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ABSTRACT

EVANGELIZING THE SECULAR-MINDED: A TRAINING SEMINAR
FOR THE UNIVERSITY SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST
CHURCH IN EAST LANSING, MICHIGAN

by

Roy Anthony Castelbuono

Adviser: Gottfried Oosterwal

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: EVANGELIZING THE SECULAR-MINDED: A TRAINING SEMINAR FOR
THE UNIVERSITY SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH IN EAST
LANSING, MICHIGAN

Name of researcher: Roy Anthony Castelbuono

Name and degree of faculty adviser: Gottfried Oosterwal, Ph.D.

Date completed: November 2000

Topic

Today in many ways our world has been unified, not by a political empire but by a way of thinking. People today find common ground in a shared experience of living guided by a set of values that spans the divide of culture, language, and history. The process of this transformation is best described by the term “secularization.”

Secularization best describes the far-reaching changes we find in our communities and in our personal lives, and is one of the greatest challenges the Seventh-day Adventist Church faces as we begin the twenty-first century.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to design, field test, and evaluate a seminar that will enable the East Lansing Seventh-day Adventist Church to understand the process of secularization and allow it to begin to design an evangelistic approach that will appeal to the secular community surrounding the church.

Sources

Sources used to understand the factors and effects of secularization came from sociologists who have written about the phenomena of secularization. Sources used to build an appropriate response to the challenge of secularization are the Bible, the writings of Ellen G. White, and Christian writers who have reflected on the challenge of secularization.

Conclusions

Each aspect of secularization, in addition to posing a threat to the continued existence of organized religion, also presents new and exciting opportunities for Christian mission. Bridges need to be built to cross the divide left by the sea change that has transformed our world through the process called secularization. We cannot depend on institutions, leaders, programs, or even doctrinal truth to be the primary bridge in reaching the secular world. The life and witness of the body of Christ are the bridge by which our mission to secularized people can be accomplished.

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

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FOR THE UNIVERSITY SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST
CHURCH IN EAST LANSING, MICHIGAN

A Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
Roy Anthony Castelbuono

February 2001

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	vii
--------------------------	-----

Chapter

I. INTRODUCTION	1
---------------------------	---

Purpose of the Project	1
Justification for the Project	2
Description of the Project	3
Limitations of the Project	4
Expectations of the Project	5

II. THE PROCESS OF SECULARIZATION: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	7
---	---

Introduction	7
What Is Secularization?	8
What We See in Secular Society	10
The Decline of Institutionalized Religion	10
The Loss of the Sacred in Life	12
The Challenge to Faith in God	13
The Individual as the Hub of Life	15
Personal "Angst"	16
Renewed Interest in Spirituality	17
The Effect of Secularization on the Church	20
An Example from England	20
A Smaller Piece of the Pie: The Compartmentalization of Religion . . .	21
Privatization of Religion	22
Insignificance	23
Outdated Structures	26
A Historical Progression	28
Tribe to Town to City	28
Structures of Society	29
Factors Contributing to Secularization	33
Science and Technology	33
Industrialization	36
Urbanization	38
Institutionalization	40

The Development of the Modern State	41
The Rate of Change	42
A Postmodern Response: A Craving for Community	44
How the Secular Mind Works	45
Contingency	46
Relativity	46
Temporality	47
Autonomy	47
Functionalism	48
A Postmodern Response: A Craving for Truth/Meaning	48
The Opportunities Presented by Secularization	52
We Are Forced to Action	53
Freedom from Religious Traditions	55
Salt of the Earth.	57
Needs of Secular Man.	59
Summary	61
III. THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS	64
God's Call	64
To a Personal Encounter	64
To Holiness	65
To Shape our Life and Culture	66
To Experience the Power of God	68
To Gather In	68
One Nation Under God	70
God's Commission.	71
Go Make Disciples.	71
Go Across Cultural Barriers.	71
Go to Any Extreme	74
A Cross-Cultural Mission	76
Elements of Mission.	76
A World Oriented Approach to Mission	80
Incarnational Mission	85
Obstacles to Cross-Cultural Mission	89
IV. MISSION TO THE SECULAR WORLD	95
A Mission to the Secular	95
The Gap We Face Today	95
The Necessity of a Missiological Approach	101
The Mission Field Across the Street	101
A "Needs"— Oriented Approach	102
Fellowship/Community	103
Meaning.	104

Values	105
Salvation/Messiah	109
Abundant Life	109
Summary.. . . .	112
Obstacles in Mission to the Secular	113
A New Paradigm for Ministry	115
Spiritual Revival	119
 V. SEMINAR DESIGN	 121
The East Lansing Seventh-day Adventist Church	121
The Purpose of the Seminar	124
Questionnaire Design and Use	125
Organization of the Program	130
Narrative Description	134
Evaluation	145
Seminar Survey	145
Seminar Content	146
Scheduling	146
Presentation Format	147
Summary	148
 VI. APPLICATION	 149
Observations and Conclusions	150
Four Life Situations	151
Rating the Degree of Secularization.	155
Secularizing Factors in Our Lives	157
Getting Out and Life at Church.	161
Attractive Aspects and Important Needs	164
Spending Evangelism Monies	167
Personal Responses	169
Spending Evangelism Monies Rethought	171
Reflections and Recommendations	173
The Effect on the Congregation.	173
The Use of Ratios	174
Implications for the Church	175
The Creative Gale of Destruction	175
Contextualizing the Gospel	179
A New Personal Vision	182
Revitalizing Sodalities	185
An Enabling Structure	188
Renewal	191
The Rest of the Story	193

Postscript	195
Appendix	
A. SEMINAR PRESENTATIONS	195
B. SURVEY INSTRUMENTS	238
BIBLIOGRAPHY	248

LIST OF TABLES

1.	Tribe to Town to City.	31
2.	Approaches to Mission	81
3.	The Gap We Face Today	97
4.	How the Relationship Between the Sacred and the Secular Influences Our View of the Secular, Secularization, the Church, and Mission	114
5.	Survey Results: Four Life Situations	152
6.	Survey Results: Rating the Degree of Secularization	156
7.	Survey Results: Secularizing Factors in Our Lives	158
8.	Survey Results: Getting Out and Life at Church	162
9.	Survey Results: Attractive Aspects and Important Needs	165
10.	Exit Survey Results: Spending Evangelism Monies	168
11.	Exit Survey Results: Personal Responses	170
12.	Exit Survey Results: Spending Evangelism Monies Rethought	172

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Project

Today we face a world that has been unified, not by a political empire but by a way of thinking. Our world has found common ground in a shared experience of living. This shared experience spans the divide of culture, language, and history. The process that has played a central role in bringing about this unification is secularization.

The purpose of this project is to understand this process that unifies our world, to discover the values that span the cultural divides of our globe, and to learn the language by which these values and understandings are expressed so that the local Seventh-day Adventist church may speak the gospel with power and clarity to its surrounding secularized community.

The focus of this project is to design, field test, and evaluate a seminar that will enable the East Lansing Seventh-day Adventist Church to understand the process of secularization and allow it to begin to design an evangelistic approach that will appeal to a secular person.

Justification for the Project

Secularization best describes the far-reaching changes we find in our communities and in our personal lives here at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Secularization

has changed each of our lives and presents one of the greatest challenges that the Seventh-day Adventist Church faces as we enter this new millennium.

As we look around at the changes occurring in our social structures we see a general decline of many of our church institutions. We also see how the meaning of the sacred in our church and community has been challenged, lost, or changed. More and more of our friends, neighbors, and family question the faith they have grown up in. These are only a few of the changes affected by secularization in our world as we enter the twenty-first century. These changes challenge us to search for a response that will reaffirm the centrality of our faith and mission.

I have lived and worked in East Lansing, Michigan, for the past ten years. During this time I have worked with people in the church, in the community, in the local schools, and in the university. No matter where I turn, I find that the way people relate to the church has changed radically from the model I experienced while growing up in southwestern Michigan in the 1960s. Religious experience for most people has become compartmentalized and the "piece of the pie" which religion can stake a claim to has been steadily growing smaller.

In East Lansing we have had five major series of evangelistic meetings over the last decade. Regardless of the location or the amount of advertising, the public response has been minimal. The traditional Bible-focused avenues of Adventist evangelism are not appealing to people in our community. Since our church exists for the purpose of sharing the gospel, this lack of response on the part of our community is a pressing concern for my congregation and me.

The shrinking of the role of traditional religious organizations that I see in our community is also mirrored in my church. More parents send their children to public schools because they feel the quality of the education there is superior to what they find at our church school. The idea of taking vacation time to spend a week at camp meeting is simply not even considered by most church members. Even coming to church at any time other than Sabbath morning is unusual for our members. It appears imperative for both myself and for my members to understand why these changes are taking place, what they mean, and how we should respond.

Since the Bible tells us that it is God's will that his gospel be brought to every nation, race, class, and group of people it is essential to understand how secularization has changed our lives so that our spiritual lives can be renewed and so that we can proclaim the gospel with power to the world around us.

Description of the Project

The first step in this project was to explore the literature on secularization with the following questions in mind: What are the factors contributing to secularization? How does the secular mind work? What are some of the characteristics we see when we look at secular society? What has been the effect of secularization on society, on the church, and on the individual believer? And, what are the opportunities presented to Christians by secularization?

The next step was to use Scripture to build a base for reaching secular people. In the Bible we find a commission to take the gospel to every person in the world. What guidelines does the Bible give us as we seek to fulfill that commission? What examples do we find in the lives of the patriarchs, kings, and prophets? Does Jesus give us any

specific instructions on how to proceed? Are there principles we can take from the work of the apostles? What does Scripture say about how to share the gospel with a different group of people, a culture that is removed from our own, a race of which we are not a part, and a class to which we do not belong? What marching orders can we find in divine revelation?

Following this research a seminar of four sessions was designed. Specific seminar objectives, lecture outlines, and group interaction activities were developed and applied.

The seminar was presented in the University Seventh-day Adventist Church in East Lansing, Michigan and was designed for its members. Participation was voluntary.

A survey was given to participants both before and after the seminar to determine whether their understanding of the effects of secularization and how to communicate the gospel to the secular mind has been affected. The survey results were not submitted to a statistical analysis but were used to find a general indication of the thought and understanding of the participants.

A report and evaluation of this seminar complete this project.

Limitations of the Project

The project does not involve an exhaustive study of the literature found in the field of secularization. The project attempts to summarize the process and the general characteristics of secularization. The project tries to develop an understanding of those characteristics that would be most pertinent to one who is trying to bring the gospel to secularized people.

The project does not involve an exhaustive theological analysis of the roots and nature of mission as found in the Bible and the writings of Ellen White. The project looks

at primary biblical passages where God calls a person or a people to bring the gospel to a new region, ethnic group, or nation. These passages are evaluated to see if precedents are established that would bear on the question of bringing the gospel to those affected by secularization.

The project is not intended to develop a set of outreach programs for an Adventist Church to use in reaching a secularized community.

The project is limited in scope to the experiences, responses, and needs of the community of East Lansing and the members of the University SDA Church.

Expectations of the Project

As religious systems, organizations, and institutions have declined, their power to control the thoughts and lives of their members has weakened. This in itself is not necessarily a negative influence. Today tens of millions of people who once were bound by the restraints and misconceptions of their religious traditions are now freer to consider the claims of the true gospel. The very challenges facing religion in our secular age can be used by God to prepare men, women, and children for *his* second coming.

Each aspect of secularization, in addition to posing a threat to the continued existence of organized religion, also presents new and exciting opportunities for Christian mission! Perhaps the best thing about secularization is that we can no longer do business, religious business, as usual. We cannot depend on institutions, leaders, programs, or even doctrinal truth to be the primary bridge in reaching the secular world. The life and witness of the body of Christ are the means by which our mission to secularized people can be accomplished.

Secularization forces us to return to the life and practice of New Testament Christianity. If we present the gospel in response to the needs of “secular man” we will find an audience. If we live out the biblical responses to these needs we will make disciples.

My expectations of this project centered around getting the participants to first of all, begin to grasp how secularization has impacted both their personal world and the community they seek to evangelize, getting them then to start to recognize the opportunities secularization has created in their neighborhoods and in their families to the point where they would then be willing to actually try some new approaches in their outreach, and most of all that each member would be challenged to reflect the gospel more fully in the context of their personal life and by so doing become a bridge between the secular world and our Father in Heaven.

CHAPTER 2

THE PROCESS OF SECULARIZATION:

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

In Paul's day the Gentile world he faced had been united by the Roman Empire. Rome's roads made it possible to travel to far-off cities and lands. Rome's legal system made it possible to be treated with consistency whether you were in Jerusalem, Athens, Alexandria, or Rome. Roman values had worked their way into the lifestyle of the cities and countries that Rome had conquered. Hellenistic culture gave a common bond to more and more of the diverse groupings of tribes and peoples who had been absorbed into the Roman Empire. Into this milieu Paul brought the message of the gospel with a power that transformed that world.

In a similar way, today we face a world that in many ways has been unified, not by a political empire but by a way of thinking. People today find common ground in a shared experience of living guided by a set of values that spans the divide of culture, language, and history. The process of this transformation is best described by the term "secularization."

What Is Secularization?

It is important to note the difference between “secularism” and “secularization.” Harvey Cox, in his book *The Secular City*, defines “secularization” as the desacralizing of social institutions and of ordinary life, whereas he defines “secularism” as a philosophy that is the mortal enemy of Christian faith. He finds the process of secularization to be compatible with biblical faith. In fact, he goes so far as to see “secularization” as the Bible’s legitimate historical offspring.¹

Lesslie Newbigin sees this difference as well in his book *Honest Religion for Secular Man*. He writes,

I am making a distinction, which was not made at the Jerusalem meeting between “secularism” as a closed system of belief, and ‘secularization’ which is a historical process of which the writer and his readers are a part. This process may be looked at both in its negative and in its positive aspects. Negatively, it is the withdrawal of areas of life and activity from the control of organized religious bodies, and the withdrawal of areas of thought from the control of what are believed to be revealed religious truths. Positively it may be seen as the increasing assertion of the competence of human science and techniques to handle human problems of every kind.²

Brian Wilson, a preeminent sociologist with special expertise in the study of religion, writes that

secularization relates to the diminution in the social significance of religion. Its application covers such things as, the sequestration by political powers of the property and facilities of religious agencies; the shift from religious to secular control of various of the erstwhile activities and functions of religion; the decline in the proportion of their time, energy, and resources which men devote to super-empirical concerns; the decay of religious institutions; the supplanting, in matters of behaviour, of religious precepts by demands that accord with strictly technical

¹Harvey Cox, *The Secular City* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1965), 18-19; 65-68.

²Lesslie Newbigin, *Honest Religion for Secular Man* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966), 8, 9.

criteria; and the gradual replacement of a specifically religious consciousness (which might range from dependence on charms, rites, spells, or prayers, to a broadly spiritually-inspired ethical concern) by an empirical, rational, instrumental orientation; the abandonment of mythical, poetic, and artistic interpretations of nature and society in favour of matter-of-fact description and, with it, the rigorous separation of evaluative and emotive dispositions from cognitive and positivistic orientations.¹

When asked to put his definition in a succinct form, Wilson states “secularization is that process by which religious institutions, actions, and consciousness, lose their social significance.”²

What we call secularization is “not only a change occurring in society, it is also a change of society in its basic organization.”³ And while some may feel immune from its touch, “the most significant fact about the time in which we are living is that it is a time in which a single movement of secularization is bringing the peoples of all continents into its sweep.”⁴

Secularization does not have just one form or expression. It is not something that has just affected the media, higher education, or people who do not attend church. Dr. Oosterwal describes how

in Europe it is mostly external. In the United States, where church and state have been firmly separated, secularization is mostly internal. People do remain part of a religious organization; churches, religions and cults flourish. But, the contents of religion and commitment are eroded. In non-Christian areas, such as Japan or China,

¹Brian Wilson, *Religion in Sociological Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 149.

²Brian Wilson, *Religion in Secular Society: A Sociological Comment* (Baltimore, MD: Penguin Books, 1966), 14.

³Wilson, *Religion in Sociological Perspective*, 148.

⁴Newbigin, 11.

the process of secularization, again, takes on different forms. All these differences are intimately related to the socio-religious context in which the process occurs.

Though originally a Western, Christian term, today, secularization is no longer synonymous with “de-Christianization” or “becoming unchurched.” It is a universal process that affects people of all religions: Hindus and Buddhists, Muslims and Shintoists. The whole process seems inevitable, part of the whole process of modernization: the development of the modern state; urbanization and industrialization; the development of science and technology. This does not mean that religion will disappear altogether. It does mean, however, that its forms are changing, and that its activities and institutions are losing the social and political and economic significance they once had.¹

Secularization is an incredibly complex, multifaceted phenomena that is touching the totality of mankind and changing the world we live in. Let us look next to see some of the ways secularization appears in society.

What We See in Secular Society

The Decline of Institutionalized Religion

One of the first things we notice even in the Seventh-day Adventist denomination is the decline of church institutions. In Michigan we have gone from three strong Adventist boarding academies to only one. A few decades ago there were full-time literature evangelists across the state. Today, full-time literature evangelists are virtually nonexistent. Once there was a powerful medical work in Battle Creek built around a large hospital. Today we are building an historic village to keep alive the memories of what once went on here.

Across the North American Division many schools and hospitals have closed and others are struggling. Each year a higher percentage of our budgets goes to keep our

¹Gottfried Oosterwal, Syllabus for Secularization Seminar, Hiroshima, Japan, 1989, 21.

church institutions functioning, while many of our churches struggle to keep up with the biological growth rates of their communities.

When I was a boy and rode into the city with my father, a minister in Chicago, he kept a small clergy sign in his car. If he needed to double park or pull up in a no-parking zone to make a visit, he simply put that small sign, "Clergy," on the dashboard so it was visible from the front window. I have been a pastor for twenty years and I have never seen anyone use such a sign. The status and influence religion wielded years ago has largely disappeared.

Secularization has clearly resulted in a reduction of the role and scope of institutionalized religion.

If there is a truth that history teaches us beyond doubt, it is that religion tends to embrace a smaller and smaller sector of social life. Originally it pervades everything: everything social is religious. The two words are synonymous. Then political, economic and scientific functions gradually free themselves from religious control, establish themselves separately and take on a more and more openly temporal character.¹

Some have even seen this decline of religion as the very essence of secularization.

Caplow,

like many other sociologists of his time, . . . viewed social evolution as an inevitable progression from social forms based on custom to social forms based on rational planning. According to this view drawn from nineteenth-century extensions of Darwin's discussion of the origin of species to social institutions, modern religion was supposed to be a vestige of a more primitive stage of society and was expected to disappear. This gradual but inevitable disappearance was called secularization.²

¹Anthony Giddens, *Emile Durkheim: Selected Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 245.

²Theodore Caplow, "Looking for Secularization in Middletown," in *Religion: North American Style*, ed. Patrick MacNamara (Belmont, CA: Wordsworth, 1984), 106.

Bryan Wilson has gone so far as to compare today's clergy to "charcoal burners or alchemists in an age in which the processes in which they were engaged had been rendered obsolete, technically or intellectually."¹

This same feeling was expressed succinctly by a person in the Newsweek chat room who wrote, "The only denominations I like are 10's, 100's, etc."²

The Loss of the Sacred in Life

Another thing we see in our society is the loss of the "sacred" in life. One example is marriage. Marriage has been considered a sacred sacrament in the Christian community. It has been a time when the bride and groom come into the holy presence of God for recognition, affirmation, and blessing to be given upon their holy union. Today many marry in a church because they like the feeling they get in a beautiful sanctuary with the stained glass windows, the weathered stone, and the old wood trim. The sanctuary becomes simply an attractive setting for the personal expression of their love for each other. The marriage itself is at best a social contract that could just as well be formalized before the justice of the peace except for the lack of ambiance in his chambers.

The secular press as well as the religious press raise questions and bring criticisms about church symbols, values, traditions, persons, and ideas once considered "holy" or "sacred" in our communities of faith. For many members of the church, these symbols,

¹P. Berger, *A Rumor of Angels: Modern Society and the Rediscovery of the Supernatural* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co., 1969), 98.

² *Newsweek Interactive Boards*, "Religion: The Meaning of the Holy Spirit: Your Take," 8 April 1998: from New4911, Message-id:1998040816470501.MAA12038@ladder01.news.aol.com).

values, traditions, persons, and ideas gradually lose their place in the practice of their faith.

We struggle to even understand the words or concepts we formerly could use in everyday conversation.

