbally attacking and physically separating themselves from people who are still mesmerized by the wine dispensed from Babylon’s mystical fountain. But Ellen White would remind us that "there are God-fearing men in the fallen churches. If this were not so, we should not be given the message to bear, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen. . . . Come out of her, My people."

The implications of this statement suggests that even though Babylon is fallen, God is still actively at work among that precariously tottering, mystical structure, seeking and saving the honest and contrite in heart for His Kingdom.

While working as a pastor in one of the islands in 1989, a team of Adventist ministers (including myself) approached the local island government, requesting the use of one of its abandoned factory sheds to store our disaster relief supplies, in the wake of the tropical hurricane that devastated the island. We were advised that since the availability of such sheds was limited, it would be best that we pool our resources with those of the other local churches and use the shed as a common distribution center for the people of the island. We had to turn down the offer because our Conference and local church members would not endorse any joint-relief venture with people of other religious faiths. Instead, the Conference elected to erect an Adventist storage shed for the distribution of the Adventist relief supplies to the people of the community. Needless to

1Ibid., 559.
say, the local government minister was not only disappointed but pretty upset at the religious narrowness and shallow thinking of Seventh-day Adventists.

Over and over again, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has been characterized and labeled as possessing a spirit of religious arrogance and bigotry, not so much because of what we believe, but more so because of our separatist, unfriendly, condescending attitude toward Christians from other denominations. They view us with grave suspicion and often form very unhealthy images as to what Seventh-day Adventism is all about, and on not too few occasions have labeled us as being a cult religion. This negative outlook of the church has created some really difficult situations for effective ministry among the people, and it would be rather naive, bordering arrogance, for us to just sit by and assume a martyr complex, when, indeed, we have created our own unwelcomed situation. A better approach would be to reach our hands across the gulf, and in the spirit of Jesus, be more neighborly to our fellow Christians, and at the same time look for opportunities where we can be partners in ministry to the Virgin Islands community. This is not an appeal for ecumenism, but a plea for God's people to form positive relationships with Christians of other faith, among whom the Spirit of Jehovah is still actively at work preparing God's invisible remnant for the final events of earth's history. Ellen White says:

The Lord has His representatives in all the churches. These persons have not had the special testing truths for these last days presented to them under circumstances that brought conviction to heart and mind; therefore they have not, by rejecting light, severed their connection with God. Many there are who have faithfully walked in the light that has shone upon their pathway. They hunger to know more of the way and
works of God.¹

She also says:

Our ministers should seek to come near to the ministers of other denominations. Pray for and with these men, for whom Christ is interceding. A solemn responsibility is theirs. As Christ’s messengers, we should manifest a deep, earnest interest in these shepherds of the flock.²

Thus, this mind-set that draws up battle-lines and builds walls that unnecessarily alienate us from the rest of the Christians community needs to be replaced for three valid reasons, other than those mentioned above:

1. It is contrary to the Person and spirit of Jesus Christ, and runs against the grain of Scripture. Even though Jesus knew that ‘salvation is from the Jews’ (John 4:22 NRSV), He did not treat other marginal or religious groups with any indifference or condescending disdain. He rejected this us-against-them attitude when His disciples reported their account of their attempting to stop someone (a non-disciple by their standard) from casting out demons in the name of Jesus, "because he followeth not us."³ In other words, "this man is not a member of our church." The disciples expected Christ’s commendation, but Jesus used the opportunity to show them that the person casting out devils in His name was not an enemy, but a partner in ministry. On yet another occasion, the disciples of John the Baptist came to Him questioning the authority of Jesus to baptize the people who were flocking after Him, when Jesus Himself was

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¹White, Testimonies to the Church, 6:70-71.

²Ibid., 78.

³See Mark 9:38-42.
baptized by John (John 3:22-26). John’s answer to His disciples was very much similar to the answer Jesus gave to His disciples. He said that "no one can receive anything except what has been given from heaven" (John 3:27). In all of the above examples can be seen the budding spirit of religious intolerance, which essentially formed the fuel for the fires of religious persecution throughout the centuries. Listen to James and John as they prescribe the ‘Christian’ solution for the rejection of Jesus by a Samaritan village: "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?"

Ellen White¹ says that these men were surprised to see that Jesus was pained by their word, and still more surprised as His rebuke fell upon their ears, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them" (Luke 9:55-56).

It is not part of Christ’s mission to compel men to receive Him. It is Satan, and men actuated by his spirit, that seek to compel the conscience. . . . There can be not more conclusive evidence that we possess the spirit of Satan than the disposition to hurt and destroy those who do not appreciate our work, or who act contrary to our ideas.²

2. It is not in the best interest of what Christianity represents for us to set ourselves up as being against the rest of the Christian community. One of the strongest arguments that can be put forward in favor of Christianity is the genuine unity of Christian believers in a very fragmented and chaotic world. Jesus said: "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another" (John 13:35

¹White, Desire of Ages, 487.
²Ibid.
116

NASB). He also said that the unity of believers will serve as a testimony to the world that He came from the Father (see John 17:20-23). Incidentally, one of the greatest problems non-Christians and unchurched people have with Christianity is that they have a very hard time dealing with so many denominations, who claim to be serving the same God, yet, at the same time, trying to tug the non-Christian world in so many different theological directions. And when we, as Adventists, claim that we have the truth for these last days (and we do), yet set ourselves up as being at odds with the rest of the Christian world, we are not making the world’s theological mazes any easier for the unsaved who are genuinely seeking after God. Christ’s Kingdom is one, and "a kingdom divided against itself will not stand." So we cannot project the image that gives the semblance that we are trying to build up an Adventist kingdom on earth that rivals the kingdoms of Protestantism and Roman Catholicism.

3. It closes the window of opportunity for enhancing ministry, and reaching people of other faiths. God did not endow only the Seventh-day Adventist Church with all the ideas for effective ministry in these last days, and if we would accept the challenge of opening up the channel of communication and, to some degree, co-operation with other Christians, there is much that we can learn and teach. But if we persist in an attitude that suggests religious arrogance, it will inhibit our ability to openly listen and learn from them, and they will be equally unwilling to listen or learn from us, regardless of how much truth we believe we have. For example, one of the strong points of our fellow-Christians is their ability to evangelize and win non-Christians, the secular, and the unchurched (i.e., the really unsaved). While Seventh-day Adventists do try to reach
these groups, with very little success in the West, their primary focus and strength seems
to be winning Catholics and Protestants over to Adventism. Is there anything for us to
learn here?

Message Above People

The greatest subject in the world in Christian circles is the love of God. This love
is so deep, so all-embracing and limitless, that it defies human definition and complete
comprehension. Yet, as great as God’s love is, it cannot exist by itself. It is not selfish
by nature and, therefore, always needs an object upon which it can express itself. In the
beginning, God created because God loved, and still does. And even after the good world
He created went bad, God continued to pour out His healing love upon it. John tells us
that "God so loved the world that He gave His only Son so that everyone who believes in
Him may not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16 NRSV). "God proves His love for
us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8 NRSV). If there is one
fact that we must never lose sight of it is that God loves the world of sinners, and is
pouring out heaven’s choicest gifts and blessings in order to save them.

Seventh-day Adventists believe that this God of love has given them a very special end-
time message for the world of sinners. And it is our belief in this historical position and
message that gave birth to the Adventist Church, its mission, and its ministry in the
world. For the typical Seventh-day Adventist in the Virgin Islands, the message (i.e., the
doctrinal beliefs of the Church) is everything, and so much so that quite often the Church
itself is described as ‘the message.’ For example, it is not uncommon for one member to
ask another: "How long have you been in this message?" Or how long have you been in the truth?" (‘The message’ and ‘the truth’ are treated synonymously in Adventist circles).

A member may even try to validate his/her authority as a major decision-maker by making the prefacing statement: "I have been in ‘this message’ (or ‘the truth’) for X number of years . . ." Or when a member apostatizes, it not unusual to hear the statement: "Brother X or Sister Y left ‘the message’." Unswerving loyalty to the message, regardless of one’s life circumstance within or without the Church, is a normative expectation. I have personally witnessed church members who suffered major abuses at the hands of their own brethren, and then have had the message used as a tool to keep them quiet and ‘in line’. What a thing this precious message (or truth) has become!

Interestingly, Vinoth Ramachandra makes this very insightful comment:

The legitimate fear that many have of any claim to absolute truth derives from the historical observation that such claims have led to intellectual tyranny and social repression. But enough has been said to indicate that the logic of the gospel leads us in a different direction. We have seen how the claim of Jesus to absolute truth and, therefore, an absolute authority, was expressed in the form of lowly, sacrificial service. The community that has been brought into being by this truth and entrusted with it for the sake of others can only proclaim that truth in the way of Jesus. Truth is not only embodied in a community, but in a community that relinquishes power in identification with the powerless.¹

God never intended that the gospel of salvation, in the context of the Third Angel’s Message, be a glorified end in itself. God is love, and His message to the lost sinners is an extension of that love. The great object of God’s love has always been people, and not

¹Ramachandra, 275.
so much the message He designed to reach them. Like the love of God, the message cannot stand by itself. It can never be an end in itself; it always needs an object to act upon, and without it, the message becomes useless. The object of the Third Angel’s Message is the nation, kindred, tongue, and people\(^1\) it is intended to reach. The message exists only because sinners, who need to be saved, exist. If we lose sight of the object of the message, we will become like another people who held in their hands the lifeless forms and traditions of their forefathers, without any power or influence to effect positive changes on their generation. Therefore, we must never cease to try to find new, creative ways to make sure the message of salvation reaches the people where they are.

We need to be constantly reminded that the message, or the truth, is embodied in the person of Jesus Christ. Truth is not just something we believe. Rather, it is embodied in the life we live. Christ was the Father’s message, the Father’s truth. He was and is the Only Truth\(^2\) that there is. And He never placed Himself above the people. In fact, He was the truth that came down and dwelt among them. In Jesus, truth condescends (John 1:14), truth ministers and serves (Matt 20:28), truth rebukes (Matt 23; John 8: 44-47), truth uplifts (Mark 14:3-9), truth teaches (Matt 5-7), and truth saves (Matt 18:11; Luke 23:42, 43). Christ’s ministry attracted the masses, not simply because what He was saying was the truth, but because what He was living was the truth. Truth was never

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\(^1\)See Rev 14:6-12.

\(^2\)See John 14:6. Jesus uses the Gr. ‘\textit{Ego eimi},’ projecting the idea that He is what the truth is, and apart from Him there is no truth.
exalted above the people, but was always in the service of uplifting and building them.

Charles E. Bradford says:

There can be no doubt about our theological framework. We have the truth. To us has been committed the unsearchable riches. We understand the times and the seasons. Proclamation is important. But the end result must be a people who have learned to live together in Christian love.¹

At the end of the day, what will really count with God is not the message and how well we know it, but rather the people who have been saved and transformed by believing and living it.