The pastoral team at Trinity Church in Columbus, Ohio, ‘retreated’ to Indianapolis for the NCAA ‘March Madness’ basketball playoffs. The ubiquitous guy with orange hair and a homemade ‘John 3:16’ sign was under the basket at the other end of the court. Seated directly behind the pastoral team were two well-dressed couples debating what the ‘John 3:16’ sign meant. Reduced to guessing, one thought it must be an ad for a new restaurant in town. The others dissed that idea since ‘who would send someone out with orange hair and a hand-drawn sign to advertise anything?’ Another thought the ‘John 3:16’ sign might be a signal to someone to meet at the John on the third floor, stall 16. Talk about clueless. They were totally in the dark why anyone would be holding a sign with those words on it.¹

Jay Leno periodically does “man-on-the-street” interviews. One night he asked questions about the Bible. “Can you name one of the Ten Commandments?” he asked two college-age women. One replied, “Freedom of speech?” Leno then asked the other student: “Complete this sentence: Let he who is without sin . . .” “Have a good time” was her response. Leno then turned to a young man and asked, “Who, according to the Bible, was eaten by a whale?” The confident answer was “Pinocchio.”²

The effect of this is also felt in society at large where the flag becomes a garment to wear and honesty and integrity are now optional. We are forced to look back to the World War II generation to study concepts such as honor while movements towards euthanasia, abortion, and genetic planning bring into question the sanctity of life itself.

The Challenge to Faith in God

Where do we go to find safety and security in our lives? Where do we look for happiness and well-being? Where do we turn to make critical decisions in our lives? The

¹ Leonard Sweet, *soulTsunami* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 45.

² Ibid., 60.

religious orientation formerly found worldwide has been replaced by a secular mind-set towards what works, what can be verified by our senses, and what can be explained by human thought and reason.

We are challenged to “live in a world that is trying not just to find out what it’s like to live, not under conditions of zero gravity, but under conditions of zero morality. What were once seen as stone tablets coming down from the mountain are now seen as sand castles built along the seashore.”¹

In this world “faith” is severely tested. It is no small task to grasp hold upon the teachings and values of our parents, teachers, and pastors and use them to guide our lives and inform our choices

Where the role of institutionalized religion has been diminished, where much that was once considered sacred in our lives has now been discarded, we find that many “individuals increasingly look on their lives without the benefit of a religious interpretation.”²

Faith in God is eroded both from within and without, “from outside the Church, popular psychological attempts to explain away belief, and from within the Church, a subjective and experience-centered ‘faith’ unintentionally conspire together to sap the solidities of biblical belief.”³

¹Ibid., 133.

²Berger, *A Rumor of Angels*, 108.

³David Lyon, *The Steeple’s Shadow* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 150.

The end result of this erosion is that once-dynamic church institutions no longer have transforming power in their communities. Instead of being a radical and vibrant social entity that shatters and resets social boundaries, the church has in many ways become captive to the surrounding culture.

The Individual as the Hub of Life

Another effect of secularization we see in our neighborhoods is that the individual has become the hub of life. We have changed from a community-based way of life to one based on the skills, interests, and choices of the individual.

Our lives do not revolve around a sense of oneness with or accountability to the people in our actual neighborhood or even our own church. In personal matters we feel accountable only to our self. In spiritual matters we feel accountable only to God.

We commute to work sharing the road with countless strangers. If we recognize someone in another car it is an unusual experience. We purchase products at large stores and warehouses where we rarely learn the names of the people who serve us or even ever see them again.

We talk to our parents, brothers, and sisters occasionally on the phone, but a full reunion of parents, grown children, and grandchildren may happen once in a decade. A family reunion with all the cousins, aunts, and uncles may occur once in a lifetime.

The groups we belong to and the activities we engage in are entirely based on personal choice with the only limitations being imposed by the needs of our spouse and children who are still at home.

Where once the church stood at the hub of life now man himself stands there. Newbigin talks about how

the Church was the centre of the mediaeval town because the Christian religion provided the overarching ideas within which all the different areas of human life were understood and managed. This is no longer so. The different areas of human thought and life constitute different worlds, governed by concepts of their own. Men may be neighbours in the same town and yet live effectively in two different worlds, which hardly meet. If they cultivate adjacent garden plots they may perhaps share for an hour or two a week the single world of horticulture; but if, like the growing multitudes that inhabit new housing developments, they live in apartments, even that is denied them. Their conversation is by telephone, their entertainment by radio and television, their visits are by motor-car, and if they have a lift they do not even meet their neighbours on the staircase. Locality has been abolished. Neighbourhood is no longer a word that refers to a place. Man is no longer a neighbour; he is at best the point of intersection of two or three unrelated worlds.¹

This community of the individual reorders our world and replaces the traditional ties that formerly existed between a person, their faith, and their church.

Personal "Angst"

"The world isn't working. Things are unraveling, and most of us know it."² This feeling from within drives us on to search for what will work in our age. With the assumption that nothing is absolute we are willing to relentlessly debunk and tear down the values, norms, and truths of our parents. Everything in our personal world continues in a state of flux. We recognize that even what seems real for us today may well be discarded tomorrow.

It is really no surprise then to find that secular men and women have experienced a loss of personal meaning in their lives. We know that we do not live in a coherent world. Many philosophies are debated around us, yet it seems so hard to find a core belief that integrates all the realities of our life and our world. We often are at a loss to make

¹Newbigin, 106-107.

²Jim Wallis, "Restoring the Soul of Politics," in *Nourishing the Soul*, ed. Anne Simpinkson et al. (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1995), 252.

sense of even the basic questions pertaining to the nature of human existence.

“Sometimes it seems as if all the words and signs that make up our conceptual framework and provide us with our basic system of distinctions are dissolving before our eyes.”¹

Psychology, psychiatry, psychoanalysis, and other therapies have developed over the course of the last century in an attempt to address this loss of meaning in our lives. Cults also work to fill this void. Unless we are able to find a sense of meaning for our lives we begin to lose our hope and optimism for the future.

When faced with the primary responsibility of giving meaning to our own lives, when challenged to find our own values, secular man often experiences a sense of loss, of loneliness, of despair.

This personal “angst,” this sense of despair, has worked its way deeply into the psyche of secular people. On the outside we may look strong, aggressive, and in full charge of our own lives but within we struggle to keep our balance as we look into the void of meaninglessness that under girds our philosophical outlook on life.

Renewed Interest in Spirituality

Many leading thinkers in the field of secularization felt that religion would ultimately be removed entirely as the currents of secularization flowed to full tide.

Acquavia said that

from the religious point of view, humanity has entered a long night that will become darker and darker with the passing of the generations and of which no end can yet be seen. It is a night in which there seems to be no place for a conception of God, or for

¹Leszek Kolakowski, *Modernity on Endless Trial* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1990), 70.

a sense of the sacred, and ancient ways of giving significance to our own existence, of confronting life and death, are becoming increasingly untenable.¹

The logical endpoint for the philosophy of secularism would certainly seem to go in that direction and yet human behavior often defies logic. James Kelly, an Episcopalian atheist said, “We love all the incense, the stained glass windows, the organ music, the vestments, and all of that. It’s drama. It’s aesthetics. It’s the ritual. That’s neat stuff. I don’t want to give all that up just because I don’t believe in God.”²

Today we find that in spite of the secularizing trends found in society there is a tremendous renewal of interest in spirituality. Where once it was thought that secularization would eliminate religion as a potent force in our modern world now it is recognized that spirituality has a key role to play in our personal and corporate lives. William Wishard, president of World Trends Research, contends that we are “in the midst of the most significant spiritual search our country has ever known. This search is seen in the resurgent fundamentalism, in New Age spirituality, in the interest in Eastern thought and religions, and in the rise of cults such as Heaven’s Gate. It’s seen in TV shows such as ‘The X-Files.’ . . . It’s seen in those who look to technology such as artificial intelligence for some higher state of being.”³ These trends show us that “society is not disinterested in God; society is disinterested in the institutionalized church.”⁴

¹Sabino Acquavia, *The Decline of the Sacred in Industrial Society* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1979), 202.

²James Kelly, as quoted in *Current Thoughts and Trends* 14 (April 1998): 20.

³William Van Dusen Wishard, “Economic Man and Environmental Man,” *Vital Speeches of the Day* (15 May 1997): 459.

⁴Jeff Woods, *Congregational Megatrends* (Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 1996), 88.

Leonard Sweet, dean of the School of Divinity at Duke University, said, “If the chapel at which I serve were to offer a program on ‘Spirituality,’ the room would be full. If the same program were to be entitled ‘Religion,’ the room would be empty.”¹ And he adds, “This huge spiritual hunger does not automatically bode well for organized religion or translate into an interest in the church.”² Sweet says, “Postmoderns are anti-religious but deeply spiritual Say “I’m a Christian” to these pilgrims, and they flee for their lives. Say “I’m a disciple of Jesus,” and they gather ‘round to hear more. Postmoderns have stars in their eyes about Jesus and the stomach for a fight about Christianity.”³

Dimitri Ehrlich talks with contemporary musicians about the role that spirituality plays in their lives and in the making of their music.

I don’t have any allegiance to an organized religion; I have an allegiance to the gifts that I find for myself in those religions.⁴ Jeff Buckley

I’m a very religious person. I just don’t worship at any particular shrine.⁵ Robyn Hitchcock

Secularization has resulted in a decline of institutionalized religion, a loss of the sacred from our lives, and has challenged our faith in God. Yet when we experience the fear, loneliness, and angst that comes from having to authenticate our own lives and existence, we want and need something more. Many recognize spirituality as a far

¹Sweet, *soulTsunami*, 47.

²Ibid., 420.

³Leonard Sweet, *Aquachurch* (Loveland, CO: Group, 1999), 41.

⁴Dimitri Ehrlich, *Inside the Music; Conversations with Contemporary Musicians about Spirituality, Creativity, and Consciousness* (Boston: Shambhala, 1997), 157.

⁵Ibid., 220.

superior ground of being than self. Stripped of traditional means of religious support we are even more eager to find rest for the spiritual ache within. Sweet describes this dichotomy well when he says,

As a church leader, I am living through an era of institutional decline and degradation some are calling the 'Second Great Depression.' As a historian of American religion and culture, I am privileged to live in one of the greatest spiritual awakenings in American history, a time some are calling America's 'Fifth Great Awakening.' What irony that in the midst of a spiritual heat wave in the culture, in the church it's a deep freeze.¹

The Effect of Secularization on the Church

An Example from England

The Anglican Church in England presents an excellent example of how a church can go from a position of power and prestige to one of irrelevancy.

Tower and Coxon blame 'three secularizations for this dismal state of affairs. First, in pre-Tudor times, clergy were an estate of the realm, operating in many spheres of life, and were nationally influential. But during the Tudor period, their social reach was reduced, leaving them only with a firm hold on education. Second, until 1837, clergy still kept a foothold in the class structure, maintaining their balance by their landowning associations and educational influence. The Victorian secularization saw new forms of capitalist finance tip the balance of power away from the land, while new legislation prised education from their grasp. The Church of England was demoted to denominational status, and subordinated to society. The third, contemporary secularization is marked by further contraction, as the church is no longer in any sense a central voluntary organization, but rather subsists on the social fringe. If the clergy had an authentic place within the occupational structure, they do not now.'²

The church loses its social influence, then its educational control, then its financial security, and ends up "subsisting on the social fringe." What happened to the

¹Sweet, *soulTsunami*, 149.

²Lyon, 129.

Episcopal Church in England is a microcosm of what is happening to churches worldwide. “We must accept that the traditional place of the institutional church in American society is dying, and with it the institutional church itself.”¹

A Smaller Piece of the Pie: The Compartmentalization of Religion

At one time the mantle of religion covered all of life. All that we saw and possessed was considered a gift of God. All that we celebrated was in honor of God. The purpose of education was to learn more of God. The sciences explained the natural laws of God. The State served at the will of God. Our health was cared for at the direct intervention of God. All aspects of our social, political, and religious lives were ordered by revelations from God. Where we came from and where we were going were explained to us by God in his word. Religion was at the core of our lives and extended in every direction.

In our secular age, the church, while it may be viewed as important, fills just one compartment of our busy and hectic life. We allow religion to meet the spiritual needs we experience in our lives but politics, education, social obligations, and philosophical points of view are free to grow and develop apart from the control or direction of religion. Each has its own sphere of influence and control.

For ages into our past, religion has been the warp and woof of our lives, but now it has been “converted from the keystone which holds together the social edifice into one

¹Mike Regele, *Death of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 20.

department within it, and the idea of a rule of right is replaced by economic expediency as the arbiter of policy and the criterion of conduct.”¹

The consequences of this have dramatically changed the life of the church and the working of its mission with the result that “establishment religion now looks back nostalgically at a wonderful past and looks forward anxiously at a frightening future.”²

Privatization of Religion

The rapper Prince Be said to Dimitri Ehrlich, “I’m not gonna downplay organized religion because it makes a lot of sense for someone who doesn’t know anything I pretty much like to make my own religion.”³ “Making one’s own religion” has become more than a cottage industry.

Lyon uses the expression “Religion on the Edge of Society.” Here he explores the marginalization of religion. “The forces of modernity are said to push the realm of feeling, symbol and the spiritual to the edge of society. Religion is unwelcome at the centre of things (unless it can be appropriated for ‘centre’ purposes), and thus finds what remaining foothold it can at the periphery--in the private sphere.”⁴

Wilson also talks about the privatization of religion. He says that in a secularized society

¹Richard Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (New York: Mentor, 1953), 6.

²Sweet, *soulTsunami*, 149.

³Ehrlich, *Inside the Music*, 225.

⁴Lyon, 58.

Religion becomes privatized. In a consumer society it becomes just another consumer good, a leisure-time commodity no longer affecting the centres of power or the operation of the system--even at the level of social control, socialization, and the organization of the emotions and of motivations. Religion becomes a matter of choice, but whatever religion is chosen is of no consequence to the operation of the social system.¹

It should come as no real surprise that limiting religion to the private sphere has weakened the church as an institution. Lyon talks about the additional problems that develop when members accept this concept of the "privatization" of religion.

Over time it is accepted, more or less reluctantly, that the Church has only a very narrow sphere of activity, and that we inhabit a world where folk generally have no time for religion. Church is a kind of relic from yesteryear, maintaining itself by bingo drives and scout-troups, or by adopting new technologies of TV and video in order to attract interest via leisure-time entertainment. The actual claims and demands of the Church's founder, Jesus Christ, have fallen on hard times. The loss of the Church's social position has resulted in a loss of nerve among today's Christians.²

This loss of nerve has debilitating results on the mission of the church. Members and nonmembers alike question the significance of the institutional church for our modern world.

Insignificance

As religion is given a smaller and smaller piece of the pie, as religion is only allowed to work within a portion of our personal lives, it is not surprising that the personal religious choices we make are viewed as having minimal impact on anyone else at our work or in our community. Brian Wilson writes that the course which social

¹Brian Wilson, *Contemporary Transformations of Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 277.

²Lyon, 2.

development has run which makes “society, and not the community, the primary locus of the individual’s life has shorn religion of its erstwhile function in the maintenance of social order.”¹ He says that “although nominally religious tolerance per se appears to have grown, paradoxically, the freedom to subscribe to the ‘religion of your choice’ is available on the implicit assumption that that choice has no particular social significance.”² Yale Professor Louis Dupre said,

The West appears to have said its definitive farewell to a Christian culture. . . . Our secular colleagues are happy to recognize the debt our civilization owes to the Christian faith to the extent that the faith, having been absorbed by culture itself, has become simply another cultural artifact. Christianity has become a historical factor subservient to a secular culture rather than functioning as the creative power it once was.³

So we find that the fact that we are Seventh-day Adventists, that we worship on Saturdays, that we will not work or take tests on our Sabbath, is no longer viewed as threatening to other churches or people in our community. It is simply a personal choice and will obviously affect no one else. Our children can go to a public high school, make the varsity basketball team, and when they tell the coach that they cannot play on Friday night, the coach simply smiles, affirms their desire to follow their spiritual beliefs, and goes about his business on Friday night without them. People who are using the courts to force the removal of manger displays from public property are being told that these

¹Wilson, *Contemporary Transformations of Religion*, 47.

²Wilson, *Religion in Sociological Perspective*, 155.

³Louis Dupre, “Seeking Christian Interiority: An Interview with Louis Dupre,” *Christian Century* (16 July 1997): 654.

displays are void of any religious meaning or symbolism; they are completely secular in their function.

Lyon expands on this theme by writing that

unlike previous times, and unlike many non-advanced societies, the warp and woof of social life contains little explicit reference to religion, and is held together only by rational contract and bureaucratic rules. Christianity, which was in several important respects the midwife of modernity, is forsaken or simply forgotten. The cultural capital it once provided has been squandered and allowed to dwindle into insignificance.

Some church groups have tried to maintain their identity by thinking they could remove themselves from the effect of secularization. There are Adventist groups who have gone back to the farm in a very literal sense for this very purpose. They live in rural communities on somewhat communal terms. Their interaction with their local communities is limited. Their contact with the larger social fabric of North America is also minimal.

Others have gone before them in the attempt to hold on to a way of life that is largely gone from our country. The Amish of northern Indiana are just one example of how a particular way of life can be preserved. The cost of this approach is the ability to share the gospel with the secularized communities surrounding them. The power of the gospel does not appear to be a vibrant force flowing from these communities to transform the world around them. The attempt to remove ourselves from the effect of secularization keeps us from having a significant impact in the world of secular people. By removing ourselves from society we risk becoming curators of museums rather than prophets of

¹Lyon, 2.

change; but when we do stay in society our lives are often viewed as nothing more than an interesting personal choice rather than the trumpet of truth to a dying world.

Outdated Structures

The new wine of the gospel must be poured into new wineskins as it is served to each succeeding generation. The secularized people we face each day are no more interested in working through outdated religious structures than in driving to work in a horse and buggy. There has been a continental drift of the soul whereby spirituality is less creedal, less propositional, more relational, and more sensory¹ Do our structures reflect this? Newbigin asks the question,

What can the parish church be in this new concrete city? Even if its spire is still discernible between the cliffs of concrete, glass and stainless steel, and the cross on top distinguishable amid the forest of television aerials, what can it be except the centre of another little, separate world for those who have the special interest called religion. It is in this new situation into which the process of secularization has thrust us that the sharpest questions have been posed about the traditional structures of congregational life. The structure, which we have inherited, appears to be neither relevant to the life of a secularized society, nor true to the biblical picture of the Church as a missionary community. What does it mean, in terms of the local congregation, to be God's pilgrim people in a secularized world?²

While congregational structures may inhibit the flow of the gospel to our communities, administrative structure may impede the work and life of the congregation. In the Seventh-day Adventist Church, North American Conference boundaries were literally determined by the limitations of horse and buggy travel at the turn of the century. The five layers of Church administration--church, conference, union, division, general

¹ Albert Borgmann, *Crossing the Postmodern Divide* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1992).

²Newbigin, 106-107.

conference--were developed when it took months to communicate with overseas fields. Many of our worship styles and lifestyle practices also come from a specific point in denominational time yet what gives structure and comfort to our lives may appear as a closed door to the unchurched around us.

In September of 1939 Adolf Hitler's army was thrown against the country of Poland. Thomas Boomersshine compares the response of the Polish army to Hitler's Blitzkrieg with the response of the church to the changes that have occurred in communication.

Hitler sent 14 armored divisions across the Polish border. The Polish army was committed to the traditions of the cavalry and sent 12 cavalry brigades against the German tanks. In the tradition of the great cavalry divisions of the Prussian army, the Polish cavalry was molded for warfare as it had been fought in the 18th and 19th century. When the divisions of German armor came streaming across the border, therefore, the Polish generals sent wave after wave of cavalry, men mounted on horses, against the tanks. The battle lasted about three weeks. The fields of Poland were choked with the bodies of horses and brave men who had gone into battle with a strategy formed for warfare in a previous period.

Today the Church goes into spiritual battle in an electronic culture, seeking to communicate the gospel in a new cultural environment. In a culture dominated by television, films, CDs, and computers, the Church continues to pursue its strategies that were developed for a culture in which books, journals, and rhetorical addresses were the most powerful means of mass communication.

Like the Polish cavalry, (mainline Protestant churches) are dying in this culture . . . empty and abandoned Protestant churches (strewn across) America's landscape like the horses and men of the Polish cavalry on the fields of Poland.¹

What traditions are we committed to that will only lead to our church disintegrating in discordancy under the weight of their burden?

¹Thomas E. Boomersshine Sr., "The Polish Cavalry and Christianity in Electronic Culture," *Journal of Theology* 95 (1995): 97-98.

More change has occurred in the last hundred years than ever before in the history of humanity. What is our response? The thinking, attitudes, language, organizations, and institutions of the church must respond to these changes or risk becoming irrelevant and outdated.

The question we must be willing to face is, what are the structures that would be most effective in taking the Seventh-day Adventist message to the world in the twenty first century? We must be willing to pour out time and energy into reinventing the forms, structures, and thinking of the church. Our success in doing this will affect not just our ability to reach the unchurched with the gospel but also our ability to retain the members who already attend our churches.

A Historical Progression

To better understand the nature of secularization today let us step back for a moment and look at the structures of society that preceded secularization. Harvard Theologian Harvey Cox uses Tribe, Town, and City to represent three stages of development in how people think about and express their spirituality.¹

Tribe to Town to City

The tribal era finds religion to be an experience of the power and truth of God. For the tribe every event came under the auspices of religion. The head of the tribe stood as the religious leader and the head of state. Tribal leaders set social boundaries, settled disputes, and gave explanations for the meaning of life, the mysteries of nature, and the expectations of the gods.

¹Cox, 26-31.

The era of the town takes the experience of religion, structures it, organizes it, and institutionalizes it. Churches, priests, pastors, theologies, and systems of belief come into existence. God and truth are explained in a rational and logical way.

The worldview provided by the church is the basis for everything that happened in the town. Civil law was an application of the moral law found in the Bible. Holidays were primarily spiritual celebrations. The church evaluated philosophical proposals as well as scientific findings. The church took on the care for the sick and the poor. The church defined marriage, divorce, and family life. The church provided for education and set social boundaries. Even the state was held morally accountable to the church.

The era of the city challenges the place and role of religion. Religion must earn its way by demonstrating functional value rather than ontological proofs. For many it is swept to the fringe of life where religion exists as a compartmentalized personal reality. The “modern state” and the “scientific enterprise” assume most of the roles which religion held in the age of the town. The law of the land now holds the church accountable in the courts of the country.

In the city Christianity is just one of many institutions attempting to shape the worldview of our society. The church still has influence but its once dominant role of integrating the many varied aspects of society is gone.

Structures of Society

Dr. Oosterwal traces out this progression from “Tribe,” to “Town,” to “City” as it appears in the social structures, the economic life, the social relationships, the ways of

thinking, the values, and the religion of society in each era.¹ The next several pages reflect on this progression that is summarized in table 1.

The small tribal group of Abraham and Lot, their families and servants, stands in contrast with the class-structured, integrated community of Jerusalem in Jesus' day. Both are markedly different from the individual living in a townhouse in downtown East Lansing.

"Economic life," in the nomadic days of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob depended upon finding adequate pastures for the flocks. Jesus and his father Joseph depended upon the exchange of wood products for other necessities of life as they ran their carpentry business in Nazareth. Today multinational corporations harvest wood in Indonesia and ship the veneers to Mexico where they are glued to a plywood base. The plywood is then routed to another factory in Mexico where it is cut to size and then sent by rail to a shipping port where the wood is loaded on a freighter heading for Copenhagen. Once there, it is trucked to a local plant for final assembly. When it has been assembled into a bookshelf it is put on another truck that brings it to Lubeck, Germany, where it is sold to "Gastarbeiters" from Turkey and taken home to their apartment.

Social relationships in Joseph's day were based on kinship. In Jesus' day a person was born into the primary groups that would define his or her opportunities and responsibilities in life. Today it is the individual who chooses the groups to which he or she will commit and belong. We stay a member as long as we want and can leave without risk or consequence whenever we choose.

¹Oosterwal, Syllabus for Secularization Seminar, 34.

TABLE 1
TRIBE TO TOWN TO CITY

Tribe	Town	City
<i>Social Structure</i>		
Small Scale undifferentiated egalitarian closed community isolated	Part of Larger Whole differentiated class structured open community integrated	Large & Complex compartmentalized institutionalized open society differentiated
<i>Economic Life</i>		
Food Gathering hunting, fishing cultivating self-sufficient undeveloped technology	Agrarian dependent on land subsistence farming labor-intensive pre-industrial technology	Urban, Industrial market oriented work specialization capital intensive advanced technology
<i>Social Relations</i>		
Based on Kinship group oriented personal, reciprocal	Based on Primary Group group-oriented personal	Contractual individual oriented impersonal, technical
<i>Way Of Thinking</i>		
Supernatural holistic inclusivistic concrete	Looking for Answers integrated exclusivistic concrete	Functional/Pragmatic analytical, rational exclusivistic abstract; scientific
<i>Values</i>		
Traditional absolute	Conservative absolute	Constantly Changing relativistic/temporary
<i>Religion</i>		
God in Everything central to all life integrated	God-Man Relationship organized, institutions differentiated	Man Determined privatized compartmentalized

In the Old Testament God says, “I send the rain and the pestilence, I send blessing and destruction, I send life and death. The men and women of the Old Testament were comfortable with viewing God as the sender of all that was good in life as well as the sender of all that was bad. In Adventist theology we have preferred, in many instances, to say “God allowed . . .” when describing death, destruction, or pestilence. We have felt the need to integrate the love of God found in the New Testament with the wrath of God that is so often found in the Old Testament.

When the children of Israel received the ten commandments at Mt. Sinai they accepted these laws as binding and absolute. The ten commandments were considered as absolute in Ellen White’s day as they were in the time of Moses or the time of Paul and have formed the base for Western values. Today, we question whether any value is absolute. We want to test each law for its current value. If we do not see a value as relevant to our lives we are quite willing to discard it entirely. Ted Turner was reported on the news recently to have said, “If I were going to pick the 10 most important rules to live by I don’t think I would squander one on the question of adultery.” In the age of the city, people choose their own values.

In the days of the patriarchs, prophets, and kings; religion lay at the core of life. All flowed from it and revolved around it. God, the supernatural, was a part of everything they touched, thought, smelled, and felt.

In the age of the town people were primarily concerned with the God-man relationship as it was expressed through divine revelations. To describe and define the nature of that relationship was paramount to the church and was reflected in its

theologies. The worldview of Christian people was then grounded in this theological understanding of God's relationship with man.

Today, in the secular city, we chose what role religion will play in our lives. If we do not like what we see with one church or religion we move on to inspect another. If necessary we create our own.

Life here in East Lansing bears little relationship to that of nineteenth century small-town America. It bears even less relationship to life as it was lived by the heroes and heroines of the Bible.

Understanding the changes that have become a part of our society is essential if we are going to bring the gospel with transforming power to the communities where we live and worship.

Factors Contributing to Secularization

While secularization is a phenomena that is broad and multifaceted a number of major factors have contributed to its rise and spread.

Science and Technology

Science has played a key role in the spread of secularization. When science started to provide effective fertilizers and pest controls, many farmers stopped depending on prayer as the primary tool to ensure a successful harvest. As science has developed drugs that heal diseases formerly untreatable, most patients now turn first to their doctor for help rather than going to their priest, their pastor, or their God. As science developed a method of dating the age of skeletons and rock formations, many church members stop believing in a young Earth. When science proposed a theory of origins, many Christians stopped believing in creation; some even stopped believing in God. Science builds up

credibility with all of us in the areas where it touches our lives and makes them better. As a result, many are led to question the role the Bible should play in their life and thinking.

To defend its intellectual turf religion has fought pitched battles with science. The result has been the exodus of many scientists and intellectuals from Christian churches. Others may remain in the church but with their confidence in the church severely weakened.

A professor once told our class this story. He was traveling in Africa with a national worker. They came upon a man who was badly hurt. He said to his companion, "Quick, we must get medical help!" His companion replied, "No, first we must kneel and pray." The professor replied, "But, he's dying!" But the national worker insisted, "First we must kneel and pray."

Which of these responses would represent the biblical world? What did Elijah do when faced with a dead boy on the bed? What did Paul do when the boy fell out of the window? What do we do today?

Where do we turn first in a crisis, science or religion? Science has made greater inroads in our lives than we realize. Areas formerly the domain of religion are now the domain of science and we do not even notice that the change has taken place.

In *The Steeple's Shadow*, David Lyon states, "Modern science and technology are in many ways the main carriers of the secular outlook. The spirit of rational calculation, typical of science and technology, has invaded the world of commerce, politics, education and even some areas of private life as well."¹

Lyon goes on to say that this spirit of rational calculation, this

¹Lyon, 77.

intellectualization, a process Weber said had been going on for millennia, in the modern world takes the form of science and technology. This does not mean that all know more about life (because more people are specialists). But it does mean that in principle there are no incalculable forces. All things theoretically, may be mastered through calculation. There is less recourse to magic. The sacred, if that is associated with the unknowable, occupies diminishing space.¹

The impact of science and technology is not limited to the industrialized, urban-dominated countries of the West, "Even in the most primitive areas the bus, the radio and the bulldozer move inexorably in, and when the necessities of world war or world commerce dictate it, anything from the jungles of Papua to the ice fields of the Antarctic can be swiftly taken over and incorporated in the single entity which is the human civilization of today."²

Science and technology provide the base for a number of the other major factors contributing to the rise and spread of secularization. Urbanization, industrialization, and institutionalization would all be impossible without the theories and tools provided by science and technology.

While our lives and world have been dramatically changed by the work of science and technology what lies ahead appears to dwarf the change caused by the discoveries of the twentieth century. In the area of computing Scientists are talking about the ability to transfer an entire personality and mind from one human being to another.

No such mental copying is now possible because the memory storage capacities of computers are immeasurably smaller than that of the human brain. The most powerful personal computers can only store some 200 to 500 million bytes – or characters – of data. . . . Yet the human mind is generally considered to possess the equivalent of a trillion bytes. . . . Every year, data storage capacity roughly doubles and its price halves. This means that unless some fundamental obstacle is

¹Ibid., 37.

²Newbigin, 12.

encountered, it will be possible before the middle of the next century at least to store – if not to reproduce entirely – a human personality electronically.¹

Biotechnology, genetic engineering, artificial life, bionic medicine, nanotechnology – these are the flagship technologies of the 21st century. Postmodernity is a culture of unnatural acts and highly contrived processes. Scientists are now back to non-backroom conversations about ‘utopian eugenics.’ What was once unthinkable is now the usual. Biotechnopia is a world created through the synthesis of biology and technology. We are leaping into a new world biologically and technologically. Yet we are crawling backward into the caves of an old world philosophically and spiritually. Technology is outrunning our theology and ethics, leaving us panting, helpless anachronisms.²

The pace of change caused by science and technology is continuing to accelerate and will have continuing repercussions on the life and mission of the church in the twenty first century.

Industrialization

The industrial revolution provided an increasing number of jobs in factory settings. These jobs revolved around the use of advanced technology. As long as the worker did his part, he knew he could rely on his machine to do its part. He was not dependent on the vagaries of nature as the farmer was. While the farmer might pray if the rains failed, the factory worker swears if his machine malfunctions.

Tremendous wealth resulted from the industrial revolution. Unfortunately, that wealth was often not shared. A great gap developed between the working class and the rich. The owners of the factories paid as little as they could while causing men, women

¹Adrian Berry, *The Next 500 Years: Life in the Coming Millennium* (New York: W.H. Freeman, 1996), 86-87.

²Sweet, *soulTsunami*, 237.

and children to work mercilessly. The church rarely took the side of these abused workers, choosing rather to support the wealthy owners.

One result was the development of new political parties such as communism and socialism. These parties defended the rights of the poor that the church had often ignored. As these parties threatened the status quo, Western democracies passed civil legislation to enforce justice for the working classes. Again the church was not involved on the side of the workers. Many left the church because they found more help outside of the church than from within.

What labor unions and political parties did for our parents and grandparents, grass-roots initiatives and community groups are doing today. In both cases they are drawing people away from religion as a place to make an immediate impact on the world they live in.

Sociological studies show that “where heavy industry is found, religious institutions tend to lose support proportionately to the rest of the population, especially when relative ‘working class’ density is high.”¹

While industrialization has provided society with increasingly high levels of creature comforts, it has also broken the bond that existed between worker and church in the pre-industrial age.

Industrialization may conjure up images of smokestacks, factory workers, and polluted skies but those are only one of it’s many manifestations. In reality it refers more

¹David Martin, *The Dilemmas of Contemporary Religion* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1978), 2, 3.

to the high level of worker specialization, international economic integration, and the free flow of capital to any part of the world.

Industrialization is a key component that has allowed our world to become horizontally integrated in ways that were never before possible. One simple example is the Ukrainian Big Mac where the beef patties come from Hungary, the lettuce from Ukraine, the bun from Russia, the pickles and special sauce from Germany, the sesame seeds from Mexico, and the cheese from Poland.¹

The effect on each of us is that we have increased personal freedom, more choices, greater mobility, and fewer ties to the local community and its institutions.

Urbanization

Leonard Sweet recalls traveling upriver to “a remote Amazonian village, where the entire community gathered to watch the one TV hooked up to a generator, their eyes glued to the number one television program in the world: BayWatch.”² He writes,

It is hard to underestimate the unprecedented nature of this global civilization. We have an interdependent, interlocked economic system in which everybody in the world participates. Global integration is becoming almost universal, with the Net the main medium. Everyone on the planet is participating in the same images and metaphors, even lauding the same heroes All this can only be described as unprecedented.³

The place where this global civilization is most visible is the city. A hundred years ago, 70 to 80 percent of the population was in the country and small towns. Today, our lives revolve around the city. Even those who live in small towns often commute to

¹*Details* (August 1997): 39.

²Sweet, *soulTsunami*, 132.

³*Ibid.*, 121.

the city for work and for shopping. The small town is no longer a self-contained sphere of social life. The city has changed our living environment, our workplace, our family's activities, and all the attending relationships.

Lesslie Newbigin notes the tremendous impact the city has on our lives today when he writes, "In every country the direction and the pace of human life are set by the big cities, and these constitute now a single network of interdependent thought and activity, linked together by innumerable commercial, political and cultural relationships, so that a movement in any part immediately affects every other."¹

Unfortunately for the church, one result of urbanization seems to be a distinct drop in the participation people experience with religious institutions.

There is proportionately less overt religious practice in big cities than in more sparsely populated regions. Jobs and careers, which require movement away from stable religious communities, especially when they have a territorial base, hasten the breakup of those communities. Greater culture-contact, which is a frequent effect of such movement, opens people to new ideas and lifestyles, and can lead to a radical questioning of once-accepted verities. Churches tend to be split into a variety of denominations and sects, thus weakening any visible unity, which may have been present with a single established institution. And lastly, the churches are themselves cut loose from involvement in the processes of justice, legitimation, the state, social control, education and welfare. At the same time, individual's everyday lives are more compartmentalized, which encourages further differences in personal religion and thus amplifies the disintegration process within the institutions.²

The interwoven web of life experienced in the small town of yesteryear has been replaced by the compartmentalization of each aspect of life in the city. Religion has suffered severely in this changeover. "The marginalization of religion in the modern

¹Newbigin, 12.

²Martin, 2, 3.

world--the uncoupling of Church and society,"¹ is certainly one of the by-products of urbanization.

Institutionalization

Industrialization brought people together in more concentrated numbers to work in the factories. The urbanization that followed cut loose both men and women from the traditional sources of work, existence, justice, education, entertainment, recreation, moral leadership, and medical care.

The specialization that was needed to fill these voids brought about the development of new institutions. Lyon describes how "industrialism and capitalism encouraged institutional specialization, thus cutting loose other institutions from the Church."² These newly autonomous institutions now were free to chose their own path and were no longer bound by the traditions or beliefs of the church.

Today, our lives are lived under the umbrella of monolithic institutions that dwarf anything that could even be conceived a hundred years ago. Many work for corporations that have offices and plants in dozens of countries worldwide. Most who live in the industrialized countries live in what have come to be called "welfare states" because of the many ways these countries provide for the physical needs of their citizens. The environmental movement has spawned regulations that reach down to the community level as they attempt to protect wetlands, forests, lakes, and endangered species. The Seventh-day Adventist Church itself has grown to over ten million members with a

¹Lyon, 59.

²Ibid.

global administrative structure to match. Wherever we live in the United States, we must deal with the consequences of this institutionalization of our lives.

The Development of the Modern State

Instead of the church serving as guide or director to the development of these new institutions, this role has gone to the state. One hundred years ago, the state's duty was to protect its citizens and promote trade. Today, the modern state runs many functions formerly cared for by religion.

David Lyon uses the phrase "From Public Morals to Parking Meters"¹ to capture the essence of this transformation. What used to happen in the local community, the setting and enforcing of public morality, now shifted to a bureaucratic, legislative level.

Lyon writes:

As home and work, and work and leisure, were prised apart, so different moralities and different authorities came to govern the separated spheres. The public world was ruled by a new time discipline--clock-watching, the cash-nexus and the bureaucratic authority of 'experts.' The private world, on the other hand, became the realm--as far as personal means and circumstances allowed--of individual choice.²

What has occurred in the area of public morality has been extended into many other areas of our lives. Social boundaries, civil law, health care, marriage/divorce, caring for the poor, the widowed, and the elderly are no longer the primary responsibility of the church, but of the state. Where we once went to the church for care and direction, now we turn to the modern state.

¹Ibid., 54.

²Ibid.

Science and technology, industrialization, urbanization, institutionalization, and the development of the modern state have altered the world we live in and have radically changed the way we live our daily lives.

The Rate of Change

Into this complex mix comes one more factor, the incredible rate at which change in all of these areas is accelerating. Greg Blonder uses the family automobile to bring into perspective the rate at which change is occurring in many parts of our lives

Imagine that the price of automobiles (unlike computers, whose cost and intelligence improve by a factor of two every 30 months) drops exponentially. At US \$200,000, a Rolls Royce is large, expensive, and unaffordable. You'd never even consider a Rolls as the family sedan. But say the Rolls drops in price by a factor of two each year.

After one year, it costs \$100,000 – still out of price, out of mind. In the second year, at \$50,000, the car stays parked in England. In the third year, at \$25,000, you start comparison shopping: the Rolls versus the Taurus. In the fourth year, the kids take one with them to college. After 11 years, the Rolls costs less than \$100.00. Now, instead of renting a car on vacation, you buy a Rolls at the airport and leave it with the recap in lieu of a tip on your return. In 20 years, Rolls Royces cost less than a quarter; they are soon repurposed as ocean breakwaters and highway barriers.¹

Much of what used to be held in high regard in our society has been repurposed as ocean breakwaters and highway barriers. The institutional church is not alone in this respect.

Winston Chen of Solelectron says, "twenty percent of an engineer's knowledge becomes obsolete every year."² Without de-learning obsolete information and pushing to be on the cutting edge in our field we soon find ourselves passed by. This is true whether

¹Greg Blonder, "Faded Genes," *Wired* (March 1995): 107.

²Winston Chen, *Executive Speechwriter Newsletter* 8 (1993): 6.

we are a blue collar worker or whether we work in an information based industry. The speed at which information is disseminated through the internet has only compounded the pressure we are under to keep up.

It is not just the rate of change that is destabilizing but it is often the nature of change as well. "After one of Linus Pauling's papers was heavily criticized at a scientific meeting, another Nobel Laureate, Niels Bohr, said, 'I think we are all agreed that our young colleague's latest theory is crazy: The question is, is it crazy enough to be true?'"¹

Often the nature of change has stood on end previously held beliefs and traditions. Nothing is sacred anymore, whether in the business world, or society at large. So much that was unthinkable a few years ago has already happened that nothing is beyond belief today.

The changes that have occurred in just the last 10 years in the fields of telecommunications and the internet have introduced whole new paradigms that each of us must come to grips with.

That Age of the Machine could count on order, rationality, coherence, and certainty. The Age of the Network can count on none of the above. As we have seen, the basic postmodern paradigms are now chaos, complexity, risk, and uncertainty. Discoveries about 'nonlinear dynamical systems' are destabilizing life, dissolving illusions, and shattering dogmas Is it any wonder that people are shaken and in shock? Is it any wonder that people are finding life confusing, baffling, beyond comprehension? This stressed and strained world of accelerating change, unforgiving competition, where social, economic, and political institutions are being shuffled and rearranged, is a genuine shock to the system.²

¹Sweet, *soulTsunami*, 111.

²*Ibid.*, 111.

A Postmodern Response: A Craving for Community

In response to the shock we feel in our lives from the impact of secularization we are actively searching for new forms of community. We crave a sense of connection that is hard to find in the suburban culture that has grown up around our cities.

Cities have become hot spots again for art, entertainment, food, morphed cultural experiences, and an emerging global culture that prizes information sharing, spiritual growth, community development, and no lawns . . . place where encounters of race, class, and religion take place. In this new urban wave, postmoderns, tired of the sameness of the suburbs, flee either to small towns or to cities . . . People are migrating to small towns and rural areas, especially 'recreational counties' with a recreation and retirement base. Unlike suburbs, where people's lives overlap but don't connect, in small towns they interact and intertwine.¹

As we seek to reestablish a sense of connection with people around us we do so in a way that will allow us to maintain the sense of individual self-determination has come to be seen as an unalienable right in our secular world.

If we have a Christian orientation we will evaluate local congregations based on how they allow us to connect with others rather than on their belief structure or denominational affiliation.

If we have a spiritual orientation we will explore all of what is taking place in our community without fear of delving into something that is new to us or even may have been taboo when we were growing up.

If we have a political orientation we may look for grassroots organizations of various types that allow a personal setting for our own lives to be nurtured.

We are not returning to the communal lives of our forefathers. We are picking and

¹Ibid., 122-123.

choosing from a growing array of options.