**Shifting Adventist Mission Paradigm in the Virgin Islands**

Administrators, pastors, and laypeople must be encouraged to develop a mission orientation that is customer-centered, and not allow the shackles of tradition and cold formality to overshadow or ignore the needs of lost humanity. Tim Wright explains:

Tradition keeps the church rooted while it seeks to do ministry in the present. In some congregations however, tradition becomes equated with gospel. Where the institution-driven congregation focuses on maintaining the institution, the tradition-driven church sees its mission as preserving tradition for tradition sake. Rather than translating these traditions into new forms for new generations, these congregations fight to keep the traditions as they have always been. Tradition becomes an anchor, holding the church to the past, rather than a rudder guiding it into the future.²

There are great days ahead for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Virgin Islands, but the church leaders and people must be willing to take an honest, critical look at the traditional ways of doing mission and ministry, and ask all the difficult, but


²Wright, *Unfinished Evangelism*, 36.
relevant questions regarding our presence, purpose, and our realistic accomplishments in the region. For example: Why do we exist as a church in the Virgin Islands? What is our purpose, and are we accomplishing it to the best of our ability? Why is it that attendance at our Sunday and Wednesday night services is so scant? Why is it that our young people seem to be losing interest in the traditional church services and AY meetings? Why do so many of our members choose to leave the church? Why do we continue to spend a large budget on evangelistic tent crusades and baptize only a certain class of people? Why is it that we are not able to attract the upper classes, the unchurched, or non-Christians to our fellowship? Why are there no special ministries to reach secular people in the community? The list can go on and on, but the point is clear, so there is really no need.

Martin Seeley states that

Asking the difficult ‘why?’ questions about purpose, meaning and values—questions about what we believe about ourselves—is seen as crucial as organizations seek to adjust and develop in a time of rapid social and economic change, without losing their essential identity and direction.1

However, we must ask these questions, for the other alternative is not only detrimental to our existence as a Christian community, but also dangerous to our position as God’s appointed agency for His final message of warning to the world. The other alternative is what I choose to call the ‘ostrich’ syndrome—that of burying our heads in our traditional forms and customs, pretending that our people and the world in which they live are not experiencing change. There is a certain degree of confidence, in my opinion,

that is not worth having, and that is the type of confidence that breathes comfort and complacency when there is an eminent need for urgent action in the face of threatening danger. It is quite easy to allow overconfidence and pride in our position as a church to ignore the staggering changes in the society about us, and to keep a straight course as the mighty Titanic of modern times.

We must be willing to admit that not all change is bad. Change may disturb our comfort level, but we must not allow this discomfort to deprive us from reaping the benefits and blessings that creative, well-thought-out change may bring. When Jesus came to the Jewish nation, it was a time for change, but He was resisted on every turn by the religious elite who would rather execute Him than change. In one of His addresses to these religious leaders, Jesus said:

No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; otherwise the patch pulls away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear results. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost, and the skins as well; but one puts new wine into fresh wine skins. (Mark 2:21-22 NASB)

Through this illustration, Christ was addressing the inflexible mentality of the Jewish leadership, who stubbornly clung to their traditional forms and customs even though these traditions were losing their hold on the Jewish people. Commenting on this episode in Jesus' ministry, Ellen White writes:

The teaching of Christ, though it was represented by the new wine, was not a new doctrine, but the revelation of that which had been taught from the beginning. But to

1For a full discussion of this subject see White, Desire of Ages, 31-38.

2Ibid.
the Pharisees the truth of God had lost its original significance and beauty. To them Christ's teaching was new in almost every respect, and it was unrecognized and unacknowledged. . . . Until emptied of the old traditions, customs, and practices, they had no place in mind or heart for the teachings of Christ. They clung to the dead forms, and turned away from the living truth and the power of God.¹

Unlike Israel, we should not allow ourselves to become prisoners of the past, clinging to traditions without evaluating them in light of changing societal needs, wants, and values. We need to adopt a new mind-set (new wineskin) that keeps in step with the times while staying faithful to Scripture, and also find new ways (new wine) to express old truths so that we can adequately address the concerns of the lost. Bill Hull states that "if we want people to hear, we must bring the message to life by restating the truth with great passion and in a language they understand."² This was the essence of Jesus' message to the scribes and pharisees; He was repackaging old truths in a new setting that required a new mind-set for assimilation and implementation. This is the spirit of marketing, and Jesus was indeed an expert par excellence.

New Wine in New Wineskins

This is a day of opportunity for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Virgin Islands, but it is also a time for change. It is a time for us to put new wine in new wineskins, a time to "put new life in old methods."³

The changing environment is rapidly eroding and displacing the positive effects of

¹Ibid., 279.


³White, Evangelism, 105.
the traditional form of religion. And while we do not subscribe to altering the core beliefs and values of Adventism, we must consider developing new avenues for mission and ministry within and without the church. This is, by no means, an easy task, for even among us we will find people who would rather get rid of the change agents, leave, or even die, than change the order of things in the church. Hull believes that "some of the toughest problems we face are those created by successes of the past."

He also went on to say that

these words are carried out daily in stalled-out and dying churches. Form leads function along the road to irrelevancy as Satan hands out the directions. In order to remain within their comfort zone, entrenched leaders hang on to old, non-working forms. Many still hope that what worked yesterday will work today. Church people sanctify and calcify ministry forms into articles of faith. Any move to change them becomes a holy "call to arms."

Ellen White counsels:

There are some minds which do not grow with the work but allow the work to grow far beyond them. . . . Those who do not discern and adapt themselves to the increasing demands of the work, should not stand blocking the wheels, and thus hindering the advancement of others.

As we consider shifting the paradigm of Adventist mission in the Virgin Islands, the suggestion given by Douglas Webster appears rather instructive:

Marketing provides the necessary paradigm shift for moving away from worn-out forms of the traditional church to the seeker-sensitive, exciting church of the 1990s. One reason church marketing may be gaining greater acceptance is that it appears to

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2Bill Hull, *7 Steps to Transform Your Church* (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1993), 101-102

3Ibid., 104-105.
be the only alternative to a church stuck in the past, resistant to change and ineffective in proclaiming and living the gospel.¹

This paradigm shift involves a moving away from organization/message-centeredness to people-centeredness. This does not mean that we reduce the importance of the organization or the message, but it does suggest putting them in their rightful places. The church, the organization that was formed to serve it, and the message which the church proclaims, all exist only because there is a lost world to be saved for the Kingdom of God. The world does not exist to serve the church, but the church the world. Thus, the approach to mission should be from the outside in and not from the inside out. What this means is that mission does not begin because we have a unique message to proclaim, but because there are lost people in need of salvation. Correctly performed, mission always begins with the needs of lost sinners, and not with the needs of the church or organization.

There are occasions when churches and pastors conduct crusades in the Virgin Islands in order to reach arbitrary goals set by the Conference. Quite often, in the process, they baptize individuals, including children, without giving due consideration to their needs or social condition. These people are drawn into a church environment that often has no real appraisal of their needs and is, therefore, unprepared to adequately minister to them. Many of them stick around long enough to see what the church is all about, and then they leave. When they do, the general tendency is to ascribe their leaving

¹Webster, 33.
to their lack of understanding of the ‘message’, with absolutely no consideration given to the fact that the personal and collective ambition of the pastor and the church, to satisfy organizational needs, overshadowed the needs of the struggling sinner. *This is organization-centered mission, mission from inside out.* Sometimes this approach to mission encourages us to go after people who we think would benefit us the most when they accept the message.

However, mission from the outside in focuses more on what is going on with the targeted population, and what God is calling the church to do for them. We have seen in chapter 2 that even though Jesus had a very clear purpose to recuse perishing souls, His ministry to them consistently took its departure at the point of their obvious need. With the woman at the well, He began with water (the thing she desired), but went on to offer her salvation (John 4); with the man born blind, Jesus healed him and later challenged him with the claims of the gospel (John 9). Jesus followed the same pattern with the man at the pool of Bethesda (John 5); Jesus also fed the hungry multitude before ministering the Word to them (John 6). Yet, it is very important to point out that Jesus also performed many miracles to satisfy the needs of hurting people, without any call to discipleship. His ministry was one of compassion and disinterested benevolence. Ellen White says:

*During His ministry Jesus devoted more time to healing the sick than to preaching. His miracles testified to the truth of His words, that He came not to destroy but to save. His righteousness went before Him, and the glory of the Lord was His reward. Wherever He went, the tidings of His mercy preceded Him. Where He had passed, the objects of His compassion were rejoicing in health, and making trial of their new-*
Jesus is the great model of mission from the outside in, mission that targeted the felt and even unrecognized needs of people, awakening their hope and stimulating their faith to believe in Him as the Savior of the world.

The followers of Christ are to labor as He did. We are to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and comfort the suffering and afflicted. We are to minister to the despairing, and comfort the suffering and afflicted. . . . The love of Christ, manifested in unselfish ministry, will be more effective in reforming the evildoer than will the sword or the court of justice. . . . Often the heart will harden under reproof; but it will melt under the love of Christ.  

The challenge, therefore, is to help the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Virgin Islands to educate pastors and members in understanding how a shift to a marketing/customer orientation will benefit the mission of the church in the region. To begin with, a customer orientation in mission will take into consideration the needs of the targeted audience and will add more focus, relevance, and power to the preaching from our pulpits, and to the ministries in our pews and communities. This orientation will encourage pastors to seek to understand the needs of the congregation (through visitation, questionnaires, pew cards, etc.) and tailor their sermons to address those needs. This perspective will help pastors and leaders develop customer value consciousness, so that they will formulate their sermons and their services around the perceived values of their congregations. Thus, sermons, instead of being grounded in the fancies of the pastor’s found powers.  

\[1\] White, Desire of Ages, 350.

\[2\] Ibid.

\[3\] Value is the consumer’s estimate of the product’s/service’s overall capacity to satisfy his or her needs. Kotler, Marketing Management, 8.
own imagination, will pour forth out of a sense of congregational needs, giving the hearers take-home value from every service. For example, a sermon on Daniel in the lion’s den can have as its take-home value "God Can Be Trusted." For a sermon on the state of the dead, the take-home value could be "We Have Hope." And the list can go on and on, but the central questions facing the pastor as he stands in the pulpit will be: What needs of my congregation am I going to address today? What value/s do I want my members to take home with them today? How-to or How-can-I sermons are excellent preaching tools to offer take-home value to church members.

Essentially, what can be said of the pastor’s sermon in terms of value offering can be said of every service the church offers its members and the local community. In this way, services and programs that target the local community will be evaluated in terms of the value they offer to the people being served. This will encourage the church to step out of itself and into the needs of the community for a better understanding of the services that people require.

From Policy Orientation to Strategic Thinking

Another major benefit of shifting the mission paradigm of the church towards a marketing orientation is that it will encourage church leaders and decision-makers to make the mental and emotional adjustment, from the challenges associated with internal gazing and policy enforcing, to the beckoning horizons identified with strategic planning and action. The machinery that runs the Seventh-day Adventist Church is inundated with all types of policies, and the Church in the Virgin Islands is no exception. Yet, while
policies in themselves may not be bad, they tend to be internally focused, inequitably administered by those in authority, and often age with the passing of time. Moreover, since policies are geared toward more internal control and organizational efficiency, they tend to be less responsive to changes taking place in the environment outside of the organization. This slowness to respond to societal needs is compounded by the fact that within the Church’s organizational bureaucracy, decisions are made from the top down, and can sometimes hinder the Church’s ability to capitalize on spur-of-the-moment ministry opportunities. Bill Hull complains that "our churches are not organized for growth and fulfilling their mission. The mission must come first, but in most contemporary churches, policy and rules come first, and these are organized for security, predictability, and safety." A classic case was the one cited earlier in this chapter, where the Conference would rather build a storage shed to house relief supplies, in a time of grave emergency, than join forces with other Christians to make a greater impact on an island community in serious trauma. Our leaders were more willing to risk the local church’s reputation than make exception to its policy. Another example is that of a local congregation that was prohibited by the Conference from using Harvest Ingathering funds to help a fire victim, who lost everything, because church policy dictated that all Ingathering monies must be remitted to the Conference office. Situations like these can become an irritating cog in the wheel of progress.

Bill Hull makes this very insightful comment:

1Hull, 7 Steps to Transform Your Church, 102.
The Pharisees’ appetite for tradition stemmed from their obsession with controlling the religious activity of Israel. The threatened person is one who enjoys safeguards, who needs controls to limit variety. The Pharisaic tendency to weight the Jewish people with policy created a massive machinery that served as a major contributor to their stumbling over Jesus. Their traditions were protections from the new, the fresh, the creative, and, tragically, from the truth. The church often labors under much the same weighty machinery, thus causing it to miss new and effective means of fulfilling its mission.1

It is my purpose, through this project, to encourage the leaders and people, that make up the Seventh-day Adventist work in the Virgin Island, to take up the very promising challenge of pursuing the task of mission and ministry from a strategic standpoint. When we bring this approach together with a marketing-oriented world view, we may not even begin to imagine the growth or success possibilities that would be open to the Church. This is not to say that the growth and success of the Church will be totally dependent on the type of strategies we bring to bear on the work, but we want to offer to God our best human efforts so that, combined with the blessing of His Spirit, we can and will accomplish greater exploits for Him. Ellen White comments:

1. "The secret of success is the union of divine power with human effort."2
2. "Human effort avails nothing without divine power, and without human endeavor, divine effort is with many of no avail."3
3. “If a man has tact, industry, and enthusiasm, he will make a success in temporal business, and the same qualities, consecrated to the work of God, will prove

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1Hull, Jesus Christ, Disciple-Maker, 106.
2White, Patriarchs and Prophets, 509.
even doubly efficient; for divine power will be combined with human effort."¹ In all our endeavors we must remember that "we are laborers together with God" (1 Cor 3:9, emphasis mine).

In his amalgamation of marketing management and strategic planning, Kotler describes the resulting combination in the following way:

Market-oriented strategic planning is the managerial process of developing and maintaining a viable fit between the organization's objectives, skills, and resources and its changing market opportunities. The aim of strategic planning is to shape and reshape the company's businesses and products so that they yield target profits and growth.²

In the context of the church, this means matching a ministry's skills and resources with environmental opportunities in order to accomplish the church's objectives and fulfill its mission. Migliore and others say that "the objective of this process is to peer through the 'strategic window' (an opportunity that will not always be there) and identify opportunities which the individual church or ministry is equipped to take advantage of or respond to."³ Essentially, a strategic orientation is externally focused, placing emphasis on responsiveness and adaptability in regard to changes in the business or even social

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¹White, Testimonies to the Church, 5:276.
²Kotler, Marketing Management, 62.
environment. With this orientation, the church's mission will determine its organizational structure, services, and programming. Since the ultimate goal of mission is saving lost people, and the marketing approach to mission is rooted in understanding and serving the needs of these people, the typical organizational structure of the church should resemble the one illustrated in figure 1.

Fig. 1. Strategic church organizational chart.

In this structure, the most important group of people are the non-Adventists (both Christians and non-Christians) in the Virgin Islands, who need to hear and respond to a clear presentation of The Third Angel's Message. These are the people who give the Church a reason for its existence in the region. Next, in the order of priority, are the front-line people (church members) who meet, serve, and attempt to establish caring,
working relationships with these non-Adventists. Under them are our middle managers (church officers), whose job it is to support the church members so that they can serve their non-Adventist friends and neighbors well. And finally, at the base is our top management (pastors), whose job it is to equip and support church officers so that they can equip and support our church members who make all the difference in whether the non-Adventist community feels satisfied with the products and services of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It is very important to observe that, in this model, the other Christian and non-Christian target groups are also at the sides of the above figure, in order to indicate that all the church members, officers, and pastors are personally involved in knowing, meeting, and serving non-members. In this entire scenario, the church’s strategic decision-making process will be formulated in the context of (1) its operating environment, (2) its purpose and mission, and (3) its mission objectives. These will be explored in greater detail in chapter 5.

However, market-oriented strategic planning will do much to strengthen membership conservation efforts within the Adventist community, and will also help to enhance the service and image of the church in the Virgin Islands. Philip Kotler has rightly said: "Satisfied customers remain loyal longer, buy more, are less cost sensitive, and talk favorably about the company." This fact also holds true for the church: Satisfied church members will probably remain loyal to church longer, are most likely to invest more in the cause of Christ, and will be more likely to talk favorably about Christ

1Kotler, Marketing Management, 59.
and the Church. Herein lies a possible solution for the volunteer fallout problem facing the Church. Kotler hits home on this very point when he writes:

It always costs more to attract new customers than to retain current customers. Therefore, customer retention is more critical than customer attraction. The key to customer retention is customer satisfaction. . . . Delighted customers are more effective advertisers than all the paid advertisements placed in the media.¹

In this regard, he says that there are at least four important steps² that an organization needs to take to reduce member defection.

1. The organization must define and measure its retention rate. For the Church, this could be the membership (or even missing member) count per year.

2. The organization must distinguish the various causes of customer attrition and identify those that can be managed better. Instead of guessing why members leave, the Church can possibly interview these members (via personal visitation) and prepare a frequency distribution to show the percentage of members who defect for different reasons.

3. The organization needs to estimate how much profit it loses when it loses customers unnecessarily. In the case of the Church, this may be very difficult to calculate, since we cannot place a price tag on souls, or accurately measure the real and potential losses to the Church and society in terms of the displaced talents and gifts of

¹Ibid., 20-21.
²Ibid., 47.
these former members. We may be able to calculate our losses in terms of the tithe and offerings of former members, but we cannot even begin to measure what the losses would be once these people leave the fellowship of the church: for example, (a) the potential loss of a soul for whom Christ has died; (b) the losses caused by their negative publicity regarding the Church; and (c) their potential to inflict great pain and suffering upon the Church in the future. Ellen White hints: "As the storm approaches, . . . men of talent and pleasing address, who once rejoiced in the truth, employ their powers to deceive and mislead souls. They become the most bitter enemies of their former brethren."1

4. The organization needs to figure out how much it would cost to reduce the defection rate. The cost to the Church should not really be a factor here since we are not dealing with bottom-line issues per se, but the eternal worth of a human soul. If the God of heaven would expend the best gifts at His disposal (e.g., Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the angels) to save one lost soul, how could the body that bears the marks and name of His Only Son do any less? In the world of business, there has been a major paradigm shift in the way modern companies relate to their customers, and there is so much that the Church can learn from them. In the classical marketing approach, companies used to place their emphasis on creating transactions rather than relationships,2 very much like the Church that places emphasis on creating baptisms rather than on forming strong, caring relationships that anchor converts in the love of Jesus Christ and the service of the


2Ibid.
Church. Discussion focused on pre-sale and sale activities rather than on post-sale activity, very much the same as the church that spends a lot of time discussing how to get souls into the baptism pool and the actual baptisms of these souls. Today, however, more companies are recognizing the importance of retaining current customers and have turned their attention to building long-term relationships with them through relationship marketing. How true is Jesus' statement that "in their generation the children of this world are wiser than the children of light" (Luke 11:8 KJV).

Here is a very good case for the children of the Kingdom to learn some lessons from the children of the world. I believe we can strengthen our membership conservation efforts in the Virgin Islands if we can move leadership and the Church in the direction of relationship marketing. Such a move will focus mission and ministry, not so much on the number of persons being baptized (even though this is very important and cannot be lost sight of), but on making disciples through long-term, caring relationships that are rooted in the compassionate love of Jesus Christ.

We must remember that the Church runs, for the most part, on volunteer service, and these people all have needs like the people they serve. When church members' needs are carefully serviced through the various ministries, small groups, and human resource development programs in the Church, burnout and fallout problems would be (if at all) very limited.

However, a word of caution must be offered here. While customer-oriented thinking and planning will ultimately influence the packaging and presentation of the
Advent message, leaders of the church must be encouraged and guided in maintaining integrity to the core principles and requirements of the gospel. This is not to say that the gospel or the standards of the Church should be watered down to suit the whims and fancies of this secular age, but that the form of presentation must be relevant to the needs of modern man. Dan Day elaborates on this very point:

The issue is not whether or not we change our beliefs or re-organize our church. It’s whether or not we’ve understood our customers’ needs well enough to show how what we have matches what they need. The key is how honestly and totally we’re committed to meeting the needs of the people Jesus called us to reach.¹

We must not become guilty of scratching where there is no itch. It is, by far, more productive to scratch where it does itch, or create the itch for our scratching. Ellen G. White said:

Men are needed who pray to God for wisdom, and who, under the guidance of God, can put new life into the old methods of labor and can invent new plans and new methods of awakening the interest of church members and reaching the men and women of the world.² (italics mine)

Summary

The Seventh-day Adventist Church occupies its unique position in this world for one purpose—to serve people. It was also given a special end-time message for a specific reason—i.e., to warn the world of its impending doom and to reach people of every nation, tribe and language, with the everlasting gospel of Jesus Christ. The Church, in its

¹Day, 16.
²White, Evangelism, 105.
mission assignment, has been mandated to be people-oriented (or customer-oriented), and must therefore seek to understand the needs of the ‘publics’ it serves and design its ministries to satisfy those needs. This customer-oriented perspective will help to reinforce the Church's mission offensive, promote Christian fellowship and brotherhood, and reduce the gross insularism that is hurting the witness of the Church in the Virgin Islands. John Stott observed that

unless we listen attentively to the voices of secular society, unless we struggle to understand them, unless we feel with modern men and women in their frustration, their alienation, their pain and even sometimes, their despair, I think we shall lack authenticity as the followers of Jesus of Nazareth.¹

Approaching mission and ministry in the Virgin Islands from a marketing perspective will teach us to suspend judgment regarding non-Adventists (Christians or unbelievers), and place us in a mode that seeks for understanding through active listening. However, we must be committed to changing the face of Adventist mission in the region, so that we will not only be the people with the message, but also a people committed to loving and serving all people.

"Ministry is not about programs. Ministry is [all] about people... and it happens when a person's needs are met."¹ Kallestad says that we must "always remember that the real business of the Church is people—not policies, procedures, or politics."² This is the essence of marketing management. It is the ability of people (or an organization) to ascertain the needs of a targeted audience (customer/s) by listening or asking the relevant questions, and to strategically galvanize and coordinate all their (its) available resources to facilitate ongoing beneficial exchange with that audience. Operating in this mode, people (or an organization) will become more responsive to the needs of the environment in which they find themselves. Barna says that

a marketing-driven church will be people-centered, not program centered. It will develop ministries to solve problems, rather than expecting people to force their problems into some preset ministry mold. Ministry will be an interactive, evolving

process, not a static structure in which everything can be foreseen and handled via organizational procedures.¹

Kotler and Levy made this very important statement:

For an organization to remain viable, its management must provide for periodic audits of its objectives, resources, and opportunities. It must reexamine its basic business, target groups, differentiate advantage, communication channels, and messages in the light of current trends and needs.²

All these activities suggested by Kotler and Levy are interrelated functions that operate within the strategic marketing planning process, and will be used along with some other key concepts to apply to the work of the Church in the Virgin Islands. In this regard, I would like to introduce a managerial concept that I believe would help church leaders keep the issue of the Church's mission central and fully operative. In the world of business, Management By Objectives (MBO) is a very popular concept that has aided managers to guide their organizations to entrepreneurial success. Gregory Moorehead and Ricky W. Griffin define Management By Objectives as "a collaborative goal-setting process through which organizational goals systematically filter down through the organization."³ In this way, organizational goals are shared and known at every level of the organization. In the realm of the Church, MBO (which I choose to reinterpret as 'Mission By Objective') can be a very useful tool to motivate and help church leaders fulfill the goals of the organization.