There is a sense that our society is draining too much of our own lives from us and we want to reclaim a larger portion for the sake of personal fulfillment. “Do not lions lounge? Do not gulls drift effortlessly on the winds? Do not dolphins play endlessly in the oceans? Are we less deserving than our fellow creatures to partake of the joys of life and the wonders of the planet and human society?”¹

Michael Dertouzos writes that “people of the twenty-first century will find themselves leading a somewhat schizophrenic life characterized by virtual urbanity and physical parochialism.”² We will be “urban villagers – half urban sophisticate, roaming the virtual globe, and half village, spending more time at home and tending to family, friends, and the routines of the neighborhood.”³

This combination of taking urban thinking into a rural setting to satisfy the need for community is one way secular people are responding to the changes brought by secularization.

How the Secular Mind Works

Today we live in an urbanized world of specialized institutions where our economy is driven by cutting-edge technology and we look to science and the state to ensure a prosperous present and a fulfilling future. The differences of where we live, how

¹“Workers of the World Relax: The Leisure Party Manifesto,” *Wired* (Special edition 1995): 109.

²Michael Dertouzos, *What Will Be: How the New World of Information Will Change Our Lives* (San Francisco: Harper Edge, 1996), 280-281.

³*Ibid.*, 305.

we work, and to whom we give our allegiances stand in contrast to that of our forefathers. The values we hold, the way we think about our lives, as well as how we come to decisions stand out in even greater contrast when compared to those of past generations.

Here are five characteristics of how the secular mind thinks that go hand in hand with the secularizing factors we have just explored.

Contingency

The first hallmark of secular thinking is called “contingency.” It is assumed here that every natural phenomenon is caused by other natural phenomena. This leaves no room for God. This leaves no room for any religious explanation of anything that happens in our world or our life. The evolutionary theory is an example of this thinking as it is applied to the question of “origins.” Langdon Gilkey defines contingency as

the sense that what is--the world around us and we ourselves--is the result of causes that are neither necessary, rational, nor purposive. The flow of events, to be sure, may exhibit a proximate order sufficient to maintain us and to allow us to trace out its recurrent habits and so to predict--sufficient, that is, for practical decisions, for science, and for technology. But none of these things that have evolved in time is necessary or intended; they are accidental, and why things either are, or are as they are, are thus mysteries which our minds cannot fathom.¹

Relativity

The second hallmark of secular thinking is called “relativity.” It starts with this assumption. Nothing is absolute! The norms, values, and truths of our parents were tied to their culture, times, and needs. To bind them on us would be bondage. We must search for the norms, values, and truths that will be relevant for our own culture, times, and needs. In relation to relativity, Gilkey says,

¹Langdon Gilkey, *Naming the Whirlwind* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merril, 1969), 40.

For this modern view, all that is pinioned within the flux of passage or of history, determined in large part by all that lies behind it, shaped by all that surrounds it, and to be replaced by what follows. Nothing in nature or history, and so by implication nothing at all that is, is thus “a se,” an unchanging and self-sufficient substance, capable of existing in and by itself and thus exhibiting an essence underived from and so unrelated to the other things that surround it. Nothing anywhere in experience, space, time, or any mode of being is, in that sense, absolute; all is relative to all else and so essentially conditioned by its relevant environment.¹

Temporality

The third hallmark of secular thinking is called “temporality.” Our lives and everything in our world are limited by time and space. We have a beginning and we have an end. There is nothing else. There is no Heaven. There is no Hell. There is also no lasting value from anything we do or say. Our accomplishments are just wisps of smoke, dispersed into the nothingness of time. Death comes to claim us all. Applied to our modern age, Gilkey says,

For moderns, time is the most fundamental structure of all experienced being. All is becoming, all is changing, all is in passage out of the past and into the future, and so all causes and all effects come and go--and all is mortal--and nothing else is real. There is in direct experience nothing else besides creatures which ‘never really are’ and death or perishing claims all creatures.²

Autonomy

The fourth hallmark of secular thinking is called “autonomy.” Man determines his own destiny. Man is accountable to no one else but himself. Using the power of reason, the discipline of science, and the tools of technology, man has no limits. Man creates his own world and makes his own choices. Gilkey sees this fourth hallmark of secular man as

¹Ibid., 48.

²Ibid., 53, 54.

a bit of a balancing out of the first three hallmarks of contingency, relativity, and temporality.

The three faces of the modern secular spirit so far portrayed--contingency, relativism, and temporality--might seem grim indeed were it not for the fourth, which is the source of whatever optimism and courage the modern spirit possesses. Little if any confidence or courage come to modern man from his wider, cosmic environment where, as we have seen, all is blind, relative, and transient. In this sense, he is truly 'on his own,' an alien set within a context that is indifferent and so irrelevant to his own deepest purposes, and whatever hope and meaning he may have must come to him from himself. The fourth category of modern secularity, is, therefore, the autonomy and freedom of man, his inalienable birthright and fortunately, his innate capacity to know his own truth, to decide about his own existence, to create his own meaning, and to establish his own values.¹

Functionalism

The fifth hallmark of secular thinking is called "functionalism." The reasoning goes like this. Truth is what works. Institutionalized religion is not solving our problems; therefore, it is not working. Since it does not work, it is not true. Let us move on to find something that functions, or works better.

Since there is no supernatural being to guide us, since there are no universal absolutes to draw on, since all we know and do will soon pass away, the simple criterion that drives the decisions and vision of secular man is, "Does it work?" Pragmatism is the hallmark of our day.

The secularizing factors of our modern age combined with the changes in how we think about our lives are all a part of the experience we call secularization.

A Postmodern Response: A Craving for Truth/Meaning

This secular way of thinking has provided the necessary base for science to literally reach for the stars. This way of thinking has brought the world together in an

¹Ibid., 57, 58.

ever tightening economic embrace. It has played a central role in the urbanization of our world and of our minds and has helped us to make the transition to the institutions, including the modern state, that loom large in all of our lives. But this way of thinking has left a void in our hearts and in our souls. We crave meaning and truth and find none at its door.

Religion is capable of providing meaning and truth but for much of the twentieth century religion battled this secularized way of thinking, epitomized most easily in the figure of science. Each has seen the other as a threat to the future and has attacked with a vigor that has left blood in the aisles. While these clashes have not gone away a new trend has emerged. Ron Sellers ranks “Increasing Clashes Between Science and Religion” as the #2 global trend in religion; “Increased Cooperation Between Science and Religion” is ranked #3.¹

Ken Wilber feels that this division between the two has caused a “violent schism and rupture in the internal organs of today’s global culture, and this is exactly why many social analysts believe that if some sort of reconciliation between science and religion is not forthcoming, the future of humanity is, at best, precarious.”²

Sweet observes that “since the 1960s, the warring camps of sacred teaching and scientific learning have started knocking on each others’ doors to come out and play. For theologians, the data of truth includes the natural sciences. For scientists, the data of truth

¹Ron Sellers, “Nine Global Trends in Religion,” *The Futurist* (January-February 1998): 21-22.

²Ken Wilber, *The Marriage of Sense and Soul* (New York: Random House, 1998), 4.

includes faith perspectives. Can you find a scientist today who does not believe in spirit?"¹

In some cases scientists have now come to the same conclusion as the theologians, albeit from a distinctly scientific position. Frank Tipler, a scientist, has written a book on the *Physics of Immortality*. In this book he argues for the resurrection of the dead. He claims that this is a "testable physical theory for an omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent God who will one day in the far future resurrect every single one of us to live forever in an abode which is in all essentials the Judeo-Christian heaven."²

Now his theory is tied more to his belief that the universe is collapsing than it is to his belief in the inspiration of the scriptures. He talks about powerful computers capable of detecting the radiation that our lives have left upon the universe. This radiation contains the means by which every thought or deed that has ever occurred can be accessed. It's not exactly your traditional view of the investigative judgement and the second coming but it is worlds removed from previous scientific responses to these Biblical concepts. When has a scientist ever been able to say "If any reader has lost a loved one, or is afraid of death, modern physics says: 'Be comforted. You and they shall live again.'"³

In the field of quantum physics the Bell Effect illustrates the interconnected nature of the universe that bears a close resemblance to Christian thought in the areas of prayer, and the nature of the divine/human relationship.

¹Sweet, *soulTsunami*, 136.

²Frank Tipler, *Physics of Immortality: Modern Cosmology, God and the Resurrection of the Dead* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 1.

³*Ibid.*, 1.

Sometimes a sub-atomic event produces a pair of particles which fly off in different directions. Quantum theory predicts that, from then on, the characteristics of these two particles will be linked, however far apart they go. For example, sub-atomic particles have a characteristic called "spin." If, when the two particles are produced, one of them has a spin of 2 and the other has a spin of -1, throughout their lifetimes their combined spin will always be zero. Now it is possible to change the spin of a particle. If the spin of one of the pair is changed from 1 to -1, quantum theory predicts that the spin of the other will instantaneously change from -1 to 1, even if it is millions of miles away. This is inexplicable by the normal law of causality. According to this, for one even to cause another, information must travel between them. But the theory of relativity says that this cannot happen faster than the speed of light So how is the Bell effect produced? No one knows What happens to a particle in one part of the universe affects a particle in another, far-distant part without any physical cause-and-effect link.¹

The craving for meaning and truth drives from within and is no respecter of persons. New ground is being broken in our secularized age to come to grips with this age old question. This search is rooted primarily in the "I don't know" of the scientist rather than the "Here I stand" of the theologian. Wislawa Szymborska spoke from this perspective when accepting her Nobel prize in 1996.

Whatever inspiration is, it's born from a continuous 'I don't know.' That little phrase 'I don't know' is small, but it flies on mighty wings. It expands our lives to include spaces within us as well as the outer expanses in which our tiny Earth hands suspended. If Isaac Newton had never said to himself, 'I don't know,' the apples in his little orchard might have dropped to the ground like hailstones, and at best he would have stopped to pick them up and gobble them with gusto. Had my compatriot Mari Sklodowska-Curie never said to herself, 'I don't know,' she probably would have wound up teaching chemistry at some private high school for young ladies from good families and ended her days performing this otherwise perfectly respectable job. But she kept on saying, 'I don't know,' and these words led her, not just once but twice, to Stockholm, where restless, questing spirits are occasionally rewarded with the Nobel Prize.²

¹Ernest C. Lucas, "The 'New Science' and the Gospel," in *The Gospel in the Modern World: A Tribute to John Stott*, ed. Martyn Eden and David F. Wells (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 129.

²Wislawa Szymborska, *Poems: New and Collected, 1957-1997* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1998), xiii-xiv.

Restless, questing spirits are searching for meaning and truth but the underpinnings of how they think are still based more in the presuppositions of our secular age than in the presuppositions of the Bible. As they feel they have arrived at something that is true to their understanding of the world they will not readily give it the status of doctrine.

'Dogma' must be approached less from a doctrinal standpoint than from a 'teaching perspective. Postmoderns are drowning in an avalanche of information. They feel the lack of a world of wisdom, rituals, and content. They are curious about strong moral codes and the strictly ordered life. Postmoderns are hungry for 'teaching,' but not for 'doctrine.' . . . Anyone who has spent time around Gen-Xers knows that round-the-clock ear-bendings are part and parcel of everyday life. But 'dogmas' for postmoderns are less back-then 'answers' that can be recited than bone-deep convictions' that can be questioned and explored.¹

There are not many certainties in the world we live in. One that still exists, even in the face of the turbulence of our age, is the certainty that our souls will hunger until they are fed.

The Opportunities Presented by Secularization

We live in a society that bears the imprint of secularization. It is a process changing the world around us and in us. We see the changes in how we think. We see the changes in our way of life. We see how the process of secularization has shaken the institutional church and yet within this very process lie the seeds of hope for the future.

Lyon refers to this when he says,

Secularization is paradoxical and ambiguous. What used to be billed as the 'end of religion' (the breakdown of state/Church collusion) is, as David Martin reminds us, the very 'essence of Christianity'. So from the churches' viewpoint secularization offers fresh opportunities as well as critical challenges. Liberated from the somewhat

¹Sweet, *soulTsunami*, 57.

dubious dependence on state support, the Christian Church once more has the chance to be distinctive in message and practice--and critical of the status quo.¹

The challenges which secularization has brought to the church at times seem overwhelming and yet within these challenges exist opportunities that are unmatched in the history of the Christian church. If we will see and grasp these opportunities then the greatest days of the church may lie ahead.

I have no doubt that God will be in this future, yet I worry deeply about whether my own tribe will be there. The church can lead the move into the new intellectual and technological territory of the soon-to-be Bionomic Age. . . . This is an extraordinary moment in history. . . . God is birthing the greatest spiritual awakening in the history of the church. . . . Is this a great time, or what?²

We Are Forced to Action

In addressing the student body at Harvard University, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn spoke of the necessity of moving to a higher spiritual level.

If the world has not approached its end, it has reached a major watershed in history, equal in history to the turn from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance. It will demand from us a spiritual blaze. . . . This ascension is similar to climbing onto the next anthropological stage. No one on earth has any other way left but – upward.³ St 410:2 quote 16

The church has no way left but upward. Demographics show that “there is not one county in the US that has a higher percentage of churched people than a decade ago.”⁴

¹Lyon, 133.

²Sweet, *soulTsunami*, 33-34.

³Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *The Address, Twelve Early Responses, and Six Later Reflections*, ed. Ronald Berman (Washington, DC: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1980), 20.

⁴Sweet, *soulTsunami*, 410.

There is sobering especially in view of the renewed interest in spirituality. "In the early 80's Wilfred Cantwell Smith warned that the rising current of religious plurality would soon become a 'flood' that would sweep away the church unless it could learn to swim in its thrashing waves. Smith's warning is even more timely now than the day he wrote it. . . . a flood tide of a revolution is cutting its swath across our world and is gathering prodigious momentum."¹

In the face of this challenge some hold out little hope. Berger says this about the church:

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 demands. 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.²

With only these two options presented to us we are forced to look for others. We already see the result of going the route of accommodation, which some churches have experimented with. We also can see the result of re-entrenchment, that has been the path that some have taken. At the least we realize that we must choose. We cannot stay as we are. We are forced to action..

Action means change. "In the medical world, a clinical definition of death is a body that does not change. Change is life. Stagnation is death."³

The word is out: Reinvent yourself for the 21st century or die. Some would rather die than change. The lengths we will go to not to change, the excuses we will muster to defend the status quo, are illustrated by a little-known fact about the Civil War.

¹Ibid., 17.

²Berger, *A Rumor of Angels*, 153.

³Sweet, *soulTsunami*, 73.

Shortly after the war began, gun manufacturers introduced new rifles that were easier and quicker to load than the standard muzzle-loading ones. But officers on both sides resisted changing their rifles and gave lots of excuses: Easy loading guns encouraged wasting of bullets; guns that allowed one to shoot lying down would cause soldier to refuse to stand up, and so on.¹

We are forced to action. This is the first blessing that secularization has brought to us, for this challenge to action could begin a reawakening in the church of the power of the gospel and of the outpouring and anointing of the Holy Spirit

Freedom from Religious Traditions

From the days of Paul up to the twenty first century the missionary enterprise has attempted to bring the freedom of the gospel to people, tribes, and nations around the world. One of the greatest challenges has been to cut through the control that is exerted by family, society, and the local religious practices. Secularization is creating an environment where many of these traditionally controlling elements are reduced or eliminated entirely. Newbigin talks about this effect where he says that the secularization

process may be looked at both in its negative and in its positive aspects. Negatively, it is the withdrawal of areas of life and activity from the control of organized religious bodies, and the withdrawal of areas of thought from the control of what are believed to be revealed religious truths. Positively it may be seen as the increasing assertion of the competence of human science and techniques to handle human problems of every kind. In a biblical perspective (as will be argued) this can be seen as man's entering into the freedom given to him in Christ, freedom from the control of all other powers, freedom for the mastery of the created world which was promised to man according to the Bible. At its best the secular spirit claims the freedom to deal with every man simply as man and not as the adherent of one religion or another, and to use all man's mastery over nature to serve the real needs of man.²

¹Ibid., 75.

²Newbigin, 8, 9.

The freedom to speak to a man without being limited by his religious tradition or by ours is a freedom that has rarely been experienced in human history. Today, as a result of secularization, we are able to share the gospel without these barriers slowing or stopping us.

In addition to the freedom we have in reaching people of other cultures and traditions, we also have greater freedom from the limits of our own religious tradition. We are able to move from the question of trying to stop the collapse of our own church culture to the real issue of how to “re-conceptualize a Christianity that is not tied to the church culture?”¹

This question requires us to separate truth from tradition, an essential though difficult process. Yet “this fundamental preference for truth over tradition is . . . a hallmark of Christianity, and any abandonment of this characteristic of what is authentically Christian would lead eventually to the disintegration of the Christian faith.”²

The same types of barriers that have often limited Christian evangelism have also limited Christian growth and freedom in our own lives. There are many barriers to personal growth that are brought to bear by the customs and traditions that have developed over the ages within our own religious traditions and the expectations that come from our family and peers in our societal settings. All of these may have a limiting effect on our personal Christianity.

¹Reggie McNeal, *Leadership Network Net Fax* 93 (16 March 1998): 1.

²Martin Henry, *On Not Understanding God* (Dublin: Columba Press, 1997), 102-3.

The freedom secularization brings us in our evangelism is a freedom that secularization also brings to our own personal spiritual walk. While secularization is a cause of fear to many Christians, Newbigin describes the freedom we may find in secularization in such a powerful way that it seems more a cause to celebrate than to mourn. He says,

The process of secularization necessarily involves the questioning of accepted patterns of behaviour. In a sacral type of society these patterns are regarded as part of the ultimate constitution of things, bound up with the final realities which cannot be questioned. Secularization destroys these certainties and puts men in a position where they have to make conscious decisions about matters which were formerly taken for granted. . . . The breaking-up of these patterns by the process of secularization is both an opportunity for new freedom and also an occasion for new strains upon the human spirit. . . . It can lead on the one hand to a new life of freedom in Christ. This new life is described over and over again by St Paul in terms of dying with Christ in order to live with him. It is a life in which all the defenses that man erects against God, even the defense of his ethics and his religion, is swept away and he learns to live in a simple and childlike dependence on the love of his Father. It is a life in which every kind of self-justification has been ruled out in favour of one simple intention--to pay back the unpayable debt of gratitude to Christ by giving oneself to one's neighbour. It is a life in which the impossible commandment to love one's neighbour as oneself has become possible because it is no longer a commandment but a gift.¹

Freedom to reach other cultures, freedom to reassess our own church traditions, and freedom to explore our personal walk with God are important opportunities that secularization brings to us. Within these freedoms the Holy Spirit can live and work in new and exciting ways.

Salt of the Earth

For the last thousand years, the Christian church has been so closely bound up with the life and experience of men and women living in Europe and North America that

¹Newbigin, 138-140.

these countries have come to be called the Christian West. While today that title may ring hollow, it is still evidence of the transforming power of Christianity on the pagan peoples who originally lived in these Western countries. The challenge today is to have the same transforming effect on modern secular culture. The commission to be a leavening agent in the world goes back to the lips of Christ himself and must lead us into the future. Lyon talks about the necessity of maintaining this central aspect of Christianity.

While secularization does present peculiar threats, and while the modern situation does magnify the challenge in several ways simultaneously, we are really experiencing new twists for age-old problems. The whole sociological paraphernalia of 'accommodating' or 'resistance' is clearly anticipated in the New Testament injunction to be 'in but not of the world'. And whatever sociologists say, that involvement in the world was originally intended to have a permeating, and not just a preservative, effect. Hence the expression 'the salt of the earth'. Further, the truth of the message was to be tested in the crucible of real life, making the 'intellectual' and 'normative' dimensions inseparable. Social theorists may put asunder what has thus been joined, only at peril of misunderstanding the very dynamic of Christian religion.¹

"The evidence for a resilient Christian presence in the modern world should stimulate a new confidence in the power of the old faith to transform both person and world. It also gives room for maneuver, freedom to experiment for instance in church leadership within the forms of faith 'once delivered to the saints'."²

The transforming power that Christian faith can bring to bear on society must flow through our personal reincarnation of the life of Christ. This is the most potent point of contact.

Postmodern society may be intrinsically hostile to the Christian faith. But it is extremely open to Jesus the Christ, even its truth claims that Jesus is The Way, The Truth, and The Life. If I want to witness to my faith and begin by saying 'I am a

¹Lyon, 134.

²Ibid.

Christian,' chances are the other person leans away from me. If I begin my witness by saying 'I am a disciple of Jesus,' chances are the other person leans in and wants to hear more. For mission's sake, what if Christians were to renounce Christianity and become disciples of Jesus?¹

Only by becoming disciples of Jesus can our own "Christianity" be transformed so that it becomes lifechanging leaven. This life changing leaven then will be "full of intellectual fire," it will be "conversant with the sciences," it will "have edge" and "engage the intellect."²

The leaven of the gospel can transform the secular world. If in this process some traditional elements are changed or lost, we can know that they are no longer necessary ingredients for the growth and life of the Christian community.

Needs of Secular Man

Freedom from the need to defend the forms and traditions of yesteryear will allow us to address accurately the search for truth, the craving for community, and the desire for spirituality that we find among secular people. Meeting these needs are the best way to reach their hearts and save their souls. It is clear according to Lyon that

modern society, seen through the lens of secularization, is in a state of flux. Not only has society split away from any close ties with institutional religion, and not only have the worlds of daily routine, government, commerce and the media been left without any semblance of agreed transcendent dimensions or moral meaning, modern society is even losing the vocabulary with which to discuss such matters. In many ways the fabric of our world is woven with the threads of a bureaucratic web, and public life is dominated by the rational criteria of efficiency and technique. The process of cutting loose 'meaning' from its older cultural carriers has had profound social consequences. . . . Science and the state, each find themselves in some disarray today. . . . Closely related to this is the ethical vacuum in more than one crucially

¹Sweet, 49.

²Ibid., 57.

important life-area. . . . A third phenomenon which relates to secularization is that of insulating people from life-crises, suffering and death.¹

Lyon continues by talking about the needs of secularized society: "Firstly, there does seem to be evidence of a quest for certainty and for 'answers'. . . . Secondly . . . is the 'redemptive' search for 'community'. . . . The other is a return to some mythic and mystical modes of thought . . . along with a crisis of secularity."²

He concludes by pointing out the opportunities created by the crisis that secular man is experiencing. He says,

The existence of opportunities is highlighted by the 'secularity crisis'. Today's ecological, political, and nuclear and life dilemmas cry out for wisdom from beyond the merely temporal horizon. Without contributing to the mood of cultural pessimism, the churches could draw on the rich resources of a text such as Ecclesiastes, which puts its proverbial finger on the futility of all 'autonomous' schemes for self-redemption. In the same spirit, the chance is here for the churches to speak into current crises with the essential Christian gospel of forgiveness through Christ and hope in the act of 'remembering your Creator'.³

His conclusion is that "the concept of secularization!--is less of a threat to faith than it is a challenge to Christian practice."⁴

Sweet poses a series of questions for the church to answer. These questions lie at the heart of where secular man lives. They articulate his chief concerns and his heartfelt desires. Sweet asks,

Can we give postmoderns the intellectual framework by which they can make sense of the world and the social scaffolding by which they can change the world?
Can we give postmoderns the right pair of glasses by which to view and bring into focus the changes that are going on all around them?

¹Ibid., 145-146.

²Ibid., 146-147.

³Ibid., 151.

⁴Ibid., 152.

Can we offer a biblical worldview that shows how all that exists is the gift of a Creator whose definitive revelations is in Jesus the Christ?

Can we move the church from a shallow cultural Christianity to a deep and wide faith that hoists life's cocktail of hope and despair but downs only hope and drowns despair?

Can we show how to develop a spiritual mind that makes sense of life and makes life make sense from a biblical framework?

Can we seek solutions in the crisis to which we are headed, not in political institutions but in spiritual forces?¹

These are the questions that the church must speak to if it is to enter into real dialogue with our secular communities. These are the issues where we must be willing to spend time and effort. As we do so we will see that

Postmodern culture needs more truth, not less. The difference is that Truth is not a principle or a proposition but a Person. Truth is not rules and regulations but a relationship. God did not send us a statement but a Savior. God did not send us a principle but a Presence. Surrendering to Jesus is not subscription to some 'article of faith' but merging one's personal story into the story of the Son of God and the Savior of the world.²

The search for truth, the craving for community, and the desire for spirituality that fill the lives of those around us will be met as their lives are merged into the story of the Son of God.

Summary

For those who have feared that secularization would bring the end of religion Newbigin points out that "the gospel is the end of religion, as it is the end of the law. But law remains a reality in the life of a Christian who accepts the process of secularization and lives fully in the kind of world into which God has led us."³ Just as law remains so

¹Ibid., 127.

²Ibid., 385.

³Newbigin, 10.

too will religion remain as an abiding reality in our life and world. The winnowing process of secularization will keep religion in the proper place in our lives so that faith, freedom, and mission will be paramount.

Even though we live in a world of despair we may find that “the life of faith is a continually renewed victory over doubt, a continually renewed grasp of meaning in the midst of meaninglessness.”¹ This good news will be a beacon of hope to those around us.

Instead of feeling fear let us acknowledge how God is using secularization to accomplish His will in our world. Look at how secularization is recreating the scattering of the disciples in our own day. Newbigin points out that

one of the things which the process of secularization is doing everywhere is to break up old patterns of community, among them venerable Christian communities, and to scatter Christians in ones and twos throughout the manifold and varied sectors of a complex society, as well as to scatter a growing number of Christians all over the world in the service of technical development, government and education. If our doctrine of the Church is truly biblical we shall recognize that here the ancient pattern is reasserting itself. God is scattering in order that he may gather, as he did with the infant church in Jerusalem when Herod put forth his hand to destroy it. When the fire is scattered, two things may happen: the scattered pieces may burn out, or they may start a wider conflagration. When the young Church was scattered abroad from Jerusalem this was what happened. It can happen again today. The condition is that Christians should remember that they are called to be a pilgrim people, to travel light, to leave behind, if necessary, much of the baggage accumulated during a long encampment, to follow without procrastination wherever the Spirit leads. For the promise of the Spirit is given only to those who go.²

As we “go” in the promise of the Spirit we find that our battle is not just against flesh and blood but also against the principalities and powers of this world. In this battle

¹Ibid., 98.

²Ibid., 122.

we may find that “‘Secularization’ which has too often been wielded as a weapon against Christianity, may be used by Christianity to locate the real enemy.”¹

Rather than “bunkering down” let recognize that “the best way to defuse the principalities and powers of postmodern culture is not to escape from it but to learn its language, master its media, and engage it on a higher level.”²

While it is true that this is no easy path for the church to take let us remember that “Jesus did not call us to live easily or painlessly. All discovery, every birth, is disorderly, ragged, and messy. Death is neat and orderly. But birth is slimy, bloody, sweaty, oozing primordial juices and elements.”³

We must be born again if Christianity is to be more than just another boat adrift on the flowing tide. We cannot be satisfied to drift with the tide, no not even to push against the tide. We must commit ourselves to getting out ahead of the tide.

If the church is to demythologize the culture’s reigning myths instead of the culture always demythologizing the church; if the church is to say that the Emperor of Technism, the Emperor of Scientism, the Emperor of Miraculism has no clothes; if technologies are to be deflected so that they not degenerate into unspeakable evil – then the church must be prepared to anticipate change and get ahead of the culture.⁴

Secularization presents us with the opportunity to be restored to a primitive Christianity brimming with Spirit and power with a message and a mission that can change our world.

¹Lyon, 134.

²Sweet, *soulTsunami*, 21.

³Ibid., 75.

⁴Ibid., 21.

CHAPTER 3

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

God's Call

In the Bible, mission springs from a personal encounter with God. From this encounter comes a call to holiness. This call to holiness goes on to shape our life and culture. As we pursue this holy calling God makes manifest his power and wisdom on our behalf. The evidence of God's work in our lives attracts attention from people around us. These people, amazed at what they see, feel compelled to come to us asking questions about what they have observed. Their desire to uncover the cause of these wonders leads them to a knowledge of God himself. As they in turn respond to God's calling they too become the "light of the world," members of God's chosen people, with a status no different from that of ourselves.

To a Personal Encounter

All mission springs from a personal encounter with God. In the quiet of the Garden of Eden, God came to speak face to face with Adam and Eve. This same type of personal encounter initiates mission after the Fall. Noah hears the voice of the Lord and embarks on the task of building an ark, which takes him 120 years. Abram, enjoying prosperity within the city of Haran, hears God's call to leave country, family, and home.

Abram responds and begins the trek that culminates in the creation of the children of Israel.

Moses cares for sheep in the desolate wastes of Moab until he meets God at the burning bush. The angel of the Lord comes to find Gideon as he works in the winepress, hiding from the Midianites. David hears the voice of God speaking to him as he cares for his father's sheep, on the rocky hills away from his family's tents. No one but Samuel heard the gentle words that came to him in the middle of the night.

In the Bible, all mission springs from a personal encounter with God. Mission to our secular world must have the same source.

To Holiness

Every encounter with God leads to a call for holiness. Peter puts it quite succinctly, "But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: 'Be holy, because I am holy'" (1 Pet 1:15, 16).

Paul, after being blinded by the presence of God on his way to Damascus, walks off into the Arabian peninsula to pursue God's holy calling. Abraham, after sensing the moving of God's Spirit, rides his camel out of Ur and begins his personal pilgrimage after God. James and John, feeling the power of Jesus' words, turn their backs on the sea, put their nets in storage, and spend the rest of their lives in pursuit of their calling.

In the Bible, when God encounters people, they are moved to a clear response. Sometimes this response takes the form of a rejection of what they have heard from God. Often, however, we find stories of people who without hesitation, leave what they are doing, put down what is in their hands, turn their back to what had until recently held their attention, and follow immediately after the call of God.

This following after God, this desire to be with him, this seeking to know his will, is the path of holiness. The call to be with him is the call to be like him. The power that we experience in his presence is the power that transforms our life. As we look into his eyes we start to see life through those eyes. The new vision that we receive, this is holiness, this is walking with God.

In the Bible, before we do mission we must first walk with God in quietness, in trust, and in worship. Before we do mission in the secular world we must go through the same purifying fire.

To Shape Our Life and Culture

The call to holiness goes on to shape our life and culture. When Isaiah sees the Lord upon his throne, the sense of his sin causes him to recoil in horror. He says, "Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, 'See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for'" (Isa 6:6, 7).

Now when God asks for a messenger to fulfill his purpose, Isaiah immediately responds, "Send Me!" (Isa 6:8). Isaiah walks out of the throne room, cleansed of his sin, with God's words on his lips.

Elijah stands before Ahab and "thunders" that there will be no dew or rain except at "my word" (1 Kgs 17:1). Elijah does not say the rain will fall at God's word, he says the rain will not fall except at "my word." This is not a boastful claim. It is not said by presumption upon divine prerogative. Elijah, walking in holiness, has become so one with his God that now his voice is not his own but is the voice of God.

Elijah's walk in the holy presence of his God prepares him for a mission that attempts to reshape the very life and culture of his people. In this attempt the mind of God is the prism through which Elijah moves, thinks, and speaks. The mind of God is the prism through which Elijah looks out at the life and the doings of his people.

Jacob fled in fear from Shechem where the blood from his son's swords filled the city streets. The smell of death and the fear of revenge shook him from his spiritual slumber. He called out to his family,

Get rid of the foreign gods you have with you, and purify yourselves and change your clothes. Then come let us go up to Bethel, where I will build an altar to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and who has been with me wherever I have gone.' So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods they had and the rings in their ears, and Jacob buried them under the oak at Shechem. (Gen 35:2-5)

Jacob and his family had allowed the values and traditions of their friends and neighbors to supplant the values and the traditions that God had given them. This left them unable to fulfill the purpose of God in their lives. This left them vulnerable to the revenge that might be sought after the massacre at Shechem. Now in this time of fear, they pursued the opportunity to be restored to their holy walk with God.

Jacob sought the holiness of God to redefine the nature and course of his life as well as the life of his family. From this renewed walk with God they could continue to experience the unfolding of the will of God in their lives.

To do mission to the secular we must go in the mind of God. We must continually assess whether the pattern and practices of our life are an unfolding of God's character and of his will. Our plans, our goals, our relationships with family and community, our worship, our traditions and customs, our marital relationships and family relationships,

our worship practices and cultural traditions must each be judged, evaluated, and transformed in the light of Gods calling us to holiness.

To Experience the Power of God

As we pursue our holy calling in God he makes manifest his power and wisdom through our lives. Peter says we “are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (2 Pet 2:9).

With trembling faith the Israelites set out from the cities of Egypt towards the promised land of Canaan. The ten miracles God had worked to bring about their freedom were indelibly imprinted upon their minds and hearts. The word about what God had done on their behalf went ahead of them and was retold for generations.

The lives of the believers united in prayer in the Upper Room were changed forever as the power of the Holy Spirit fell upon them. The preaching at Pentecost and the miraculous works that followed were evidence to all that God was at work through the lives of his followers.

In the Bible, the power of God is the critical, life-giving faculty that works in our lives to realize the goals of his calling. As we engage in mission to the secular world the power of our work must be the power of God’s Spirit.

To Gather In

The evidence of God’s work in our lives attracts attention from people around us. Their interest and amazement compel them to come to us with questions. Their desire to uncover the cause of these wonders leads them to a knowledge of God himself.

God's wisdom, poured out through the life of Solomon, draws the Queen of Sheba to Jerusalem for a visit. She cannot contain herself, "Praise be to the Lord your God, who has delighted in you and placed you on the throne of Israel. Because of the Lord's eternal love for Israel, he has made you king, to maintain justice and righteousness" (1 Kgs 10:9).

The Queen of Sheba was just the first of many to seek an audience with Solomon. The author of 1 Kings writes, "King Solomon was greater in riches and wisdom than all the other kings of the earth. The whole world sought audience with Solomon to hear the wisdom God had put in his heart" (1 Kgs 10:23, 24).

All the gifts God pours out upon us are to bring glory to him. Hezekiah recognized that even our deliverance from danger is for a greater purpose. When faced with the arrogant armies of Sennacherib he prayed, "Now, O Lord our God, deliver us from his hand, so that all kingdoms on earth may know that you alone, O Lord, are God" (2 Kgs 19:19).

Hezekiah grasped the purpose and role that God had given to Israel and to him as Israel's king. This role was to make visible to the world the power and wisdom of God so that others would be drawn to him.

God's concern for the salvation of all the nations of the earth is beautifully expressed by Isaiah where he writes, "Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn" (Isa 60:3). God's actions towards Israel are a part of a larger purpose.

In the Bible God's purpose in mission is to gather men and women to himself. As we reach out to our secularized friends and neighbors we must remember that the purpose is simply to bring them to God where they may find their calling in him.

One Nation Under God

There is only one nation under God and it is made up of all who respond to his calling. Among those people there is neither "Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28).

Rahab, a prostitute in the city of Jericho, stands trembling on the city wall. The fear of God is already upon her. She needs no convincing. She has already responded to God's call and is simply waiting for the first opportunity to join God's people.

The fact that she is a woman, a prostitute, and a Canaanite is not held against her. She gives help to the spies. She asks for mercy. She is saved from destruction and given a place in Israel (Josh 6:25). Her memory, along with that of Ruth and Tamar, is immortalized by being included in the genealogy of Jesus recorded in the gospel of Matthew (Matt 1:3-5). Among the people of God two former prostitutes are given equal billing with Abraham, David, Joseph, and Mary.

As Isaiah closes his book he writes,

And I, because of their actions and their imaginations, am about to come and gather all nations and tongues, and they will come and see my glory. . . . They will proclaim my glory among the nations. And they will bring all your brothers, from all the nations, to my holy mountain in Jerusalem as an offering to the Lord. . . . And I will select some of them also to be priests and Levites, says the Lord. (Isa 66:18-21)

The fact that some from foreign nations would be allowed to become priests and Levites indicates the equality all would share in becoming a part of God's people.

A personal encounter with God draws us to a holiness that shapes our life and culture. God's power and wisdom work through our lives, attracting people to himself where they become members of his family. This is what the Bible calls us to give our lives to. This is the basis for doing mission in our secular world.

God's Commission

Go Make Disciples

The most radical change in the focus of mission caused by the teaching of Jesus is found in the Great Commission. "Therefore go 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 I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matt 28:19, 20).

The vision previously found among the prophets involved a gathering in of the Gentiles to Jerusalem as the glory of God was revealed among his chosen people. Now Jesus commissions his disciples to go to all nations and make disciples.

God has been working throughout Israel's history with this end in mind. The sending of Jonah to Nineveh was a harbinger of what now would become the focal point of Jesus' followers. This reorientation of thinking from "Come" to "Go" would require a complete rethinking of goals, methods, and message. The first issue they would have to grapple with was, Just whom did Jesus want them to disciple?

Go Across Cultural Barriers

In his own day Jonah was extremely reluctant to accept God's command to go and preach to the city of Nineveh. Instead, Jonah ran in the opposite direction. The people of

Nineveh cannot be valid recipients for the grace of God. In spite of the miracle of the fish, the miracle of the plant, and the response of repentance from the entire city, Jonah is angry that God has spared the people.

The blindness that covered Jonah's eyes also affected Jesus' disciples who received the great commission. Certainly they should go to every people and nation, seek out their Jewish brothers, and expend every energy to make them disciples. The thought that Jesus wanted them to include the Gentiles in their mission was still absent from their thoughts.

The meaning of John's words, "Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God--children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will but born of God" (John 1:12, 13), was not at all clear to Jesus' followers even after his resurrection.

Peter's vision of God commanding him to eat unclean food hits like a thunderbolt as the disciples grapple with God's intention to include the Gentiles as a part of his people. The words Peter heard in vision were very unsettling to him, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean" (Acts 10:15).

Peter had been called to holiness and he knew that to fulfill that calling he had to avoid all that was impure. It was against the law for a Jew to visit with a Gentile or associate with one. So it was not easy for Peter to say, "God has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean" (Acts 10:28).

Peter's conclusion that, "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right" (Acts

10:35) would be the hinge upon which the door to the gospel would swing open to the entire world.

Peter's new insight was confirmed by the momentous outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon Peter's Gentile hosts. Following God's clear acceptance of these new believers they were baptized.

All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name. While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have. So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. (Acts 10:43-48)

In spite of Peter's status within the early Christian community and the presence of other Jewish believers when he went to Cornelius's house, Peter's actions were strongly questioned upon his return. "So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him and said, You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them" (Acts 11:2, 3).

Peter's response was clear and direct.

As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning. Then I remembered what the Lord had said, John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit. So if God gave them the same gift as he gave us, who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could oppose God! When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God saying, So then, God has even granted the Gentiles repentance unto life. (Acts 11:15-18)

This experience seems to have settled the issue for the early Christian community. Belief, not natural descent, became the doorway for entrance into the family of God. The crucial question that still remained was, Even if Gentiles were allowed to come in through that doorway, was the inside of the house still to be determined by the worship

styles and lifestyle requirements which had been given by revelation of God to the Jewish people?

Go to Any Extreme

For the Jewish Christian it was a natural assumption that any Gentile joining the family would come under all of the laws revealed by God to his chosen people in the Old Testament. For us today it is a natural assumption that in reaching across the secular divide, people responding in faith will naturally use the same worship styles and adapt the same lifestyle patterns that we believe God has revealed to us.

It is interesting to note that even during Jesus' ministry he gave clear indications that change was coming for both Jew and Gentile.

Believe me woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth. (John 4:21-24)

Worship is to take place "neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem." This is not simply a reference to the end of the sacrificial system. Jesus' statement has a wider meaning. Jesus does not tell the woman that a time is coming when she will worship as the Jews do minus the sacrifices. Rather, both Samaritan and Jew will need to seek the Father in spirit and in truth. The early believers would have to quickly work out an application of these words because Gentiles were now being brought into the church.

To spearhead mission to the Gentiles God chose Paul, a hard-line conservative from the extreme right. Other Jewish Christians must have viewed Paul as an excellent choice. Certainly he would work hard to hold the line on new Gentile converts. No doubt

he would push them down the path of holiness that included a keeping of every letter of the law. It was not to be.

Paul grasped, as no other Christian leader of his time, that the sole purpose of mission was to bring people into the presence of God where the holiness of his person would transform their heart and mind after his likeness. Paul summed up his approach to the Hellenized world of his day with these words, "To those under the law I become as one under the law so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I become as one not having the law so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I become weak in order to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all means possible I might save some" (1 Cor 9:20-23).

Wherever Paul went he took on the worldview, the cultural concerns, and the theological understanding of his target audience. To reach them Paul lived and spoke as if he was one of them. Paul was willing to go to any length, short of violating the moral law of God, in order to bring the gospel to people in their language and in their cultural context.

Paul's desire to "be all things to all men" was so strong that he was willing to risk the approval and support of the entire Jewish Christian church if that was what it took to complete his mission. This willingness to "risk all" in order to "save some" drove Paul on until he had successfully dragged the Jewish Christian church, kicking and screaming, into the light of a new missiological day. Gentile Christianity was recognized as valid in its own right and was given room to grow and develop its own worship styles and cultural expression. A precedent was being set that as the gospel took root in a new environment,

its growth was not to be impeded by the sacred practices and traditions of the ones bearing the gospel.