Douglas Webster raised two very important questions that deserve honest, objective answers by church leaders today.

If we're in the business of reaching people for Christ, why not take marketing strategies that have been proven successful among baby boomers and use them to help motivate this powerful and influential target audience to buy into the Christian faith? If polls and surveys tell us what turns Americans on, what's wrong with using that knowledge to turn the keys of the kingdom?¹

My honest answer to Douglas is "I don't know." But it surely conjures up in my mind Jesus' statement regarding the wisdom of the dishonest steward in Luke 16:1-13 NRSV: "And his master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly; for the children of this age are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light" (italics mine).

The point for us here is that Jesus applauded the wisdom of the servant, but not the application the servant made of it. If the servant was faithful in his handling of his master's goods, he could have used his wisdom in a more honest and positive way. I am of the opinion that the children of light can use their God-given wisdom to apply the body of knowledge, provided through marketing management, to turn the keys of the kingdom.

**Strategic Mission² Planning Process**

Simply stated, strategic planning involves the matching and utilization of an organization's resources in response to opportunities that arise in the environment. These

¹Webster, 20.

²I would like to substitute the word 'marketing' with the word 'mission,' since we are really talking about mission, but only from a marketing perspective.
opportunities develop over time, and decisions must be made as to whether or not the organization’s resources should be used to address them.

While there are many different ways in which the Church could choose to pursue the strategic mission planning process, a systematic approach, based on a series of predetermined questions,¹ could provide the Church with step-by-step guidelines for accomplishing its objectives. For example:

1. What are we going to do? This gives focus to specific needs that the church will try to address.

2. Who are we doing this for? This will identify the target population whose needs will be addressed.

3. How are we going to accomplish this? This question challenges church leaders to focus their attention on the different avenues through which the stated needs may be served.

The basic framework that can guide church leaders in strategic decision-making is (1) the Church’s operating environment, (2) the Church’s purpose or mission statement, and (3) the Church’s mission objectives.² Kotler and Andreasen³ have done an excellent job on expanding this framework, and I have chosen to adopt and apply this to the mission and ministry of the Church in the Virgin Islands. The successful application of

¹Migliore and others, *Church and Ministry Strategic Planning: From Concept to Success*, 21-22.

²Ibid.

³Kotler and Andreasen, 66-120.
this strategic mission decision-making framework may require church leadership to get help from someone within the organization (if such a one exists) who is adept at religious marketing, or better still, to hire an outside marketing expert with a strong religious orientation. If the leadership chooses to use someone from within the organization, precautions should be taken that the marketing process and results are not subjected to extreme Adventist bias.

Principles to Work By

In this section, I outline and explain a few core principles that characterize strategic market planning, so that church leaders can have an idea of the range of possibilities available to them if they wisely apply these principles to the task of mission in the Virgin Islands. I also attempt to reframe some marketing jargon so that they reflect a mission perspective in their application to the issues presented in this discussion. It is not my intention, however, to make these principles hard-and-fast rules for doing mission in the Virgin Islands, for their application will change as the mission environment changes. However, I am recommending them as a basic framework to stimulate further investigation, experimentation, and, possibly, further amplification.

Analyze the Church as an Organization

This analysis should include an examination of the Church’s culture, mission, goals, objectives, strengths, and weaknesses. Every organization has its unique culture, which represents the underlying assumptions and unspoken expectations that influence the way things are done within the organization, and the Adventist community within the
Virgin Islands is no exception. Commenting on the corporate culture that contributes to the success of their "best-run" organizations, Peters and Waterman offer the following insight:

Without exception, the dominance and coherence of culture proved to be an essential quality of the excellent companies. Moreover, the stronger the culture and the more it was directed toward the marketplace, the less need was there for policy manuals, organizations charts, or detailed procedures and rules. In these companies, people way down the line know what they are supposed to do in most situations because the handful of guiding values is crystal clear [italics mine].

No doubt a customer-centered orientation can be very useful in enhancing the corporate culture of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Virgin Islands. Therefore, in the strategic planning process, church leaders must be prepared to take a candid look at the Church's corporate culture to see how well it is aligned to the overall mission, present goals, and objectives of the Church. Moreover, the Church's mission, goals, and objectives should be clearly defined, communicated, understood, and owned not only by church leaders, but by the members as well.

1. **Mission:** This describes the Church's purpose and reason for its existence in the Virgin Islands—Why do we exist? What are we to be as a Church? What does God want us to do for this community and world as a Church? How are we to do it? Pastors and church officers can lead their congregations in defining the purposes of the Church in the Virgin Islands, and once these purposes are discovered the Church's ministries and programs should be organized around them. Rick Warren, of the Saddleback Church in

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southern California, suggests that the purpose-driven church should be committed to the five tasks that Christ ordained for His church: (1) love the Lord with all your heart (commitment to worship), (2) love your neighbor as yourself (commitment to ministry), (3) go and make disciples (commitment to evangelism), (4) baptize them (commitment to community and fellowship), and (5) teach them to obey (commitment to discipleship).¹

Kotler suggests that an organization should strive for a mission that is *feasible, motivating, and distinctive.*²

2. **Objective:** This may be a major area of focus or accomplishment the Church would like to target. The focus could be any one or all of the five tasks—e.g., create a worship atmosphere that would attract more visitors to our church.

3. **Goal:** A specific objective stated in an operational and measurable form—e.g., our goal is to establish three branch Sabbath schools in the first six months of the year, or to increase our visitor attendance to worship service to twenty persons per week.

The Church must also make a careful reassessment of its strengths and its weaknesses as they relate to the total resources (people, finance, skills and talents, fixed assets—buildings, land, etc.) available for use in the pursuit of its mission objective and goals. To accomplish this, church leaders should perform periodic audit, not only of finances, but of all areas of church operations. This involves a comprehensive, systematic, independent, and periodic examination of the Church's mission environment,

¹Ibid., 103-106.

²Kotler and Andreasen, 72.
objectives, strategies, and activities with the view of determining problem areas and opportunities, and recommending a plan of action to improve the Church’s strategic mission performance.\footnote{Ibid., 80.} For an organizational audit to be of any productive use, it must be governed by the four elements already named above:

1. **Comprehensive:** The organizational audit must cover all the major mission issues facing the Church, both within and without the organization.

2. **Systematic:** The audit should involve an orderly sequence of diagnostic steps covering the Church’s mission environment, internal mission system, and specific mission activities. The diagnosis is followed by a corrective action plan that covers both short and long-run proposals to improve the Church’s mission effectiveness.

3. **Independent:** The audit should be conducted by a capable individual who has sufficient independence from the Church to allow for honesty and objectivity.

4. **Periodic:** The audit should be conducted periodically, and not only in a time of crisis. This will help to keep the Church on track regarding it mission, and probably avert any crisis that may be lurking on the horizon.

Based on my experience working in the Virgin Islands, I believe that an organizational audit will greatly benefit the local congregations (and possibly the Conference), enhancing the overall mission operations of the Church as a whole. Two areas of need that quickly come to mind are: (1) Church structure and decision-making process, and (2) approach to mission and ministry.
Church structure and decision-making process

Since the local church is the lowest level on the Seventh-day Adventist five-tiered organizational structure,\(^1\) it is rather easy for it to become a victim of the decision-making process. Most organizational decisions are filtered down through the organization before they reach the local church, and sometimes they are not timely, or even relevant to the local church situation. Often the local church feels imposed upon when decisions are made about them without their input, and with no regard to what is going on in the community of faith at the time. As a pastor, I can recall incidents of having to shelve the program of the local church because the Conference, and sometimes the Union, had something else on their agenda, e.g., a surprise crusade by a visiting evangelist, unplanned departmental workshop, or another program promotion. I can also remember the confusion and disarray among the churches that resulted when the General Conference (GC) made the decision to merge several organizational departments under one head called Church Ministries Department. This may not have been a bad decision by the GC, but it was certainly not a shared decision, and the move never really took root in the Virgin Islands. It may be a very good idea for leadership in the organizational hierarchy to take a periodic look at the structure and the decision-making process to see if

\(^1\)The Seventh-day Adventist five-tier administrative structure is comprised of the local congregation on the lowest level; then the Conference, which is made up of a number of churches in a specific geographical area; then the Union, which consists of a number of local Conferences; next the Division, which oversees a number of Unions, over a larger geographic area; and then the General Conference, which is the highest governing authority of the Church, and oversees the Divisions.
steps can be taken to increase overall organizational efficiency. Here may be a case for organizational audit.

One option that is a major buzzword in the corporate world, and to some degree in many mainline denominations, is a process called organizational reengineering. Hammer and Champy describe this process as "the fundamental rethinking and radical redesign of business process to achieve dramatic improvements in critical, contemporary measures of performance, such as cost, quality, service, and speed."¹ Four important words in this definition need earnest consideration:

1. **Fundamental**: This requires asking the most basic questions about our Church or organization, and how we operate. Why do we do what we do? And why do we do it the way we do?

   Asking these fundamental questions will force us to look at the tacit rules, policies, and assumptions that underlie the way we conduct our business of managing churches and the way we carry out mission. Often these rules and policies turn out to be obsolete, erroneous, or even inappropriate.² This is a common situation in many churches today. I have seen church officers going through rounds of the same activity, year after year, after year. Then others succeed them and do exactly what they saw their predecessors do. Hardly anyone stops to ask, Why are we doing things this way? The

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²Ibid., 33.
general posture seems to suggest: “Well, this got me through last year, and I’ll just go right ahead and do the same thing again this year.”

2. Radical: Hammer and Champy suggest that the etymology of this word (Latin ‘radix’ meaning root) requires the organization getting to the root of things—not just making superficial changes or fiddling with what is already in place, but throwing away the old. Radical redesign means disregarding all existing structures and procedures and inventing completely new ways of accomplishing the work. Howard Snyder suggests that “for a radical gospel (the biblical kind) we need a radical church (the biblical kind). For the ever-new wine we must continually have new wineskins.”

When I first read this, I uttered the proverbial “wow!” “This is indeed revolutionary!” “This is really heavy stuff!” “My church needs this!” However, when the cold reality set in, I immediately realized that organizational reengineering may be a very tall order for the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Beside having to deal with denominational pride, the structural inertia of vested interest, and the gnawing fear of change, there are just too many “sacred cows” to slay along the way. But Church historian, George Knight, would have us remember that “the 1861-1863 and 1901-1903 organizational structures were not divinely inspired, but were established to facilitate mission.” However, a burning question continues to nibble on my brain: If the people in

1Ibid.


the business world could be so much in earnest about what they do, that they are willing to radically redesign an entire organization in order to achieve a desired but mundane end, how really serious are we about finishing the *Missio Dei* to hasten the return of Jesus? My hope is that some aspect of this reengineering concept will hit home with church leaders and challenge them with the possibilities of casting new vision for mission and ministry on the landscape of Adventism.