As the light of this day grew, the fears of many Jewish Christians were realized. For within a few generations the customs, culture, and laws of Mosaic Jewish Christianity were gone from the Christian church. This was in large part caused by the destruction of churches and the dispersion of Christian communities from the land of Palestine that had occurred by A.D. 135 which effectively removed the traditions of the Jewish Christian community from within the Christian church. The loss of the Jewish Christian community was an immense blow to the Gentile Christian churches. They now had to find their way without the advice or experience of Jewish Christian believers. Errors were made that otherwise might have been avoided and yet the power of the gospel could not be restrained. The church, however imperfectly, moved on to fulfill God's commission.

A Cross-Cultural Mission

Elements of Mission

The Holy Spirit is the central element of the birth, growth, and future of the Christian church in New Testament times. It is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that inaugurates the work of the church in the book of Acts. It is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that validates the inclusion of the Gentiles in the household of faith. It is the fruit of the Holy Spirit that is evidence that broken lives have been connected to the power of God. The Holy Spirit is in all and works through all as we read the chapters of the New Testament. The Holy Spirit must play this same role in mission to the secular world.

The power of the experiential faith of the Christian church burned quickly across the empire of Rome and on into the rest of the world. The faith of these believers did indeed move mountains. Their faith was firm as a rock as the persecution of the Roman empire broke upon it. Mission to the secular must be built upon such a faith.

The growth of the church was not a result of plans, programs, and directives flowing from Jerusalem, Antioch, or Alexandria. The growth of the church was the result of the power of the gospel being worked out through the lives of its individual members. The local church, self-funded and self-directed, was the center of all work and direction. New initiatives could be put into place immediately in response to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

We live in an age when politics has reverted from national to local. Grassroots initiatives and concerns are the driving force in our communities. In this sociological environment programs developed on the national level are unlikely to have the impact their creators envisioned. A return to the local church as the incubator and director of outreach is needed. Mission to the secular will flourish when it is driven by the vision of its own members.

Paid professional pastors were not the primary bridge to the community in Paul's day. The Holy Spirit fell upon all the believers and they worked together according to their gifts. Mission to the secular will not be accomplished by hiring more paid professional "surrogates" to do outreach but by the Spirit-led involvement of each member. The role of the pastor must be redefined in terms of training and equipping members to evangelize within the spheres of their personal and social influence.

Into an era ripe with messianic expectations and looking for a meaning that paganism could not supply, the gospel of Jesus Christ came like a draft of fresh air. The gospel Christians preached was simple in its profession and yet earth shattering in its implications. The gospel Christians preached was accessible to all persons, regardless of their status in society, their educational level, or their ethnic background. Yet it challenged each to experience a level of personhood higher than any could have imagined. The gospel Christians preached could be expressed in the thought forms of any language or culture and yet stood on end all common conceptions of the relationship between man and God. The gospel Christians preached required no pre-knowledge or pre-training and yet had a transforming effect on each of its members. The gospel Christians professed broke down the barriers that divided men and women from each other, created a community of believers knit together tighter than the clans, tribes, and families from which they had come and yet did not create new barriers for entrance to those who were not a part of this fellowship. Christians were not gatekeepers of historical traditions but worked to pass on a living experience with a risen Lord. In all these ways Christians brought the breath of life to a stale and dying world. Mission to the secular will succeed when the gospel experienced in the early church is the gospel shared with our friends and neighbors.

The gospel of Jesus Christ unencumbered by our cultural baggage and experienced in its pristine power will be both relevant and electrifying to members of the secular community. A gospel that is simple in its expression, that is equally accessible by all, that can be expressed in the thought forms of any person, and that breaks down all man made-barriers keeping people from experiencing oneness with each other will be

sought after by people in our secular age. A gospel that has profound implications for our lives, that draws us to experience the fullness of our gifts and our person, that stands on end everything we have ever thought about God and our destiny, that removes from our lives the causes of personal pain and suffering, that replaces alienation with community and despair with joy, will still draw people and transform lives today.

The early Christian church was personal and service driven. Members came together for fellowship. There were ministries of healing, caring, gathering in prayer, sharing of personal goods that went along with the proclamation of the gospel. The message that was preached was made real by the life of the body of believers as they met together in each other's homes. The personal nature of the church is evident in the letters of Paul. Everywhere he writes he takes time to give personal greetings to those he knows. Mission to the secular will be effective as the local caring body of believers touches personal lives in our communities.

For the New Testament church Christian unity was not the result of doctrinal statements. Christian unity was not founded on unanimity of belief or practice. The diversity and plurality of the early church was bound together by their unifying commitment to Jesus Christ and his gospel. As time passed, the early church worked through many of its theological and liturgical differences to arrive at a sense of unity on what came to be considered core Christian beliefs. The history of the Seventh-day Adventist church reflects this same pattern of development. Early Adventist unity was not founded on unanimity of belief or practice. The diversity and plurality of the Adventist pioneers was bound together by their unifying commitment to how the prophetic timetable signified the imminent return of Jesus.

God exercised great flexibility in allowing significant diversity and plurality to exist in both the early church and the Advent movement. One result of this flexibility was that both movements soon covered the world. Mission to the secular requires a similar approach. Mission to the secular can experience significant growth if we will have the flexibility to allow the gospel of Jesus Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit to form and constrain the lifestyle and worship practices of new secular Christians. It is the gospel alone that has the power to transform secular lives into holy lives. We must have the patience to allow that gospel to grow in the hearts of secular people and over time for a new consensus regarding core beliefs to develop.

The factors of mission that bridged the gap from Jew to Gentile in the time of Paul will also be effective in our secular age. The question we must ask, What role do these factors play in our current approach to mission? Have we tended towards an approach to mission that allows many of these crucial factors to be placed in a diminished role? How can these factors be restored to primacy as we approach mission to the secular?

A World-Oriented Approach to Mission

Let us compare for a moment two styles of mission: one style is church-oriented, the other style is world-oriented. Dr. Oosterwal, in his class on secularization, used the following chart to illustrate the differences between these two orientations. See table 2.

In the New Testament the church experienced tremendous growth, but growth was not the object. The object was to tell people about Jesus Christ. The object was to have the gospel of Jesus Christ transform the web of relationships that surrounded each

TABLE 2
APPROACHES TO MISSION

Church-oriented		World-oriented
	<i>Purpose</i>	
church growth; expansion		evangelism; finding the unreached
	<i>Evangelism</i>	
program centered, institutional special time, place and occasion campaign; crusade; come-structure		personal part of life spontaneous witness; go-structure
	<i>Message</i>	
absolute; unaffected by changes in culture and society		related to changing circumstances and conditions
	<i>Ministry</i>	
proclamational, truth centered calling people out of the world		incarnational, need-oriented sharing/caring within the world
	<i>Organization</i>	
centralized, hierarchical		decentralized, democratic
	<i>Structure</i>	
vertical		horizontal
	<i>World</i>	
evil, inferior; passive in function		God's good creation, redeemed in Christ, active in function
	<i>Church</i>	
God's holy fortress focus, aim, center		salt, yeast of world instrument, tool
	<i>Missionaries</i>	
specialists: minister evangelist, church workers		every believer through their gifts of the Spirit
	<i>Goal</i>	
building up the church perfecting the believers		restoration of the Kingdom hastening the judgment

person in society. There is a difference between planning for church growth and experiencing the outflow of faith to the community around us.

The charismatic nature of the early church involved each member in personal, spontaneous acts of witness. They had no Bible study guides to hand out so they had to talk about their beliefs to their neighbors and friends. They had no worldwide evangelistic meetings to invite people to see so they had to pass on the essential elements of their faith within the context of their weekly worship and study services. They had no halls or convention centers to rent so they met in homes to share their faith. They had no radio, TV, satellite, or newspapers where they could share their message. They could not even pass out copies of Bibles to friends or family who expressed an interest in their faith.

The only way they could share their faith was one-on-one with their very own lips from the context of their personal experience with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Today we often substitute the institutional outreach of the church in place of personal sharing. When this happens, the impact on the secular world is minimal. The institutional program-centered evangelism of the church can complement personal one-on-one work but it cannot take its place.

The gospel, as it went to the Gentiles, broke in a radical way with the beliefs and practices of Jewish Christians. Paul's presentation of the gospel was relevant to the lives of Gentiles. This gospel presentation, attacked viciously by many Jewish Christians, worked a transformation of Gentile society. The worship styles and lifestyle practices of the early Christian church were quite different from those of Palestinian Jews in the days of Jesus, which in turn were quite different from those practiced in the days of Moses,

which in turn were quite different from those engaged in by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In the Bible, change and progression under the leading of the Holy Spirit are the norm. Should we expect anything different today?

Paul sought to recognize the core of the gospel and was willing to leave his own traditions and cultural applications behind as he took that gospel to the Gentiles. The challenge we face, and it is not an easy one, is to allow the gospel to move with power among our secular neighbors and to allow the Holy Spirit to shape the expression of their faith.

Jesus became a man in order to minister to men. Paul became like unto the Gentiles in order to minister to the Gentiles. We must become like the secular in order to minister to the secular.

In Paul's day the local church was the center. Church organization was very flexible. Today we find a more vertical, centralized structure in our church. This strong central structure helped to create a worldwide church with schools, hospitals, radio stations, and printing plants that circle the globe. While this structure has many advantages, reaching the secular community is not one of them.

The secular community is distrustful of any large institutional structure. The secular community wants "buy in," participation, and a fair bit of local control. A decentralized, democratic structure will aid in our outreach today just as it did in Paul's day.

If we view the world as an evil place, if we see it as inferior to the church and subsequently something to be put under submission to the church, then these views will make it difficult to work effectively among secular people. The implications of our views

of the “world” are far ranging especially when working with secular people. This does not mean we should accept the view which secular society gives as it interprets the “world.” Rather we must find a balanced biblical view of the “world” if we are to maximize our opportunities of witness to the secular community, God's world.

There was nothing special about the church buildings of Paul's day. Small home churches were more the norm. The primary focus was not to get people to attend a particular church meeting but to get them to bow before Jesus Christ as their risen Lord and Savior. The body of Christians gathered to celebrate this faith. They gathered to build faith through teaching, preaching, and personal testimony. Worship affirmed their faith and prepared them for their ongoing work back in the world. Where all this took place did not matter but that it took place was essential.

Today most of our missionaries are specialists and paid professionals. We have often come to depend on them to do the primary work of evangelism. In Paul's day that work was a part of the life of each Christian. We must return to a lay missionary movement where every believer uses the gifts that the Holy Spirit has given to them as a means of sharing the gospel with secular people. Adventist Frontier Missions is an example of the potential found in this type of approach as it is applied overseas. The same potential exists here in our homeland if we will approach our work in the same manner. When every member is actively engaged in personal, spirit-filled ministry, the church will be built up and individual faith will be perfected.

In Paul's day a “world-oriented” approach to doing mission bridged the gap to the pagan world. If we are to bridge the gap to our secularized communities we too must

build “world-oriented” approaches to them. This “world-oriented” approach to mission is the model we find when we look at the ministry of Christ.

Incarnational Mission

The incarnation of Jesus Christ is the seminal event around which every part of our world, life, and being take on meaning and direction. Far from being simply a supernatural event that occurred 2,000 years ago, the incarnation continues to be a living, pulsating, energizing reality in which we live, move, and have our being. Mission, as with all else, must be interpreted through the perspective of this timeless Event.

The most radical change in the style of mission occurs when incarnational ministry becomes the central medium of our mission. John writes,

He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God - children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. The Word became flesh and lived for a while among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:10-14)

As we study the incarnation we find the principles needed for mission in every age, time, and place:

1. Voluntarily walking away from what is beautiful, good, and rightfully ours in order to save a fallen world
2. Identifying with others in a way that allows a bond of “oneness” to develop rather than arriving in a way that impresses or overwhelms
3. Allowing the timing of salvation to bet in rhythm with the heart of the one to whom we speak
4. Taking on the role of “servant” when we could easily assert the role of master

5. Choosing to be last when by right of birth we are first.

The ripples flowing out from the incarnational ministry of Jesus touch every aspect of our life and work.

At the last supper Jesus sat with his disciples for the last time. Once more he showed the objectives, tenor, and style of his own redemptive ministry on earth when he washed their feet and said, "Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you" (John 13:14, 15).

As Jesus prepared for his own death he told his disciples that they must carry on his ministry to the world. Jesus prays to the Father and says, "As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world" (John 17:18).

The disciples' ministry will in turn be passed on to succeeding generations. Jesus says, "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you may they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (John 17:20, 21).

The life and ministry of Jesus Christ had a powerful impact on every individual who came into his presence. Whether Jesus was in a fishing boat, walking in the hills, teaching in the synagogue, or worshiping in Jerusalem, no one left his presence untouched. Ellen White describes his work in this way:

Jesus saw in every soul one to whom must be given the call to his kingdom. He reached the hearts of the people by going among them as one who desired their good. He sought them in the public streets, in private houses, on the boats, in the synagogue, by the shores of the lake, and at the marriage feast. He met them at their daily vocations, and manifested an interest in their secular affairs. He showed his

sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then he bade them, "Follow me."¹

Ellen White goes on to say that if we "relieve the physical necessities of your fellowmen" we will find that their "gratitude will break down the barriers, and enable you to reach their hearts."²

When their hearts have been reached by gracious acts in our lives, then they become open to hear the story of what God has done in our life. This story that we tell is the most powerful witness we can give.

Those who have put on Christ will relate their experiences, tracing step by step the leading of the Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus Christ will open the door of their hearts, and will make upon their minds lasting impressions. . . . Tell them how you found Jesus, and how blessings come to you as you sit at the feet of Jesus. . . . Tell them what blessings of gladness and joy there are in the Christian life. Your warm, fervent words will convince them that you have found the pearl of great price. Let your cheerful encouraging words show that you have found the higher way . . . and as it is done many will awake as from a dream.³

God, through the person of Jesus Christ, modeled for us the style and nature of redemptive ministry that was an expression of his own character. The insight gained from the life of Christ clarifies and develops the approach to ministry found in the Old Testament. God calls for a holiness that works out from within. God wants to pour out his power through the words, actions, and relationships of his people. The response of those touched by the lives of Spirit-filled men and women will cause others to respond to the

¹Ellen White, *Counsels on Stewardship* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1954), 119.

²Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), 9:127.

³White, *Counsels on Stewardship*, 125.

power of God. The ranks of Spirit-filled men and women grow. Each of them feels deep within a compulsion to “go” and to “tell” all nations, tribes, and peoples of what God has done for them.

Seeing the ministry of Christ as a model for our own ministry causes us to reread the Old Testament in a new light. It is natural to ask, “How did Abram, Joshua, Solomon, and Isaiah reach out to share God with their contemporaries?” A new question needs to be added. “How did God reach out to share himself with Abram, Joshua, Solomon, and Isaiah?”

The real model for redemptive ministry found in the Old Testament is not that of the patriarchs, judges, kings, or prophets but it is the model of God reaching out to these very people. God reached across the cultural divide from heaven to earth. God chose to use imperfect forms, models, and language to convey the meaning of the gospel. God chose to accept the imperfections of the men and women who served him and bore his name. God exercised great latitude when it came to the cultural practices and personal lifestyle of those who entered his family.

It is little wonder that Paul, having experienced the presence of God during those years in Arabia, came to understand the nature of God’s work and chose the same approach in his mission to the Gentiles. Paul wrote to the church in Corinth,

So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God--even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved. Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ. (1 Cor 10:31-11:1)

Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not

having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings. (1 Cor 9:19-23)

The power of the gospel expressed through incarnational ministry is a power that cannot be stopped. Our mission to the secular must find its way on this same path.

Obstacles to Cross-Cultural Mission

There are many obstacles to cross-cultural mission. To cross cultural barriers often requires us to learn a new language and new customs. We may have to leave a comfortable home, livelihood, and friends. We may be exposed to bacteria and diseases for which our body has no antibodies to use for self-defense. We may have to raise funds for support and supplies. The educational opportunities for our children may be lacking. Our spouse may not be able to work or practice his or her vocation. Medical care may not be at the standard we have come to expect. Career opportunities may be limited. The food may be disagreeable. We may miss holiday celebrations that are meaningful. The weather may be oppressive. Our living standards may drop. We might clash with national workers. Our stress levels might rise. We may experience a higher level of loneliness and isolation. We might not be appreciated. We might fail in our work.

This is not an exhaustive list but it does touch on significant areas. The greatest obstacle however to cross-cultural mission lies in our ability to differentiate between the gospel and our own cultural adaptations. This becomes more difficult when our cultural adaptations have become synonymous with the experience of Christianity. This becomes almost insurmountable when at one point in the past divine authority affirmed our current practice.

An example is when the Jewish Christian leaders met to discuss just what part of the law they should make binding on the new Gentile converts. Ellen White writes that “The Jews feared that if the restrictions and ceremonies of their law were not made obligatory upon the Gentiles as a condition of church fellowship, the national peculiarities of the Jews, which had hitherto kept them distinct from all other people, would finally disappear from among those who received the gospel message.”¹

This fear of losing much of what made them unique from other peoples caused Jewish Christians to question the motives and integrity of Paul himself. Ellen White reveals this concern as she writes,

When they saw the Christian church departing from the ceremonies and traditions of Judaism, and perceived that the peculiar sacredness with which the Jewish customs had been invested would soon be lost sight of in the light of the new faith, many grew indignant with Paul as the one who had, in a large measure, caused this change. Even the disciples were not all prepared to accept willingly the decision of the council. . . . They regarded Paul with disfavor, because they thought that his principles in regard to the obligations for the Jewish law were lax.²

One issue that especially came to the forefront for the early Christian community was that of circumcision. Moses had not been allowed to proceed on his mission to deliver the Israelites from Egypt until he was circumcised. Before crossing into Canaan, time was taken to circumcise all the men who had been born during the forty years of wandering in the wilderness. Jesus had been circumcised. Jesus had never said that the practice of circumcision was to stop at the Cross. God had commanded circumcision. It

¹Ellen White, *Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911), 189.

²*Ibid.*, 197.

was certainly logical for Jewish Christians to conclude that “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved” (Acts 15:2).

This became such a heated debate that the apostles and elders met to consider this question. After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them:

Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe. God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. He made no distinction between them, and us for he purified their hearts by faith. Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of the disciples a yoke that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear? No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are. (Acts 15:6-11)

This is a very clear statement that both Jew and Gentile are saved through the grace given by Jesus. Also it appears that circumcision is a symbol of the larger issue of Jewish law as implied by the word “yoke.” It would seem that if both Jew and Gentile are saved in the same way then they are both saved from the “yoke” of the law. Many of the Jewish Christians themselves eventually freed themselves from the “yoke” of the law as evidenced by Paul’s comments to Peter in Gal 2:14, “You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew.”

James’s conclusion ended the discussion with the statement, “It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements: You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid these things” (Acts 15:28, 29).

Paul does not challenge this conclusion at the council but his advice in 1 Cor 10:25 runs contrary to the council’s conclusions. Paul says, “Eat anything sold in the meat market without raising questions of conscience, for, ‘The earth is the Lord’s, and

everything in it.' If some unbeliever invites you to a meal and you want to go, eat whatever is put before you without raising questions of conscience."

The circumcision problem was also far from settled. Many Jewish Christian leaders felt tremendous pressure to conform to the group wanting the law to be enforced. Paul confronted this problem directly in.

When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was in the wrong. Before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray. When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter in front of them all, 'You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs? (Gal 2:11-14)

This hypocrisy by leaders of the Christian church caused Paul to respond with a series of powerful statements that clarified the essential nature of this problem.

Paul wrote to the church in Rome that "a man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code" (Rom 2:23, 29).

Paul continued by saying,

But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. . . . Is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith. (Rom 3:21-24, 29, 30)

In a similar way Paul says to the Christians in Galatia, "You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have been

clothed with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal 3:26-29).

He goes on to clarify that this oneness in Christ does not need to be preceded by circumcision. "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love" (Gal 5:6). Paul stresses again the inner transformation that the believers have experienced. "Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation" (Gal 6:15).

To the Christians in Philippi he writes in rather strong terms, "Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those mutilators of the flesh. For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh" (Phil 3:2-3).

In Paul's letter to the Colossians he warns against any return to the use of circumcision because it was merely a symbol and now the reality is here so it would be a step backwards to return to the symbol.

For in Christ all the fullness of the deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority. In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. (Col 2:9-17)

While many of these statements may have been penned later in his life, no doubt the essential concepts had been a part of his preaching for a long time. These types of

thoughts and statements were quite offensive and inflammatory to many back in Jerusalem. When Paul returned to Jerusalem in Acts 21 the Christian leaders wanted Paul to take some action to pacify the feelings many of his Jewish Christian brothers felt towards him.