3. **Dramatic:** Reengineering is not about making marginal or incremental improvements but about achieving quantum leaps in performance. It should be brought in only when the need exists for heavy blasting. Marginal improvements require fine-tuning; dramatic improvement demands blowing up the old and replacing it with something new.¹

This type of language may strike fear in the hearts of people who spend all their lives trying to protect and preserve an organization, because their livelihood depends on it. In his chapter called “Five Dilemmas in the Institutionalization of Religion,” Thomas O’Dea explains that genuine organizational reform becomes threatening to the status, security, and self-validation of the incumbents of office, because of mixed motivation that characterizes the bureaucracy.² On the other hand, reengineering may ring a bell of hope in the heart of others who are in dead earnest about finishing the mission that the organization was created to accomplish, and moving on to something else. The world

¹Hammer and Champy, 34.

and, more so, the Church need the latter, for both are conducting business in a time of crisis. Now is not a time for fine-tuning; we have been doing that for many years. Now is the time for heavy blasting, and we dare not just sit around and wait for the latter rain to do it. We must rise up and hasten that glad day.

4. Processes: This is the most difficult part of reengineering, because most people are not “process-oriented”; they are focused on tasks, on jobs, on people, on structures, but not on process. This concept has direct application to the work of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Virgin Islands, since mission and ministry are very task oriented. Even the name given to the missionary arm of the Church, “Lay Activities,” is very much suggestive of a preoccupation with the work of Christ. This is extremely important and certainly must continue, but the focus of reengineering is to make sure the processes involved in planning, facilitating, and engaging in mission are both smooth and efficient. Many congregations go through the same yearly round of activities without giving any serious thought to refining the processes that make the Church and its mission operational. Kallestad’s suggestion to such churches is to reflect on ways to reengineer the structure of your church so that your congregation can move from gridlock to effectiveness. Think of ways that you might move more quickly, with much greater confidence than ever before. A church is far more than its structure, but structure is hardly unimportant. A dysfunctional structure can paralyze a church.

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1Hammer and Champy, 35.

2Kallestad, 105-106.
In an effort to help churches deal with the reengineering process, Barna drafted a suggested change chart (table 1) that can prove very helpful to church leaders in the Virgin Islands.

**TABLE 5**

**REENGINEERING CHANGE CHART FOR LOCAL CHURCH**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change Factor</th>
<th>Changing From</th>
<th>Changing To</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authority</td>
<td>centralized</td>
<td>decentralized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>pastor-driven</td>
<td>lay-driven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power distribution</td>
<td>vertical</td>
<td>horizontal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reaction to change</td>
<td>resistance</td>
<td>acceptance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity</td>
<td>tradition and order</td>
<td>mission and vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scope of ministry</td>
<td>all-purpose</td>
<td>specialized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practices</td>
<td>tradition bound</td>
<td>relevance bound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People’s role</td>
<td>observation and support</td>
<td>participation and innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal product</td>
<td>knowledge</td>
<td>transformation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Success factors</td>
<td>size, efficiency, image</td>
<td>accessibility, impact, integrity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary challenges</td>
<td>momentum, relationships, leadership, complacency</td>
<td>heresy, relationships, unity, leadership, balance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect of technology</td>
<td>attention-grabbing</td>
<td>growth facilitating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Means to growth</td>
<td>more, better-run programs</td>
<td>more relationships and experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth prospects</td>
<td>limited</td>
<td>unlimited</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: George Barna. *The Second Coming of the Church*, 177.
He states that the
net effect of the changes will be to make the Church more responsive and proactive, without jeopardizing the core values and truths upon which the Church is based. Structures, formats, styles, and relationships can be adapted to fit the church’s goals and standards, regardless of past prohibitions and the existing expectations held by many people.¹

Approach to mission and ministry

This follows the traditional pattern of being centered around program, formatted by the higher organization (Conference, Union, Division, and sometimes the General Conference), which are very often out of touch with what is happening at the local church level, or what is taking place in the external mission environment. I believe the days for one-size-fits-all programs are over, and the local church should be given some measure of autonomy to formulate its own programs, or at least to make adjustments to the filtered-down models, so that they can be relevant to the local mission situation. Mission and ministry should evolve from the needs of the community of faith and the needs of society, and not simply from programs that the higher organization is trying to funnel through the system. James Emery White has accurately portrayed the typical approach to ministry in the Virgin Islands: (1) Begin with a program, (2) Find some people, (3) Sell the program, (4) Carry out the program, and (5) Maintain the program.² This is the approach that has characterized Adventist ministry over the years. However, Warren


²James Emery White, Rethinking the Church (Grand Rapids: Baker Book, 1997), 69.
suggests that "instead of trying to grow a church with programs, focus on growing people with a process. This concept is the heart of being a purpose-driven church. If you will set up a process for developing disciples and stick with it, your church's growth will be healthy, balanced, and consistent."¹

To give an illustration of the process at the Saddleback Church, Warren says:

We bring people in, build them up, train them, and send them out. We bring them in as members, we build them up to maturity, we train them for ministry, and we send them out on mission, magnifying the Lord in the process. That's it! This is our total focus at Saddleback. We don't do anything else.²

This is a great story, and worthy of emulation, for it cuts right to the heart of what mission is about. The illustration clearly portrays the centrality of mission as the anchor to the entire process of bringing, building, training, and sending people. It is the hub of the total machinery of the Church. The illustration also focuses on the importance of people as the reason for and the goal of mission. It portrays a never-ending circle of activity involving people—i.e., bring people, build people, train people, and send people to bring more people; and the process goes on.

Programs do have a place in mission and ministry, but too often they are leaned upon as crutches, when Christians would rather shun the hard work of brainstorming and creating their own programs around the needs of the local community. Canned programs tend to quench creativity of the gifted people in the community of faith, and are pretty often out of touch with the needs of the people they are targeted to service. James Emery

¹Warren, 108.
White says that "the most effective ministry in churches are those that are based on the knowledge of the needs and interests of the people a church is trying to minister to."\(^1\)

**Analyze the Church's External Environment**

The church should have a clear understanding of the 'publics' (internal and external) it intends to serve, its competition, and its macro-environment (i.e., social, political, technical, and economic). In this context some form of market research should be done in order for the church to fathom and address the diversified needs of these publics (e.g., Conference, officers, members, institutions, local community, etc.). Aaker and Day say that

Marketing research links the organization with its market environment. It involves the specification, gathering, analyzing, and interpretation of information to help management understand the environment, identify problems and opportunities, and develop and evaluate courses of marketing action.\(^2\)

This process involves the systematic and objective gathering of information for assisting managers in making decisions regarding a marketing situation facing the organization. The major steps associated with the research process are: defining the problem and the research objectives, developing the research plan, collecting the information, analyzing the information, and presenting the findings.\(^3\) Using this

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\(^1\)James Emery White, 71.


\(^3\)Kotler, 130-140.
marketing tool, church leaders will be able to zero in not only on congregational needs, but the needs of the community as well.

Analyzing the external environment will also give church leaders and members a more informed understanding of who or what is their competition. For many, many years Seventh-day Adventists in the Virgin Islands regarded other Christian denominations as their primary competition, and the non-Christian community only in a secondary sense. We have tried and, in many cases, succeeded in outmaneuvering and beating them on the evangelistic battlefield, but how productive have been our victories? Have we been really tearing down the strongholds of Satan? While we compete with our Protestant brothers and sisters, Satan is waging a one-sided war in many of our neighborhoods with drugs and gang activity. Who is our competition really? While other denominations may cherish beliefs different from ours, their mission and ours are the same—i.e., to build up the kingdom of God in preparation for the return of the King. Admittedly, we have been extremely remiss in defining who we are really competing against. On this matter George Bama makes this eye-opening remark:

The Church's main competition is not with other churches—it is with organizations, opportunities, and philosophies that provide people with an alternative to the Christian life. Our main competition is from organizations like ABC, CBS, Universal Studios, MGM, K-Mart, 7-11, JC Penny and so forth... How many local churches do you know that are able to compete with the same tough-mindedness, the same highly focused sense of purpose, and an equivalent level of professionalism in promoting their ministry (i.e. business) and product as their secular competitors?

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We are living in the information age, and those who control the information wield a mighty source of power. Our church members, and young people in particular, are exposed to a proliferation of information from all sides, and I am not very sure that they are equipped and ready to filter off all that is coming at them. We cannot afford to just sit back and offer our members and the Virgin Islands community dry, reheated programs and services of yesteryears, and expect a faithful following. The merchants of this world are in dead earnest to win the confidence and the loyalty of the masses to buy into their offerings, regardless of how ridiculous and ungodly they may appear to be. They are serving up goods in very delightful styles and in a variety of places, and their aim is to win at all costs. The Church must also be in earnest about its mission and ministry, and use the resources at its disposal to find creative and productive ways to cater for the needs and hold the interest of its members and non-members. Barna says that "if we hope to include people in the life of the church, we must provide appealing and high quality activities that can successfully compete for people's time, attention and resources."¹

It is also important for church leaders to understand the social and political arena in which they have to operate, and to keep abreast with the economic and technological changes taking place in and around them. While the internal environment will inform church leaders of what is desired and permissible, the external environment will tell them what is possible.

The information and knowledge gained from the environmental analyses can then be integrated to set strategic mission objectives and goals. This process will involve the coordinating of information to determine what long-term course of marketing action would best achieve the church's organizational mission and objectives. This marketing mission may be to extend a new line of services to the community, or to establish a company of believers in a particular locality, improve and extend the Church's channels of distribution of the Advent message, or any other marketing alternative that contributes to the overall mission of the Church.

**Develop a Core Mission Strategy**

The core strategy is really a statement or set of statements that outlines just how the organization will tackle the market challenges. Will it go after the whole market or different segments of the market? An effective core strategy will have the following characteristics:

1. It will be customer centered. The main focus of the strategy will be to meet the needs and wants of the target audience. It will not simply force a program on the customer, or just push organizational agendas.

2. It will be visionary. It will articulate a future for the organization that offers a clear sense as to where the organization is going, and what will happen when it gets there.

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1Kotler and Andreasen, 165-166.
3. It will differentiate the organization from its key rivals. The organization will stand out and offer target markets unique reasons to prefer its goods and services over that of the competition.

4. It will be sustainable in the long run in the face of likely competitors’ reactions. Once a strategy is successful, a competitor is most likely to react, and the organization should anticipate this possibility and prepare for it.

5. It will be easily communicated. The central elements of the strategy will be simple and clear enough so that both the customer and members of the organization will have an unambiguous understanding as to why it should be supported.

6. It will be motivating. A successful strategy will have the enthusiastic commitment of those who will carry it out.

7. It will be flexible. The strategy should be broad enough to allow for a range of applications based upon the uniqueness of individuals using it. It should not be so rigid and uncompromising that it cannot be adaptable to unforeseen situations.

In the past, the Church adopted a mass-marketing approach to evangelistic mission in the Virgin Islands. The big tents were for the multitudes, and many came. However, though the results were good, they were also skewed along the lines of Black immigrants from the neighboring Greater and Lesser Antilles. While tent crusade could be maintained as an ongoing but carefully monitored activity, there is also a very urgent need to explore other methods.
Targeting an audience is an important step in defining the mission of the congregation. It puts a human face on the ministry's purpose. Once a congregation settles on its audience, it can design an approach to these people that may open the door for the entrance of the transforming gospel of Jesus Christ. Warren writes:

Catching fish on their terms means letting your target determine your approach. When you go fishing, do you use the same kind of bait for every kind of fish? Of course not. Do you use the same size of hook for every kind of fish? No. You must use the bait and hook that best matches the fish you want to catch.

It would be very wise for church leaders to consider segmenting the territory's population to help make the following strategic decisions:

1. **Quantity decisions**: How much of the Church's financial, human, and mental resources are to be devoted to each segment?

2. **Quality decisions**: How would each segment be approached in terms of specific offerings, communications, place of offering, prices, and the like?

3. **Timing decisions**: When should specific marketing efforts be directed at particular segments?

The Church may, therefore, choose to segment the Virgin Islands community possibly along ethnic, geographical, religious, and non-religious lines, since one approach would never successfully reach everyone. Further, it may not be at all practical

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1 Wright, *Unfinished Evangelism*, 51.

2 Warren, 196-197.

3 See Kotler and Andreasen, *Strategic Marketing for Nonprofit Organizations*, for a more comprehensive treatment of market segmentation.
or economically feasible for the church to effectively address all segments at the same time. Wise leadership would therefore consider target marketing or niche marketing, based on the church's resources, quality of its offerings, and timing of mission activity. For example, the church may find that its unique position on health or prophetic interpretation can provide a distinct and advantageous marketing niche over other religious groups in the islands.

**Develop Competitive Position**

Once the market segment(s) and stance have been decided upon, the Church could adopt a competitive positioning strategy toward its target or niche market(s). The SDA Church does not enjoy a healthy public image among certain sectors of the Virgin Islands, and would therefore have to reposition itself in order to appeal to such sectors. This strategy must be clearly identifiable and must offer some customer value. On this matter George Barna said that "competitive positioning aids people's recall of your church in a positive, believable and helpful light."¹ Steve Dunkin made the informative comment that "everything the church does tends to create an image . . . including the architectural style of the building, the way the grounds are kept, the greeters at the door (or lack of them), the type of music, the style of a church sign, and the order of service—to name a few."²


We must be prepared to ask ourselves the very hard, but realistic, questions: What does the Virgin Islands community think about us? When the name of our Church is mentioned in any conversation, what type of reaction does it bring from people?

Besides giving careful consideration to the above factors in their positioning strategy, church leaders and people could also prayerfully weigh what characteristics of the Church or congregation really matter to the target audience—possibly a caring community image, or a community dedicated to truth and quality service, or some other position. However, nothing is gained by positioning the Church in a manner that is irrelevant to its target market.¹ Steve Dunkin suggests that the Church could also choose to position, what he calls, a "faith image." He said:

As men and women of vision, our motto should be, . . . Believing is Seeing! In other words, there is no need for you to be bound by the present image of your church, especially if that image is an unfavorable one. Reach out, by faith, become the church that you believe God is calling you to be and intends you to be!²

Design the Marketing Mix

Once the Church's positioning strategy is carefully defined, it would make transparently clear the principal elements that must be in its marketing mix,³ and also reflect the need for careful mix coordination. In the context of the Church, these elements would be:

²Dunkin, 50.
³Marketing mix is the four key elements of the marketing strategy: product, promotion, distribution, and price. Bovée and Thill, Marketing, 20.
1. **Product:** The Christian product is essentially a loving relationship to Jesus Christ, initiated and supported by the proclaimed Word, prayer, Christian fellowship, and discipleship. It is very important to recognize that there are many attributes to the Christian product. It can be featured in different sizes (since once size does not fit all), form, brands, and packaging. As Christians we must develop the art of understanding our customers so well (through caring friendships) that we could match our product offer to suit their needs. Warrens says that if we are going to catch fish, we must learn to think like fish.\(^1\) This does not mean that we have to live like them or even act like them, but it certainly means that we have to understand them. Consequently, Warren advises that "in order to catch fish, it helps to understand their habit preferences, and feeding patterns. Certain fish like smooth, still, water, and others like to swim in rushing rivers. Some fish are bottom crawlers, and others like to hide under the rocks."\(^2\)

The Christian product is not an easy sell because it runs across the grain of the thinking of modern society. Even Christ had a very difficult time trying to market the Cross (one aspect of the Christian product) to His own disciples (Matt 16:21-26).

Speaking on the marketing of the Cross in a secular world, very much like ours, Paul said: "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor 1:18 KJV). "But the natural man receiveth not

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\(^1\)Warren, 188.

\(^2\)Ibid.
the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor 2:14 KJV).

If there was ever a time when these passages of Scripture had great significance for the preaching of the gospel, that time is today. The preaching of the Cross is foolish to this age that exalts human wisdom as the ultimate source of authority. Church leaders are, therefore, challenged to package the product of the Cross in such a way that it would not only be in harmony with the Church's positioning strategy, but that its features, styling, and branding would make it identifiable and appealing to the Church's target market.

It would also be very helpful to remember that the Christian product is two-dimensional and must be offered as such. It portrays not only the word proclaimed, but also the life lived. It is not only theoretical, but also practical and relational. Ellen White writes:

Not all the books written can serve the purpose of a holy life. Men will believe, not what the minister preaches, but what the Church lives. Too often the influence of the sermon preached from the pulpit is counteracted by the sermon preached in the lives of those who claim to be advocates of truth.1

2. Price: This represents any cost, real or imaginary, that a person perceives that he has to pay to become a Christian. This cost is often perceived as treasured objects, ideas, and even total lifestyle that must be given up in order to take up the life that Christ offers. It involves an intellectual and emotional commitment to Jesus Christ and His cause. Jesus said: "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and

1White, Testimonies for the Church, 9: 21.
take up their cross and follow me" (Matt 16:24 NRSV). There is a real cost to discipleship, and Jesus did not hesitate to make this absolutely clear. (See Luke 14:25-33) Therefore, the object of the Christian marketer in this context is not to reduce the cost of discipleship, but to make sure that the quality and value of the Christian offerings exceed, by far, the disciples' cost.

3. **Place of Distribution**: This has to do with the movement of the Christian product, in terms of message and life, from the Church to the community. The Church must endeavor to develop multiple channels of distribution through which it seeks to disseminate the good news of the gospel. There is definitely room for enlarging upon, re-defining (in terms of mission objective and changing public needs), and possibly re-positioning current distribution channels used by the Church in the Virgin Islands. These channels include and are not limited to the churches, schools, Adventist book stores, radio station (WGOD), television, colporteurs, Adventist literature, crusades, cottage meetings, Bible studies, and other church-related activities. There is the urgent need to move away from the attitude that says: "We have the truth, so come and get it."

Distribution opportunities exist wherever people exist, so we need to deploy our distribution forces and resources wherever the people are. Warren writes:

Churches that expect the unchurched to show up simply because they build a building and hang out a "We're Open" sign are deluding themselves. People don't voluntarily jump into your boat. You must penetrate their culture. To penetrate their culture you must be willing to make some concessions in matters of style in order to gain a hearing.¹

¹Warren, 196.
In order to accomplish this penetration we need to engage with the unchurched on their 'turf,' seeking to understand them, their needs, their dreams and aspirations, and their motive force. Like the salt of the earth, we need to mingle with a motive—i.e., to position the positive, converting influence of a consistent Christian life to lead the unchurched to Christ. Mission channels exist wherever the believer happens to be, at any time of day or night. Dan Day observes that "we market best when we do it right where we are, in our circle of friends, business associates, and fellow-travellers. And we do it by being real for Christ, allowing Him to impress us with His commitment to people and use us to meet their needs." In this context he suggests:

The key to a vigorous witness (good marketing) is for us as Christians to begin expanding our circle of involvement, so that our influence can be felt in the widest possible scope—on the job, on the Little League field, at school, at the social services center, at the lake, and behind the wheel.

In support of this approach, Bill Hull emphatically states:

There is no impact without contact. Unless we go where the fish are, we won't catch any. The Pharisees weren't catching anyone; they were fishing in a stained-glass aquarium and were coming up empty. The reason the Church has been so inept in evangelism is partly due to the pharisaic unwillingness to live in the real world.

In a more specific sense, Warren suggests that we are to go where the fish are biting. He declares, "It is a waste of time to fish in a spot where the fish aren't biting.

\[1\] Day, 174.

\[2\] Ibid., 143.

\[3\] Hull, Jesus Christ, Disciple-Maker, 102.

\[4\] Warren, 187.
Wise fishermen move on. They understand that fish feed in different spots at different times of the day. Nor are they hungry all the time. He based this cogent observation on reality fishing and the principle of receptivity, as depicted in Jesus’ parable on the Sower and the Soils (Matt 13:3-23). The harvest principle suggests that we pick the fruits that are ripe first, but not to the neglect of the those that are green. As workers together with God, we can help create conditions that can transform green fruits into ripe ones, ready for the picking. However, regardless of the target, the entire purpose of the process of distribution is to create and refine accessible avenues for the delivery of the saving gospel of Jesus Christ to the hearts of unbelievers.

4. **Promotion**: This consists of a variety of techniques, including advertising, sales promotion, public relations, and personal selling, that are used to communicate with customers and potential customers. Christian media is an open untapped field for the Seventh-day Adventist Church. We are often too reluctant, at times, to expose ourselves and our offerings through the various electronic or literary media available to us today. In the area of advertising, the Church can possibly expand and refine its use of radio, television, and the World Wide Web. We can tap into the business expertise of our own members to design web pages that position the Church, its service, and value offerings in a very positive light. We can also redesign our current Adventist literature arsenal so that, in language and format, it may be able to easily cross cultural and sub-cultural

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1Ibid.

2Bovée and Thill, 23.
boundaries. Moreover, our advertising must take us where the fish are. In the shopping malls, airline magazines, and busy thoroughfares of life, Adventist literature of all kinds should add the Church’s presence and silent witness to the many voices that are clamoring for the attention, time, and interest of the masses.

Another area where the Church can make a positive impact on the Virgin Islands society is in that of public relations. There is a need for us to shake off some of our Christian otherness and become more actively involved with the community by either sponsoring community-based programs ourselves, or by linking up with other organizations and churches that do. Frequent press releases about in-house events and programs that can benefit the community as a whole should become a norm among our churches. The Church should not sit by silently or stand aloof from the social ills that affect our society, but should be a visible presence in addressing these ills with compassion, governed by integrity to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Hull rightly explains:

Jesus ministered with both feet in the real world. He launched out into his world, not being overly concerned about getting soiled. We, too, need to be willing to risk criticism from others in order to reach those in need. Such a commitment usually involves social interaction with those who practice different ethics. But as followers of the One who did not compromise, we are called to reach out to the people who are in need, breaking down the barriers by spending our time with them.¹

The Church needs to regard promotion and advertising as ongoing activities, and not just event-orchestrated attempts to influence customer behavior. Moreover, if we continue to rely on traditional methods, using language that is filled with in-house

¹Hull, Jesus Christ. Disciple-Maker, 111.
clichés, to communicate our offerings to the community, we may not be able to get our message through the filters of secular society. Warren warns:

If you look at most church advertising, it's obvious that it was written from a believer's viewpoint, not from the mind-set of an unchurched person. . . . No matter how life-changing our message is, it won't do any good if we're broadcasting on a different channel from the unchurched.¹

Everything about the Church promotes and advertises the Church, from its outward appearance to the quality of its services and value offerings. Everything about us as a people also promotes and advertises the Church. Believers in the Virgin Islands must be impressed with the fact that, wherever they are and whatever they do, they are speaking on behalf of the Church. Ellen White writes that "there is an eloquence far more powerful than the eloquence of words in the quiet, consistent life of a pure, true Christian. What a man is has more influence than what he says."² However, while lifestyle is a powerful, incontrovertible witness to the gospel, the word-of-mouth testimony of the believer has always had far-reaching effects in hastening the spread of the same. People in the business arena recognize the great power of the word-of-mouth testimony of the customer, and many leading corporations have adopted the operational philosophy that 'the customer is always right.' These corporations would rather give in to customers' complaints (concocted as some of them may be) than have customers walk away dissatisfied. They fully recognize the magnitude of the damage one dissatisfied customer can bring to their organization. Kallestad and Schey report that "studies have shown that

¹Ibid., 189.