You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews have believed, and all of them are zealous for the law. They have been informed that you teach all the Jews who live among the Gentiles to turn away from Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or live according to our customs. What shall we do? They will certainly hear that you have come, so do what we tell you. . . . Then everybody will know there is no truth in these reports about you, but that you yourself are living in obedience to the law. (Acts 21:20-24)

Paul's efforts are of no avail. Assailed in the temple he is being taken away when he turns to make his case to the crowd. In closing he says, "Then the Lord said to me, 'Go; I will send you far away to the Gentiles.' The crowd listened to Paul until he said this. Then they raised their voices and shouted, 'Rid the earth of him! He's not fit to live'" (Acts 22:21, 22).

The greatest obstacle to cross-cultural mission is the fear on the part of our own members that in trying to be "all things to all men" we are giving up an essential aspect of divine revelation. This fear can bring out anger, hate, and violence that rivals or surpasses the fiercest persecution we might face from those not of the household of faith.

Yet if we are to follow the New Testament elements of mission, if we are to have a "world-oriented" approach to mission, if we are to engage in the incarnational model of Jesus' ministry, we must risk the same fate that imperiled Paul.

If we want to do mission in the secular world we must be willing to risk rejection by fellow Seventh-day Adventists. Paul said, "Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!" (1 Cor 9:16). That cry must be ours as well.

CHAPTER 4

MISSION TO THE SECULAR WORLD

A Mission to the Secular

The first step in mission to the secular is to experience the “call” of God and to embrace the “Commission” of God. This precedes any planning or activity. To engage in ministry to our secular communities without taking this first step puts at risk our mission, our community, and ourselves.

The second step is to recognize that the process of secularization has had a wide-ranging effect on all of us. We see how secularization has changed the institutions in our community. We see how secularization has effected many members of our community. We must also recognize how much it has impacted our own personal lives. Secularization is changing the world around us and in us. This self awareness is essential if we are to minister to the secular for we must go as fellow pilgrims, not as aliens.

The third step is to believe that the gospel can transform lives as effectively in our secularized society as it did in the days of Paul. The challenge remains for us to “become all things to all men in order that we might save some.”

The Gap We Face Today

We have had a personal encounter with God. We have responded to his call and want to run with his commission. We recognize that secularization has burrowed itself

deep into our heart and mind. We lift up our lives to God so that he might expunge that which would hinder us and add that which might assist us. Now let us take a look at the gap that exists between the world of the Bible and the world around our churches.

A tremendous gulf separated Paul, in his Jewish-Christian world, from the pagan Gentile world. What gulf do we face when we go from our Adventist-Christian world to the secular world of the twenty-first century? Let us compare these three worlds to better understand what we face today. See table 3.

Is there a God? The Gentile world said gods were everywhere. Paul said there was only one God and that he could show them why theirs did not exist. Today the secular world says either, "God is dead!" or "This is how I think God should be." The Christian world is closer to the Gentile world of Paul's day than it is to ours because both believed in the existence of an inherently powerful supernatural deity .

Where did life come from? Pagan cultures point back to the origin of life as a work of the gods. Paul said it was the work of the one true God. Today people would say it is random chance. Once again, the Christian world is closer to the Gentile world because both see a divine origin to life.

What happens after death? Egyptians responded to the question of the afterlife by building pyramids of great complexity. Theologies of the afterlife were common to most cultures. Paul agreed that there was life after death but his description of it was quite different. Today secular man says, "Life after death? Who knows, I really prefer to be focused on getting what I can out of this life." Again the Christian world and the traditional Gentile world are closer in their thought forms.

TABLE 3
THE GAP WE FACE TODAY

Gentile World	Christian World	Secular World
<i>Is there a god?</i>		
Many gods everywhere	Only one God	No supernatural
<i>Origin of Life</i>		
Work of the gods	Work of God	Random chance
<i>After Death?</i>		
Life after death	Life after death	Nothing after death
<i>Religious Duties?</i>		
Please the gods	Obey God	What works for me
<i>How am I Saved?</i>		
Sacrifice at the temple	By the death of Jesus	I don't need salvation
<i>Rules?</i>		
Priests/Rulers determine	God determines	None are absolute
<i>Where is Hx going?</i>		
Endless cycle, sometimes gods affect it	Second Coming God controls	Going nowhere man controls
<i>Value of Individual?</i>		
Embedded in the Group	Infinite	Central
<i>View of Nature?</i>		
Mysterious/Sacred	Ordered under God	Consistent/Controllable
<i>Relation to Nature?</i>		
One with Nature	One with God	One with Nature

What about religious duties? People in Paul's day knew they needed to please the gods. They thought they could do it with exterior rituals. Paul said, "Sorry, it's not just going to the temple and sacrificing, you have to give heart obedience to the one true God." Today? Religious duties? Religious duties revolve around finding things that I believe help me in my life. In this area as well, the Christian world is closer to the Gentile world. Both teach that there are divine laws that we ignore at our eternal peril.

How am I saved? Gentiles would go sacrifice at the local temple and say, "That's how I'm saved!" Paul says, "No, only by the death of Jesus can you or I be saved." Modern man says, "Salvation? Who needs to be saved? If anything we need to be saved from the irrelevant religious concepts of the past. Get me a good 12-step group and I'll be fine." The Gentile world and the Christian world share together the belief that we do need salvation and that there is a way by which we may reach salvation.

What about rules? In Paul's day there were many religious rules and taboos. Priests and rulers did not hesitate to lay expectations on their people. Paul would say God is the only one who makes rules that are binding. Today secular man says that there are no rules that are absolutely binding. To cross the gap and speak to one who does not believe in absolutes is far more difficult than to speak to one who merely disagrees about which rules are truly binding.

What about history? Much of the Gentile world held to a cyclical view of history. History is like the cycles of the year, they keep going around and around without an endpoint in view. Christianity and Judaism said, "You're wrong! History is going some place." The Jews say history is going to the age of the Messiah. Christians say history is going to the return of the Messiah. What do secular people say today? They say that

history has no ultimate meaning. It is going nowhere. Here we find the Gentile world and secular world to be closer to each other than either is to the Christian world.

What value does the individual have in society? Millions of Chinese laborers died to build the Great Wall of China. Masses of poor Egyptians slaved to build the pyramids. While they were loved by their family and valued by their clans the political structures of their day gave them few rights as individuals. Their lives could be disposed of by fiat of the king and there would be no repercussions.

The Bible says that man has infinite worth. Man is so full of meaning that God sent his own Son to die just for us. What does society say today? The value of the individual is central. The democratic political structures of the Western world guarantee individual rights that have never before existed in the history of our world. The influence of Western democracies in this area helped to topple totalitarian regimes in much of Eastern Europe and continues to have a leavening influence on remaining totalitarian regimes throughout the world.

It may well be that this is largely a result of Christian influence in the countries where democracy was born. Nevertheless, it has taken on a life of its own and we have more in common with secular man on this question than Paul had with the Gentile world.

The Pagan world viewed nature as a provence of the gods. Nature could be capricious, as the gods were capricious. Nature was not something that man could control or predict. It was divine, mysterious, and had a logic of its own. The Bible says that nature is under God's control and is ordered and consistent. The consistency found in the laws of nature is a reflection of the consistency found in the moral laws of God. Nature, then, can be studied. Western science came out of this Christian philosophical

framework. Even though science has severed the relationship between God and nature, we still have more in common with our secular age in this area than Paul did with his Pagan age.

Today the Pagan view of “mother earth” has come full circle. Many feel that the rights of animals and the rights of the natural world are just as important as the rights of man. Evolution teaches that nature is our creator so there is no basis for differentiating ourselves from the world around us. Christianity and Judaism say, no, we are a unique creation of God, we are made in his image, and in this way stand apart from the rest of nature. While we share a biological oneness with the world around us, we have also been created to enjoy a oneness with God that the rest of nature can never know. Here we find that the gap in Paul’s day was just as great as the gap we face in our day.

What are we to conclude? In many significant areas, the gap we must cross in mission to the secular world is larger today than the gap Paul crossed to reach the pagan world in his own day. The challenge for Christian mission to the secular world is immediate and imposing.

Success will come as we follow Paul’s model for reaching the Gentile world. That model is to use only the gospel of Jesus Christ to bridge the gap. That model does not impose additional requirements no matter how helpful they have been to us or to our fathers.

Paul, to cross the gap in his day, was willing to take the risk of alienating Jewish/Christian leaders in Jerusalem. He would not allow his ministry to be stopped by opposition from members who simply did not understand the gospel of Jesus Christ or the nature and calling of Paul’s personal ministry.

We, to cross the gap in our day, must not limit mission to a form that is comfortable to all of our own members. To do this risks making it irrelevant or ineffective to the people we are trying to reach.

The Necessity of a Missiological Approach

The purpose of mission is to bring to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to peoples and cultures who do not know him. This gospel then must be inculturated into that new setting.

The inculturation of the Church is the integration of the Christian experience of a local Church into the culture of its people, in such a way that this experience not only expresses itself in elements of this culture, but becomes a force that animates, orients and innovates this culture so as to create a new unity and communion, not only within the culture in question but also as an enrichment of the Church universal.¹

Since the culture of secularization is so distinct from that of Christianity we must apply the same clear and insightful analysis to doing mission in our own neighborhoods as we do when thinking about going to a country like Mongolia.

The Mission Field Across the Street

The powerful process called secularization has created tremendous changes right here in our own neighborhood. To cross the street today is the equivalent of crossing the ocean a generation ago. We must recognize that

Postmodern culture is most accurately described as 'pre-Christian.' We are in many ways back in the first century in the midst of a culture that still has yet to hear about who we are and what we believe. Instead of the Christian church giving off nothing so much as the sour whiff of the rejected suitor, what if we were to look at USAmerica as a vast mission field – 120 million pre-Christian people 14 or older? . . . Only two countries have more nonbelievers than the US: India and China. The US is the third-largest mission field in the world. Unfortunately, our efforts at evangelizing the unchurched have all the pace of a southern summer. Few believers

¹Ary Roest Crolius, as quoted in Sweet, *Aquachurch*, 81.

have relationships, much less friendships, with nonbelievers. And our bluntness of touch when handling the unchurched – how would you like to be a lion in a den of Daniels? – is made even more artless by our interior distractions, effortful compassion, and dependence on the sedimental sentiments of establishment religion.¹

In crossing the ocean as missionaries we would study the language, the culture, the economy, and the social structure of the country we would be entering. We would check out the legal requirements for entry, create support groups for our missionaries, and look for existing cultural bridges that could carry gospel themes to the people. Personal spiritual preparation would be a “given.”

In crossing the street we must learn to ask the same types of questions. What language do they speak? What values do they have? What are the social structures? How do I gain entry into this community? What is taboo here? What parts of the gospel will they be most receptive to? How can I prepare myself spiritually for this mission? These types of questions are prerequisites for doing mission in a secularized society.

A “Needs”-Oriented Approach

It is easy to think of our church in terms of its denominational history, doctrinal distinctions, and institutional concerns. The challenge today is to think of church “less as a building we attend once a week or an institution we maintain . . . and more as an intergenerational, multicultural, organic community where we also happen to worship and celebrate our Christian faith, . . . praying that God’s kingdom will come and God’s will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”²

¹Sweet, *soulTsunami*, 50.

²Tom Sine, “A New Call for Community for a New Millennium,” *Green Cross* (Fall 1995): 25.

When church is experienced in this way then it becomes natural to follow the world-oriented mission that Christ modeled in his ministry. This world-oriented mission recognizes secular people's basic needs and approaches them on that pathway. A world-oriented mission allows the gospel to speak to the needs people are experiencing. Social scientists today recognize five basic needs in secular society.

Fellowship/Community

Secular people have become accountable primarily to themselves. They have become lost in the concrete jungle of the secular city. There is a tremendous need for deep fellowship and community. Secular people have plenty of casual friends and relationships, but inside many are lonely.

Their preoccupation with their own interests has not allowed them to be grounded in a larger social group that can give them a sense of place and family. This grounding rarely exists because they are unwilling to sacrifice the individuality that must be given up to become a significant part of a larger group. Nevertheless the need is real and deep and offers an avenue into the secular soul.

Secular people need a place to hang their hats, a place to let down their hair, a place they can call home. The New Testament church, with its close-knit home churches, provided such a place. The modern church growth-movement confirms that providing this sense of fellowship is essential to winning and keeping members. Sweet talks about two sets of questions people ask as they come into relationship with a church community.

Can the church build new kinds of relationships with members and nonmembers, collaborative relationships over combative relationships? The biggest factors determining whether new members will dig in or drop out are answers to these three questions:

Can I make friends in this church?
 Is there a place where I will fit in?
 Does this church need me?

A "no" answer to these questions means the member leaves after about six months. A "yes" answer keeps them for six months, after which the questions become different:

Are my new friends as good as my old friends?
 Does this group address specific needs in my life?
 Is my contribution valued?¹

We must make our church a home where hearts can meet and grow. Fellowship cannot be passed over a TV screen. Fellowship cannot be passed via a pamphlet, brochure, or book. Fellowship is passed on when we stand face to face with another human being. Fellowship must be experienced in person. A crowd can enjoy a dynamic speaker but they cannot know a true sense of community with that person. God asks each of us to stand in his stead. God asks us to become one with the community around us.

Meaning

Science seems to explain away meaning from our lives. We are, after all, the result of what random chance has created over a period of hundreds of millions of years. We will soon go back to dust and be forgotten by our children's children. If we can keep from destroying our world with nuclear weapons or ecological disasters, human life may continue until the sun grows cold or an asteroid collides with the earth. The past offers no inspiration, the future is questionable, and the present is uncomfortably difficult as well.

¹Sweet, *Aquachurch*, 196.

Technology has replaced the work many people used to do. Is there really any value to our lives? The world runs on the basis of cause and effect. Is there any room left for God?

This sense of meaninglessness presents a tremendous opportunity to make the gospel of Jesus Christ relevant to our secular community, for in the response to this sense of meaninglessness the Bible offers hope. The Bible puts an infinite value on each and every man, woman, and child. The Bible paints a picture of a powerful past, a glorious future, and an exciting present. We must be willing to spend time in our public evangelism dealing with these issues.

As secular people join us for worship they are not concerned about our style of worship so much as “whether the people, including the clergy, are having life-transforming experiences in worship. Are these churches, and their clergy, mediating deeply moving experiences of the divine?”¹ Secular man needs to come into personal contact with men and women whose lives radiate with a sense of meaning and direction that he does not have. An institution cannot give this. A program cannot provide this. Our lives must be the instrument through which this meaning is seen.

Values

“The Lost Children of Rockdale,” a story profiled by PBS on *Frontline*, tells a troubling tale of moral values in America. Rockdale is a fast-growing, wealthy suburb of Atlanta. Kay S. Hymowitz reports the story in *City Journal* and describes the setting this way:

¹Donald E. Miller, as quoted in Sweet, *soulTsunami*, 209.

Many Rockdale residents are newcomers to the region who have succeeded in their search for the good life. We get innumerable images of the wide streets of pristine subdivisions and newly sprouted McMansions, with their cathedral ceilings and airy, granite-countered kitchens. And, in fact, the mothers and fathers who inhabit these perfect houses do a good deal of what we hear good parents today ought to do: they coach Little League teams, they go on family vacations, they fix dinner for the kids. In the end, though, they remain utterly clueless when it comes to turning their mansions into homes where children can learn how to lead meaningful lives. Devoid of strong beliefs, seemingly bereft of meaningful experience to pass on to their young, they have at their center a vague emptiness that comes to seem the exact inverse of the meticulous opulence of their homes. The *Frontline* episode could just have easily been titled "*The Lost Adults of Rockdale County*."¹

The cause for the show was an outbreak of syphilis in Rockdale County that affected over 200 teenagers. Hymowitz writes,

What was so remarkable was not that 200 teenagers in a large suburban area were having sex and had overlapping partners. It was the way they were having sex. This was teen sex as Lord of the Flies author William Golding might have imagined it, a heart-of-darkness tribal rite of such degradation that it makes a collegiate "hook up" look like splendor in the grass. Group sex was commonplace, as were 13-year-old participants. Kids would watch the Playboy cable TV channel and make a game of imitating everything they saw. They tried almost every permutation of sexual activity imaginable.²

The producers of the show found a number of factors contributing to the unusual sexual activity of these teens. Some came from broken homes. Some were children of part-time parents who worked long hours to provide their children with a high level of material comfort. Others had two caring parents who coached their sports teams, were home in the evening, and spent time with their children. It became clear that more was involved than lonely teens finding a "surrogate family" where the currency of exchange was sex. Hymowitz writes,

¹ Kay S. Hymowitz, "What's Wrong With the Kids?" *The City Journal* 10, no. 1 (2000): 41.

² *Ibid.*, 42.

“They know they must love their children; they know they must provide for them – both of which they can do abundantly. . . . But when it comes to the cultural resources that would outfit their children with the moral awareness and worthy aspirations that would help them form a firm sense of self, these parents are deeply impoverished.”¹

Some in the study pointed out the need for parents to talk with their kids about tough issues. The Kaiser Foundation began a campaign to help parents realize this goal so that kids could talk to them about anything. The question still remains, as Ms. Hymowitz points out, just how is it that this talking is supposed to help the kids if the parents have no firm values of their own to pass on to their children? Ms. Hymowitz writes, “They don’t believe there are any firm values to impart. These parents undoubtedly do not approve of group sex or sexually transmitted diseases. . . . But they have absorbed from the surrounding culture an ethos of nonjudgmentalism, which has drained their beliefs on these matters of all feeling and force.”²

Even after the facts became known, one of the mothers said that while she clearly disapproved of the behavior of her son she did not know what else she could do since she felt that her own values were only opinions and that her son needed to make his own decisions.

Convinced that there are no values worth fighting for, the lost adults of Rockdale County have abdicated the age-old distinction between parents and children and have settled for being their children’s friends and housemates. . . . When adults turn into friends, childhood must disappear. Childhood cannot exist with no adults around. The children of Rockdale, still baby-faced and restlessly energetic, have lost all the sense of wonder, spontaneity, and idealism that we ordinarily associate with childhood. One of the most memorable images from the documentary is of three

¹Ibid., 43.

²Ibid., 44.

cherubic 14-year-olds demonstrating their sexual activities with the stuffed animals that still lie heaped on the bed in one of their rooms. It is in this child's bedroom, whose walls are decorated with graffiti, some of it obscene, that they also chant the lyrics of their favorite rap song. . . . The tone of their delivery is a mixture of robotic chanting and giggling, and it captures perfectly the pathetic struggle inside them between the nihilism their own degraded experience has taught them and the childishness that nature insists still defines them.¹

This particular case study from Marin, Georgia, illustrates the dilemma facing many secular people. In the secular world today nothing is considered absolute and everything is relative with our best thoughts and aspirations merely an opinion. This line of thinking has taken from secular people any permanent trustworthy rules to base their life upon. True biblical values, presented in the cultural context of our own age, can speak with power to this need.

The fact that a set of values has been espoused by a large group of people in the past is not sufficient persuasion for secular people to accept them. The fact that I can show how my values are rooted in the Bible is of trifling significance to secular men and women. They want to see the impact these values actually have in my life.

How do these values enable me to survive the dog-eat-dog arena that is our workplace? How do these values keep my marriage together? How do these values help my children to adapt and thrive at school? How do they improve the life of my community?

Secular people are not interested in whether I am refraining from eating "unclean foods." Secular people want to know how values revolving around honesty, home, honor, and personal relationships can be built into our lives. Once again secular people cannot

¹Ibid., 45.

make these observations if our personal life does not cross within the sphere of their own, for they want to see the proof with their own eyes.

Salvation/Messiah

Institutional religion has declined. The modern state has taken on many of the prerogatives formerly the realm of religion. The modern state, however, has failed to heal the evils that reside in the human heart. Secular man hurts deep within. Loneliness, meaninglessness, and the sense that everything is relative, all contribute to this aching hurt.

Secular man experiences pain that he simply cannot remove. Wealth cannot cover it. Education cannot carry us beyond it. Therapy cannot resolve it. Where is he to turn to find healing?

The church must be, to secular people, a house of healing. The church must be a place of salvation for the hurting hearts of our secular communities. For the community to know that this is the case, for our neighbors to sense that this is happening, they must see firsthand the healing that has taken place in our own lives.

Abundant Life

The products advertised on TV promise to make us happy. If we will just buy this, drink that, wear these clothes, drive that car, then our lives will be good. Secular people are highly skeptical of such advertising. They are even more skeptical when faced with TV preachers promising the abundant life in exchange for a small tax-deductible donation.

In a world where secular people often feel alone, unappreciated, and are unable to find a base upon which to build their lives, there is an incredibly keen interest in experiencing an “abundant” life.

More and more we find that secular people do not just want to go on an expensive vacation to far-off cities; they want to go on an adventure. They want to climb mountains, paddle up rivers, be roped onto cliffs, guided through caves, or buy a seat on the first commercial shuttle to space. Of course they may want to be pampered as they go, but still they want something beyond the ordinary.