²Ellen White, Ministry of Healing, 469.
While, as a church, we cannot subscribe to the philosophy that the customer is always right, we can certainly build upon the idea that the word-of-mouth testimony of satisfied and dissatisfied church members has tremendous potential to bless or hurt the Church. Even of greater consequence is the potential of those who choose to visit our church to use their word-of-mouth testimony to give the Church a positive endorsement or very negative publicity—both pending on what they experience when they visit.

However, the basic idea I want to generate here is that, as a believing community, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Virgin Islands has very good reason to encourage all members to use the powerful instrument of their personal testimony not only to promote the work and name of the Church, but also to impact and possibly convince their friends and acquaintances with the power of the gospel.

5. **Personalization:** Many marketers seem to agree that this element should be considered when developing the marketing mix. Personalization focuses on high-touch, quality pre- and post-sale service, and aftercare warranty. It adds personality prior to, during, and after the sale activity. It is normal business practice for a company to have a customer service department to deal specifically with problems customers may experience long after the sale has been completed. Customers are able to return purchased items without any questions being asked. Customers are given loaner cars to

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1Kallestad and Schey, 40.
drive while repairs are being done on their vehicles. Service representatives perform in-home service to customers who purchase very large items, and so on. In this context, sale is not a one-time activity but an ongoing process of forging a long-term relationship with the customer, in order to establish standing loyalties. Kallestad and Schey observe:

For some businesses, the staff or volunteer person who first discovers or hears of a problem "owns" the problem. It is that person's responsibility to either take corrective action, organize the necessary team of persons who can effectively deal with the problem, or to make sure that the problem is delivered to the proper person who has the authority and responsibility to take action. The importance here is that the problem is not lost through persons who say it is not their job to fix it. Feedback should then be given to the customer who first experienced the problem.1

Here again is a very valuable lesson for church leaders and members. Very often after a person is sold on the Advent message and is baptized into the Church, the high-touch, pre-sale activities that occurred under the tent suddenly disappear as members become preoccupied with other things (including looking for more souls). This has been a perennial problem after major tent crusades, which has been characterized by a 'bait-and-switch' approach to soul winning. If the worldly-wise corporations can see the importance of after-sale service and invest time, people resources, and money to establish departments to cater to customer needs, why cannot the people of God do the same? If these people of business can value one customer so much (and that is for pecuniary gains), why cannot the Church of God value the converted sinner even more (since a soul saved is worth more than all the world's wealth)? Maybe the time has come to adopt some of the ways of the world in the matter of service quality to those we seek to engage

1Ibid., 41.
with the saving gospel of Jesus Christ. We too, must consider the conversion of the sinner as an ongoing process that seeks to forge a dynamic relationship with Jesus Christ and members of the community of faith, with the goal of establishing standing loyalties with Christ, His Church, and the born-again believers. Perhaps a good consideration for the Church is to institute a member service department to deal with membership issues and complaints even long after individuals have been baptized and received into the fellowship of the Church. The people in this department may be trained Christian professionals and experienced, caring church members (e.g. counseling, family life, financial management, etc.), who can render meaningful assistance to hurting people, or refer them to others who can.

Develop Structure, Tactics, and Benchmarks

At this stage, church leaders may set up structure (or modify an existing one) and management systems for implementing the mission strategy. This would necessitate Total Quality Ministry (TQM) and internal marketing to recruit, equip, and motivate volunteers to facilitate this implementation. The processes of TQM consider the continuous improvement in the way congregations do their ministry. It takes the principles of Total Quality Management and interprets them for use by the Christian Church. It does not try to make people with zero defects, nor does it try to make people

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the product of continuous improvement, but it does seek continuous improvement and zero defects in the way ministry is accomplished.1 TQM would involve the outlining of detailed tactics for carrying out specific tasks demanded by the strategy, and by setting up benchmarks to measure interim and final achievement goals of the program. Detail tactics for carrying our mission strategy may include making decisions about what offerings to make available to target audience, what channels to use and how to use them, how to manage consumer costs, what communication tactics to use through advertising, personal witnessing, and public relations.2

Managing quality and assuring quality outcomes are major issues in the business world today. According to General Electric's chairman, John F. Welch, Jr.: "Quality is our best assurance of customer allegiance, our strongest defense against foreign competition, and the only path to sustained growth and earnings."3 John Walker believes that

quality ministry is about the church’s service to its members and to the community. It is about meeting our own and our customers' expectations of what the Church offers. 'By their fruits you shall know them' – by the way we deal with and process baptism enquiries, wedding preparation, [church board meetings], nurture programs, the care of church-yards, the integration of new members into the church, and much more, we are being judged by the quality of what we are doing and how we are doing it.4

---

1Ibid., 12-15.
2See Kotler and Andreasen, 215-216.
Benchmarking is a major business concept to help a company keep a focus on quality. This is generally accomplished by measuring one company’s performance with that of the best companies in its particular industry. This is probably a very good procedure for the Church in the Virgin Islands to adopt, not only to keep a focus on quality, but also to discover what other churches are doing better in areas where we are weak. For example, Seventh-day Adventists have had a very tough time winning unchurched, irreligious people, but our Protestant brothers and sisters appear to be doing much better than we are in this area. Bill Hybels and the Willow Creek Community Church have become a major benchmark in reaching out to secular, unchurched people; and church leaders from different denominations (including Seventh-day Adventists) have visited the community to see what they can learn from Willow Creek to strengthen their ministry to this people group. We cannot afford to allow denominational pride to prevent us from reaching across the divide to learn from other Christians different and sometimes better ways of reaching people with the gospel. It would be rather naive and foolhardy to believe that God has blessed only the Seventh-day Adventist Church with all the spiritual wisdom and insight to fulfill His mission here on earth.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Virgin Islands must be committed to continuous quality improvement to all its members and the local community. In order to do so, church leaders and people must recognize the following premises\(^1\) about quality improvement:

\(^1\)Adopted from Kotler’s observations on pursuing a total quality marketing strategy. Kotler, *Marketing Management*, 57.
1. Quality must be perceived by customers (members as well as non-members). It must begin with the customers’ needs and end with their perceptions.

2. Quality must be reflected in every church-related activity within and without the community of faith. Leonard A. Morgan of General Electric once said: "We are not just concerned with the quality of the product, but with the quality of our advertising, service, product literature, delivery, after-sales support, and so on."¹

3. Quality requires total congregational commitment. Quality can only be delivered by churches in which all members are committed to quality and motivated and trained to deliver it. Kotler observes that "successful companies are those which have removed the barriers between departments. Their employees work as a team to carry out core business processes and desired outcomes. Employees are intent to satisfy their internal customers as well as their external customers."²

4. Quality requires high-quality partners. Quality can be delivered only by churches whose value-chain partners—Conferences, Unions, Divisions, and the GC—are also committed to quality.

5. Quality can always be improved. The most productive churches believe in continuous improvement of everything by everyone. Kotler suggests that "the best way


²Kotler, Marketing Management, 57.
to improve quality is to benchmark the company’s performance against the ‘best-of-class’
competitors and strive to emulate them or even ‘leapfrog’ over them."

6. Quality improvement sometimes requires quantum leaps. Although quality
needs to be continuously improved, it would be helpful for a church to sometimes target
quantum improvement. Small improvements may come through working harder, but
large improvements may call for fresh solutions, process reengineering, and working
smarter.

7. Quality does not cost more. Quality is really improved by learning ways to do
things right the first time. Quality should not be inspected in, but designed in, because
when things are done right the first time many unnecessary costs are eliminated.

8. Quality is necessary, but may not be sufficient. Improving the Church’s
quality offerings and services is absolutely necessary because church members and
unbelievers are becoming more picky and demanding. However, better quality may not
always confer a winning advantage, especially if other denominations improve their
quality to more or less the same extent.

9. Quality drive cannot save a poor product. A quality drive cannot compensate
for product deficiencies. Although the Seventh-day Adventist Church has an excellent
product in term of message and the potential of the message to give the best quality life
that there is, sometimes there are major gaps in product performance whenever the thing
believed (the message) does not integrate with the thing experienced (lifestyle).

'Ibid.
Implementation and Reassessment

The planned mission strategy should be put into action in the targeted area, and its outcome should be carefully measured to see if the set mission, objectives, and goals were effectively met. If these were not achieved, then there may be need for adjustment in the core strategy or tactical details, or even both.

Summary

Approaching mission from a marketing perspective can offer many options to the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Virgin Islands. Once church leaders can get over the hurdle of adopting a marketing mind-set toward mission and ministry, they can then determine the basic direction the Church will take over the strategic planning horizon. To help accomplish this, leaders can use the strategic mission planning process, which acts as a step-by-step guide to keep the Church focused and on track until its mission, objectives, and goals are accomplished.
Chapter 6

Conclusion

The greatest good that can be done for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Virgin Islands is to release the potential of the whole people of God in creative ministry within and without the worshiping community. While the traditional approach to ministry may maintain its place as a vital link to our past history, church leaders and members must come to grips with the hard-to-ignore challenges facing the Church in these times. If the Church is to fulfill its mission in this end-time, it must be willing to relate and speak in relevant terms to the contemporary issues facing modern man. Tom Peters\(^1\) suggests that flexibility and adapting to the fast-changing nature of consumer needs is the order of the day, and that the business or church that protects the basic beliefs, but allows members to cut a wide swath, will find greater progress, faster growth, and more creativity. In a sterling effort to show the inroads of secularism on religion, renown sociologist Peter L. Berger explains:

Religion no longer legitimates "the world."... The religious traditions have lost their character as overarching symbols for the society at large, which must find its integrating symbolism elsewhere. Those who continue to adhere to the world as defined by the religious traditions then find themselves in the position of cognitive

minorities—a status that has social-psychological as well as theoretical problems. The pluralistic situation presents the religious institutions with two ideal-typical options. They can either accommodate themselves to the situation, play the pluralistic game of religious free enterprise, and come to terms as best they can with the plausibility problem by modifying their product in accordance with consumer demand. Or they can refuse to accommodate themselves, entrench themselves behind whatever socio-religious structures they can maintain or construct, and continue to profess the old objectivities as much as possible as if nothing had happened.¹

The latter scenario is not an option for Seventh-day Adventists, simply because we have a divine mandate to reach the world for Christ. We cannot and dare not pretend that "since our ancestors died, all things continue as they were from the foundation of the world" (2 Pet 3:4 NRSV). We cannot ignore a world gone mad and pull ourselves into a cozy, comfortably cocoon and continue to maintain that we are the people of God.

Webster explains:

The mentality of the traditional church is generally pessimistic. People spend a lot of time dwelling on the past, rehashing old differences and taking comfort from set styles. They feel burned out, defensive, threatened by change and tired of trying. There is a lack of innovation, options, variety and experimentation. "We've always done it this way" is a discouraging refrain chanted to a generation eager to rethink old forms and reach out to new people.²

Bill Hull says that if we are truly the disciples of Christ, we will follow His example of ministry with both feet in the real world. Without contact, there can be no impact.³


²Webster, 47-48.

³Hull, 108.
It is, therefore, very important for church leaders to see that motivating, equipping, and supporting the witness of church members can no longer be limited to the traditional methods and the doctrinal approaches of cottage meetings, Bible lessons, lay crusades, or the big tent. All these are good, but besides being worn to the bone, they attract only a certain class of people at the exclusion of others—failing to utilize the full potential of the people of God. Alternate approaches must be sought, and new strategies must be implemented in order to open up new ways to reach all classes within the Church and every people group that make up the Virgin Islands. Lindgren and Shawchuck maintain that "the church must intentionally seek to provide many contexts in which sensitive, seeking persons may experience God's presence, gain increased understanding of God's nature and become deeply committed to doing his will."1

It is my humble opinion that adopting the principles of marketing management to serve as tools in motivating and equipping the whole people of God in mission and ministry is one of the most viable options available to the Church today. Ellen White reminds us "not to forget that different methods are to be employed to save different ones."2 Marketing-oriented ministry is one of the best approaches to ministry that can be taught to lay leaders. George Barna3 outlines a number of tangible advantages and


2White, Evangelism, 106.

3Barna, Marketing the Church: What They Never Taught You About Church Growth, 34-36.
benefits that a church can realize through effective marketing.

1. **Numerical growth.** If you study your market, devise intelligent plans, and implement those plans faithfully, you should have an increase in the number of visitors, new members, and people who accept Christ as their Savior.

2. **Better communications.** Through a planned approach to the message you convey to your target audience (not just sermons, but every form of promotion or advertisement), you can enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of your communications. You should be able to develop a positive image for your church that will persuasively alert people to what your community of faith is all about, and how they can benefit from what you offer.

3. **Greater understanding of your ministry.** Many churches are diligently ministering, but lack a clear sense of direction or purpose. By specifying your goals, resources, problems, opportunities, strategies, and tactics, you cannot help but have a very precise definition of why your church is in business and how your ministry can achieve optimum results.

4. **Superior use of resources.** Limited resources—human, financial, physical—do not have to limit what you can accomplish. If you know exactly where you are going and how you are going to get there, it is much easier not only to conserve your readily available resources and use them more efficiently, but also to identify other needed resources and determine how to acquire them.

5. **Community sensitivity.** A marketing orientation will help your church to become better acquainted with the people, problems, and opportunities within the
geographic area you serve. The knowledge and insight you gain will allow you to make your programs and communications more relevant to people's needs.

6. **Enhance personal ministries.** As church members catch the vision of ministry and understand the plan for marketing the Church, they will have a more meaningful personal ministry if they are motivated to pursue it. The marketing approach to ministry encourages personal ownership and responsibility on the part of all those involved in the process.

7. **New leaders.** By sharing the vision and developing a planned approach to church growth and development, a new team of leaders can be identified, trained, and involved.

8. **Reduction of the pastor's frustration.** By preparing new leaders, by using existing support more effectively, and by developing a plan for managing ministry and growth, the pastor's burden can be better managed, if not largely alleviated. The goal is not to exempt the pastor from all ministerial pressures, but to provide him with a support system that would greatly ease the tension involved in trying to make the Church reach its potential.

10. **A changed environment.** Once the marketing activity begins to take root, a different atmosphere will pervade the Church. Members will have a better sense of purpose, and the general environment will become more positive, upbeat, and confident.

Capitalizing on this marketing perspective, pastors and people would be able to help the Church position itself and design programs that can effectively appeal to secular-minded people that make up the community and marketplace which the Church is called
upon to serve. Leaders and people must be trained to refrain from making the assumption that the secular society must be beholden to the unique message proclaimed by the church, and should be encouraged to ask customer-oriented questions and come up with customer-oriented, but Bible-centered answers. Customer value and satisfaction have become the order of the day, not only in the world of business, but also in the world of religion; and contemporary worshipers and "want-to-be Christians" are searching for and expect to receive nothing less. The growing secular society of the Virgin Islands and the youth of the church want a Jesus who can identify with who they are, what they are, and where they are. They are looking for a religion that satisfies the longings of the heart, and the Seventh-day Adventist Church is obligated to give these lost but searching souls just that. Millard Erickson observes that secular people "tend to think of God as identified with the past. The incidents in which he revealed himself were in the past, so that is where he fits and belongs. So we find it hard to conceive of him as being present and active in the future."1 Erickson portrays this as modern man's unofficial theology2 overwhelming his official theology.3 It is a situation, says Erickson, where we may believe that God was present in and understood a society where people rode on donkeys


2Erickson defines our unofficial theology as what we actually believe in practice, the belief that underlies what we do, and is revealed in our actions. Ibid., 34.

3Our official theology is what we believe in theory, what we say we subscribe to. In this case, our official theology is that God is eternal, living in the past, present, and future. He is omniscient, knowing everything. He is omnipresent, existing everywhere. Ibid.
and camels, but not the world of high-speed freeways, air and space travel. Our image of God is of an old man in a flowing white robe with a long white beard. Such a God does not fit into our present, so we tend to exclude him in favor of modern science as the means of dealing with contemporary complex issues, and we certainly tend not to expect him in the future in a post-Christian or postmodern or post-theistic time.\(^1\) As a reflection of this situation, Douglas D. Webster explains that "at a time when so many are confused over what they really need and want out of life, the church must renew its confidence that Christ is the answer to the quest for transcendence, significance, and community."\(^2\)

Certainly, the evangelistic success of the North Caribbean Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in the United States Virgin Islands is worthy of all commendation, but it must also be said that its mission strategy does not reflect a comprehensive response to the call of Matt 18:19, 20, or Rev 14:6-12. These passages of Scripture require "God's remnant" to carry the gospel to every nation under the sun, crossing international, national, cultural, and sub-cultural boundaries established by God and man. In the context of the Virgin Islands, the Church has not effectively done so, and therefore needs to take a keen, thorough look at its God-given responsibility in the light of its remnant theology and mission.

It is my hope that such an examination will bring to the attention of church leaders some of the pertinent issues raised in this project so that steps are taken and strategies are

\(^1\)Ibid.

\(^2\)Webster, 95.
implemented to ensure that every sector and people group in the Virgin Islands community will have the opportunity to hear a very clear presentation of the everlasting gospel. The Adventist claim to "remnancy" poses a major challenge to the mission of the church in the Virgin Islands, especially in an age of growing secularism and postmodernism, where relativism in regard to truth and orthodoxy is fast becoming the norm. However, the church's future mission enterprise must consider the needs of the secular, the unsaved, and unchurched, as well as God's children in Babylon; and such consideration will call for some adjustment in Adventist thinking and attitude towards these groups. There is also room for some measure of openness and dialogue between Adventist leaders and those of other denominations to reduce hitherto adversarial relationships among the clergy and people, and to create a climate where information and strategies can be shared on how to approach and win the unchurched and people of non-Christian religions. This is not a call for doctrinal compromise or a tainting of the Adventist "image," but there is much that church leaders can learn from the success ventures of other Christian churches. It would be very naive or, more accurately, arrogant to think that God has blessed only the Seventh-day Adventist Church with all there is to know about the Missio Dei.

Present and future remnant mission strategy for the Virgin Islands must not be limited to the traditional, doctrinal approaches of cottage meetings, Bible lessons, lay crusades, or the big tent. Ellen White says:

Men are needed who pray to God for wisdom, and who, under the guidance of God, can put new life into the old methods of labor and can invent new plans and new methods of awakening the interest of church members and reaching the men and
women of the world [italics mine].

She also predicts that "means will be devised to reach hearts. Some of the methods used in this work will be different from the methods used in the work in the past; but let no one, because of this, block the way by criticism." Dan Day writes:

If we do have the truth (and I believe we do), it doesn’t lose one iota of its impact when we take the time to market it, rather than merely trying to sell it. We need to escape our elitist attitudes and end our isolation from the rest of the Christian family and the larger community too. We owe it to others to show them how powerful our distinctive message is by the impact it has on our lives.

The time has come for these new methods and approaches to be implemented in the mission practice of the "Remnant Church" in the Virgin Islands. It is my hope that this dissertation project would be a healthy reference source that would stimulate and

---


2 Day, 174.
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The time has come for these new methods and approaches to be implemented in the mission practice of the "Remnant Church" in the Virgin Islands. It is my hope that this dissertation project would be a healthy reference source that would stimulate and encourage further investigation and exploration of alternative approaches to mission and ministry in the Virgin Islands.

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2Day, 174.
APPENDIX
APPENDIX A

CORRESPONDENCE FROM NORTH CARIBBEAN CONFERENCE
OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST
TO: Pastor Ruthven Roy

MEMBERSHIP

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The other information you asked for we cannot give since we only have names of members only. From this information you may be able to calculate the percentages you need. If you need any other information you can call me.

Sis. Fleming
Attention Pastor Ruthven Roy

From Mrs. Fleming

Pastor Roy, I am sorry I cannot find the minutes for 1980 backwards.
APPENDIX B

POPULATION CENSUS DATA FROM THE U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS
MESSAGE:

FROM: DIANA F. RICHARDSON, RESEARCH ECONOMIST

DATE: 11/20/92

Number of pages including front sheet: 04

Please telephone (809) 774-8784 ext. 114 if you do not receive all pages.
1980 CENSUS OF POPULATION AND HOUSING

Population by race and ethnic group

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<th>Area</th>
<th>All Persons</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Other races</th>
<th>Hispanic Origin*</th>
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* Persons of Hispanic Origin may be of any race.

KINDLY CONFIRM RECEIPT OF THIS DOCUMENT BY WAY OF FAX # (809) 774-1199

THANK YOU.
JAMES EDMEADS
1990 U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS CENSUS OF POPULATION AND HOUSING: STF1
BASIC POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

State Level: Territory Totals

TABLES P1 and P5: Population and Sex

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TABLES P2, P16 and P16A: Families

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TABLES P3 and P25: Households and Household Type

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<td>with i or more nonrelatives</td>
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TABLE P4: Urban And Rural

Urban:
- Inside Urbanized Area: 0
- Outside Urbanized Area: 0
Rural: 0
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TABLES P6 and P7: Race and Hispanic Origin

***** Hispanic Origin May Be Of Any Race *****

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### TABLE P6: Race and Hispanic Origin

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<td>900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic Origin</td>
<td>3190</td>
</tr>
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</table>
### TABLE P6: Race and Hispanic Origin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Island: St. Croix</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>36255</td>
<td>99.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>5373</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian or Pacific Islander</td>
<td>300</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian, Eskimo, or Aleut</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>0.4</td>
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<td>8061</td>
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<td>11425</td>
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<tr>
<th>Island: St. John</th>
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<td>Black</td>
<td>2266</td>
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<td>1210</td>
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<td>Other Race</td>
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<td>Hispanic Origin</td>
<td>93</td>
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<th>Island: St. Thomas</th>
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<td>Black</td>
<td>39482</td>
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<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>7192</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hispanic Origin</td>
<td>3190</td>
<td>8.3</td>
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</table>


Marsh, Joseph. "Babylon." Quoted in James White, Review and Herald, December 9, 1851, 58.


White, James, to Enoch Jacobs. Day Star, September 20, 1845, 26.


———. "The Seven Churches." Review and Herald, October 16, 1856, 189.


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