If this “beyond” is not defined by fear-inducing physical thrills, it is defined by its uniqueness. Spending one week learning from a five-star chef, going to Michael Jordan’s personal basketball camp, accompanying an archeologist on a dig, working with ecological scientists on a ship in the ocean, secular people want more than the routine, the conventional, the known. “I only have one life, thinks ‘secular man,’ how can I get everything I want out of it?”

For Paul, Christianity was not routine. Christianity filled Paul with passion, wonder, and excitement. Christianity tore Paul from his sheltered suburban roots and sent him careening across countries, continents, and seas. Paul stood before kings and emperors. Paul endured poverty and riches. Paul was cheered as a god and booed like a devil. Paul lived an “abundant” life. We must bring this “abundant life” which Christianity offers to our secular world. We must challenge them with the honesty, the authenticity, and the exhilaration of genuine Christianity.

The church can create a space in which authenticity can thrive. The church can provide the authenticating experiences of empathy (‘I’ve been there’) and understanding (‘I know how you feel’). It can also help identify the signifiers of authenticity that have been drawn from the experiences of those who have followed

Christ in history and today. For the disciple of Jesus, authenticity is not the self-expression of a private vision, but the divine impression of a community's expressions and identity. The church can also show postmoderns how to resist the evangelism industries of advertising, television, and the movies that seek to infiltrate our consciousness with their values, turning us into grist for the market mills.¹

Sending out mailers and talking to people from remote radio stations will not get this message across. Our secular communities want to see the abundance of Christianity in our own personal lives.

Summary

This abundance of Christianity, this experience of authentic Christian faith, is something that few in our communities have ever seen or experienced. In the face of the general ignorance that exists about Christianity, it is a powerful witness.

Too much of our Christian witness today concentrates upon trying to convince people that Christianity is true. We need instead to consider two prior problems. First, most Americans and Canadians are ignorant of even the basics of authentic Christian faith. And second, most people think that they do understand Christianity and thus feel entitled to dismiss it out of hand.²

Whatever their misunderstandings about Christianity might be, there is no mistaking the needs in their own lives. If we can bring the gospel to touch those needs they will stop to listen.

In the midst of a culture of communal anorexia, there is a deepening desire for a life filled with friends, community, service, and creative and spiritual growth. The church must provide its people with a moral code, a vision of what gives life value, and an experience of embeddedness in a community to which one makes valuable contributions. Personal relationships are key in postmodern ministry. Can the church foster close, supportive, confiding, confining relationships? When Jesus completed most of the training of his disciples, like parents training their children, he

¹Sweet, soulTsunami, 130.

²John G. Stackhouse, Jr., "Why Our Friends Won't Stop, Look, and Listen," *Christianity Today*, 3 February 1997, 49.

announced their commencement by graduating them to the status of 'friends' (John 15:15).¹

Are we willing to be their friends? We can meet the needs of secular people only face to face, one person at a time. If we present the gospel in response to these specific needs, we will find an audience. If we live out the biblical responses to these needs, we will make disciples.

Obstacles in Mission to the Secular

In mission to the secular we face all of the same obstacles that are a part of any cross-cultural ministry. Since our neighbors speak the same language, shop at the same stores, and celebrate the same holidays, we often forget this. The barriers to entry are just as real when dealing with secular people as they are in the jungles of New Guinea.

Our ability to differentiate between the gospel and our own cultural adaptations is key to our success. What cultural adaptations have become so much a part of our life that we confuse them with the experience of Christianity? We must discover those modern-day equivalents to the "circumcision controversy" and learn how to move beyond them.

Another obstacle in mission to the secular is that of the dichotomy often drawn between the secular realm and the sacred realm. Dr. Oosterwal, in his class on secularization, presents five views on the sacred/secular relationship, these views are shown in table 4.

The term "secular" has negative connotations to most Christians. To fully see and utilize the positive aspects of secularization we must reexamine the dichotomy that is

¹Sweet, soulTsunami, 221.

TABLE 4

HOW THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SACRED AND THE SECULAR
INFLUENCES OUR VIEW OF THE SECULAR, SECULARIZATION,
THE CHURCH, AND MISSION

The Secular Is	Secularization Is	The Church Is	Mission Is
<i>When the Sacred Is Seen in Opposition to the Secular</i>			
inferior; evil pollutes the believer needs to be avoided	threat to the church illegitimate increases worldliness	above the world called to come out God's fortress	soul winning, crusade evangelism calling people out of world
<i>When the Sacred and the Secular Exist in Mutually Autonomous Spheres</i>			
realm under God own divine calling complements/corrects	fruit of the gospel God at work necessary process	fulfilled in world incarnate in world participates in worldly	work of the laity part of whole life integrated in all they do
<i>When the Sacred Wins the Battle with the Secular</i>			
claimed by sacred conquered by sacred subjected to sacred	impoverishes society decline of culture prevents church growth	heart of all culture guide of all culture expand to all of life	claiming people and activities for God and the church
<i>When the Secular Reaches Its Zenith and Becomes the Sacred Sphere</i>			
the only reality religion hinders man coming of age	process of liberation helpful to man's true nature/existence	part of culture part of social life quest for ultimate	penetration of life works "underground" makes "anonymous Christians"
<i>When the Sacred Is Expressed through the Secular</i>			
not separate of sacred God's good creation fallen and redeemed	evidence of "Gr. Con." Christ vs. Satan Man participates in	bridge tween God-Man and the sacred-profane God's colony on earth	proclaim & serve reconcile man to God hasten the judgment

often drawn between the sacred and the secular. Why do we think of the sacred as being in opposition to the secular? Where does this thinking come from?

During the medieval age it was widely believed that spirit was in conflict with matter, the religious was in conflict with the profane, the church was in conflict with the world, the soul with the body, the clergy with the laity, and that the sacred was in conflict with the secular. In each case it was believed that the former was superior to the latter.

We fight the idea that the soul and body are in conflict. We certainly reject the superiority of the soul to the body. We also champion the priesthood of the believers. Why do we accept then that the sacred is in conflict with the secular and that the sacred is superior to the secular?

Boniface the VIII made the following statement, "The Religious sphere is always superior, and the secular, that is the realm of government of the professions, and the arts and sciences, is always inferior. For that reason, laymen ought to obey the clergy."¹ If we reject that laymen should obey the clergy, should not we also reject that the secular sphere is always inferior to the religious sphere?

If our approach to the secular community is premised on an erroneous base, a false dichotomy between the sacred and the secular, could that explain some of our difficulty in reaching secular people?

Both the sacred and the secular are an expression of the love of God for man. They cannot live without each other nor can they live in domination of each other. They must be mutually supportive where each can act as a correcting agent to the other. Both

¹Boniface VIII, *Unam Sanctam*, 1302, quoted by Gottfried Oosterwal, *Class Syllabus for Secularization*, Hiroshima, 1989.

realms can feel the corruption of sin and both can be avenues of the divine as it transforms our life and world.

If we insist upon drawing a dichotomy between the sacred and the secular we risk expending the majority of our energy fighting non-issues, securing allegiance to nonessentials, and building programs and institutions that neither fit society nor transform it. Our view of secularization must be biblically based in order to bring the gospel effectively to the secular world.

A New Paradigm for Ministry

Secularization offers us powerful avenues to bring the gospel to our communities. A new paradigm must arise in response to these opportunities. Here are five characteristics of this paradigm.

1. *Mission and evangelism are the calling of the members.* It is only through the lives of the members that we can engage in personal ministry in our communities. Professional church workers are too few and the fact that they are paid professionals causes a skeptical response.

The Postmodern Reformation church will once and for all abolish the laity. Of course, in saying that, I have also said something else: The Postmodern Reformation church will once and for all abolish the clergy. There is no biblical ordering of the church into 'clergy' and 'laity.' Only 'ministers,' which one becomes at one's baptism, and those set apart and ordained for the 'equipping of the saints' for their ministries.¹

2. *The local church is the center of all evangelism.* Since the essence of doing mission is personal work, the central focus has to return to the local church. Schools, hospitals, media centers, and administrative offices can only support and assist the work

¹Sweet, soulTsunami, 217-218.

of the members. Personal needs cannot be met from out of town. If the focus is on the denomination, we risk ongoing stagnant growth. If the focus is on the local congregation there is no limit to our growth. John Naisbitt warns large companies of this same danger when he says, "small companies, right down to the individual can beat big bureaucratic companies ten out of ten times. Therefore, unless the big companies reconstitute themselves as a collection of small companies, they will just continue to go out of business."¹

3. *Mission and evangelism are world-oriented and are driven by secular needs.*

Since the church is no longer the focus of community life it can no longer be expected that effective evangelism will occur by simply inviting people to come there and listen. The community is not willing to come to us in this way. We must go to the community.

We need a new theory of church that is based less on budgets and baptisms than on community and service. In the theology of Jesus, you are saved to be spent. A missional church is one that orients itself to the needs of those outside it more than the needs of those inside it.²

Postmodern preachers don't populate the pews; they connect people to the living Christ. Postmodern evangelism doesn't say to the world, 'Come to church.' Rather, it says to the church, 'Go to the world.' . . . Postmodern evangelism is recognizing that God is already at work in people's lives before we arrived on the scene, and that our role is helping people to see how God is present and active in their lives, calling them home.³

4. *The primary role of the pastor is to train members.* It is comfortable to depend on a specialist to do our evangelism. It is easier to listen to a professional speak than to

¹John Naisbitt, "From Nation States to Networks," *Rethinking the Future: Rethinking Business Principles, Competition, Control & Complexity, Leadership, Markets and the World*, ed. Rowan Gibson (London: Nicholas Brealey, 1997), 214.

²Sweet, soulTsunami, 342-343.

³Ibid., 53-54.

stand there ourselves. However, what our community will accept as proof that our affirmations have value demands nothing less than that our members move to the front and that our religious professionals move to the background. The primary role of the pastor then is to assist, stimulate, guide, and prepare the members for their God-given calling in the world, according to their specific spiritual gifts.

He spent his ministry not founding local communities or growing a mega-following for himself, but building a handful of itinerant disciples in first-century Palestine into a great team.¹

The genius of Jesus' method is that he spent his entire ministry majoring in the quality of disciple making, not the quantity of disciples. Jesus did not have a self-conscious strategy for growing his movement. Growth simply happened as a result of the mysterious work of the Spirit from the contagion of the quality of life in Jesus Christ. Jesus spent more time on shaping his disciples for leadership than on their pastoral care.²

Face outward! Move out! Become a movement church. Raise up movement people more than institutional people. Give up upward mobility for outward mobility. A church primarily concerned with itself and its needs is not healthy. The church is where people like to go, not like to come.³

5. Make Churches Into Wellness Centers.

The church is God's medium for restoring lost men and women to himself. The church must be a place where hurting sinners can find rest for their souls. And yet if we do not go on to experience the fullness of healing God offers us we remain stuck in our pain. Acknowledgement of our sinful state is the essential step where our life turns towards God but once that has occurred our attention should be refocused on the full restoration of our body, mind, and soul that can only occur as we grow up in him.

¹Sweet, *Aquachurch*, 192-193.

²Sweet, *soulTsunami*, 254.

³*Ibid.*, 309.

Jesus is the Great Physician. We are to be the physicians of our people. But postmodern physicians work harder to keep people from getting sick than making sick people well. Most fundamentally, faith does not so much make sick people well as keep well people from getting sick. It is time to move the church from a sickness paradigm to a wellness paradigm, from a sin paradigm to a holiness paradigm. It is time for our churches to 'go holistic' and move from being Illness Centers to Total Wellness Centers.

You've heard it quoted many times: 'The church is not a museum for saints, but a hospital for sinners.' No wonder we're in such a fix: We're more fixated on sin than sainthood. We specialize more in disease than in health.¹

Each characteristic of this new paradigm revolves around the value of lost men and women in the eyes of God. The calling of each member to ministry, the importance of the local congregation, the outward world oriented focus, the reorientation of our focus to full restoration in Christ, all is driven by the desire to restore lost people to God.

How important is one person to you? Can your church put its arms around a visitor's shoulder and say, 'I want to understand you; I want to hear who you are; I want to listen and hear your story, and how God is already working in your life. I want you to change us because you're here.' The Guerilla Marketing Newsletter reports that American Airlines calculated that if they had one more customer on each flight in a given year, the difference in revenue would have been about \$ 114 million. This is how much one customer is worth to American Airlines. How much is one new disciple of Jesus worth to your church?²

We can no longer do business, religious business, as usual. We cannot depend on institutions, leaders, programs, or even doctrinal truth to be the primary bridge in reaching the secular world. The life and witness of the body of Christ are the means by which our mission to secularized people can be accomplished.

¹Ibid., 255.

²Ibid., 306.

Spiritual Revival

A biblical understanding of secularization challenges us to appreciate and respect what God is doing through this process. The phenomenon of secularization that has circled the globe cries out for a response rooted in spiritual revival and reformation.

Accepting the New Testament approach to mission challenges us to personal, active involvement. Seeing the needs in our secular communities gives us a direction for our personal involvement. As we reflect on the needs and challenges in this ministry we recognize that our own personal lives are the bridges needed to reach people in a secular world.

This realization can do nothing less than spur us on to spiritual revival. The nature of mission to the secular rests heavily upon our personal spiritual lives. If it were not for the promise of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, this responsibility would be overwhelming.

Ellen White writes about the gift of the Holy Spirit in the days of the apostles and how we may receive the Holy Spirit today.

To us today, as verily as to the first disciples, the promise of the Spirit belongs. God will today endow men and women with power from above, as He endowed those who on the day of Pentecost heard the word of salvation. At this very hour his Spirit and his grace are for all who need them and will take him at his word.¹

As Pentecost was necessary before the apostles could engage the Gentile world of their day, so we too need a Pentecost in our age to enable our lives to be used by God to gather to himself lost men and women from the secular world.

¹White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 8:20.

As we consider crossing the street to meet our neighbors, remember that “God desires to refresh his people by the gift of the Holy Spirit, baptizing them anew in his love.”¹

The gift of the Holy Spirit is not far off and long ago. The gift of the Holy Spirit is not held back until we reach a higher level of perfection. The gift of the Holy Spirit is not given as a reward for finishing the task. The gift of the Holy Spirit is meant to be an ongoing part of our walk with Christ.

Our Father whose primary interest is in our spiritual life and well-being gives the gift of the Holy Spirit eagerly. If there are trying times in our mission for others, if sometimes we start to lose our faith or hold on God, remember that, “the Lord is more willing to give the Holy Spirit to those who serve him than parents are to give gifts to their children.”²

God is ready to begin this work in us. God is already at work opening doors of opportunity that we are only now beginning to fully comprehend. Are we willing to join him in this ministry? Bridges need to be built to cross the divide left by the sea change that has transformed our world through the process called secularization.

These bridges are not made of rock or stone. These bridges are not made of programs, beliefs, or doctrines. You are the bridge. I am the bridge. WE are the bridges. God has called us in the power of the Holy Spirit to not just build bridges but to be bridges to our secularized communities.

¹White, *Counsels on Stewardship*, 250.

²White, *Acts of the Apostles*, 50.

CHAPTER 5

SEMINAR DESIGN

The East Lansing Seventh-day Adventist Church

The East Lansing Seventh-day Adventist church was planted in 1955 by the Lansing Seventh-day Adventist church with the intent of establishing a base for evangelizing Michigan State University and its surrounding community. During its early years the church was pastored by interns from the Lansing church. In the 1960s the church had a succession of men serve as pastor who had come to the area to work on advanced degrees at Michigan State University (MSU). The duration of their stay was often one to three years. Different buildings were rented for the worship services until 1971 when a small colonial-style church was purchased one mile west of the university. The sanctuary held 90 to 110 people comfortably, but classroom space was limited and fellowship room space less than adequate.

The church mortgage was paid off during the next few years but the lack of space for a growing congregation led to another move in 1987 when a church came on the market that was located just one block north of the front of the MSU campus. A Lutheran congregation had built the new church in two stages. The sanctuary that accommodates 150 people had been built in the 1940s. It was a beautiful stone structure of a classic church architectural style with stained-glass windows and golden oak trim. A wing for

classroom space had been added in the 1960s that would accommodate the Sabbath school/fellowship needs of a congregation of 250 people.

I came to pastor this congregation in July of 1990. In addition to East Lansing I also was given a congregation in Bunker Hill that is located thirty miles south of East Lansing. I typically spend one Sabbath a month in Bunker Hill and the rest of my time in East Lansing.

Our congregation in East Lansing has a membership of 160. Our weekly worship attendance has been 110 to 120 in recent years. Over the years many of our members have come from overseas to work on graduate programs at MSU. As a result we have had an ethnically diverse congregation. Some years I have had more elders who were born overseas than elders who were born in the United States. We have always had a strong representation from numerous countries in Africa and in the Caribbean as well as India, South America, and Asia.

For many years our congregation has been open to women serving in leadership positions. When I arrived ten years ago we had as many female elders as we had male elders. In 1992 we hired a woman to serve as our assistant pastor. She was with us for only a year and we could afford only a task-force-sized financial package, but the congregation welcomed her with open arms in the role of pastor.

Our congregation is characterized by warmth, friendliness, acceptance, hospitality, tolerance, and independence. Our worship style is traditional on most Sabbaths. We have certain Sabbaths during the year that differ from the norm. The first Sabbath in December we have a Christmas brunch at 9:30 followed by a children's

musical recital at 10:30, followed by a worship service of music and drama provided by student groups from our Junior Academy.

For Mother's Day in May we always have one of our mothers preach, while the men provide the food, the hosting, and the clean-up for the potluck. A year ago we started having a musical praise service that precedes our worship hour. Some weeks we have electric guitars as a part of the musical accompaniment. Initially we had some complaints about the volume of sound from the amplifiers so we turned them down. We do not use drums. Often we have cellos, violins, and a keyboardist playing along with the guitarists. We have encouraged any of our youth who play an instrument to join us up front. This praise service has become a favorite part of our Sabbath worship time.

The open, tolerant climate in our congregation has not been conducive to offshoot types of thinking or to dissident groups so this side of Adventism has not affected our church life. Most of our members are very traditional in how they dress, adorn themselves, and relate to the church and its institutions. We also have some families who are nontraditional in varying aspects of their lifestyle and witness. During my years in East Lansing there has not been stress or tension between members relating to these types of issues.

Many of our student families from overseas send their children to public schools. Sometimes this is because of finances, sometimes because of transportation, but usually it is because in their home countries the majority of Adventists utilize the public school system. A number of our other families also utilize the local public schools. There are also many families that have sent their children to Adventist schools for some or all of their schooling. Most of our members are supportive of denominational programs and

institutions. Regardless of individual differences in some of these areas members have always expressed a strong loyalty and commitment to our local church and to each other.

We have had five major series of evangelistic meetings over the last decade here in East Lansing. Some meetings have been held in our church and some have been held in local schools and hotels. We have experimented with different advertising approaches using radio, TV, newspaper, and direct mailings. We have used traditional Bible-focused avenues of Adventist evangelism, both with live speakers and via satellite. When we have started meetings in neutral sites and have had a larger budget to work with initial attendance has been larger but has dropped significantly even before transferring back to our church location. Overall our meetings have not drawn a strong response from the people and students in East Lansing.

Since our church exists for the purpose of sharing the gospel, this lack of response on the part of our community has been of great concern to myself as well as to my congregation. I believe that my congregation wants to be able to speak the gospel with power and clarity and is open to exploring new evangelistic approaches to our community.

The Purpose of the Seminar

The purpose of this seminar is first to help members begin to grasp just what secularization is and how far reaching its impact is both on their personal world and on the community they seek to evangelize.

There is no question that secularization has shaken the individual faith and religious identity of many Christians and that it has taken a tremendous toll on the

Seventh-day Adventist church. We must understand and recognize the dangers inherent in this process.

However, while secularization has had a staggering impact on us and on our church we must secondly be able to grasp the new and exciting opportunities it affords for Christian mission and witness.

God is using the phenomena of secularization to free people from cultural and religious bondage. God is using secularization to prepare men, women, and children for his second coming. Do we see the doors of opportunity that God is opening?

Lastly, to fully utilize these new opportunities we must return to the New Testament practice of community, mission, and ministry. These New Testament practices will result in the remaking of church life, thinking, and structure. These practices will bring the gospel with power to our hearts, our lives, and our neighborhoods.

Questionnaire Design and Use

To what degree are my members aware of the worldwide phenomena of secularization? Do they see any positive aspects to secularization? Do they consider themselves to be highly secularized? Do they reflect secularized responses when they must solve problems, plan for the future, and make decisions? These were some of the questions I had in my mind as I began to design the survey instrument.

During the course of my research I felt that my members might not realize the extent to which secularization has permeated each of our lives. It appeared to me that many Seventh-day Adventists mistakenly identify the effects of secularization as touching primarily those who espouse the philosophy of secularism. Consequently many church members see secularization as something out there, something that is fighting

against the church, something that is in every sense an enemy of the church, something that is creeping into the church through the guise of wedding rings, jewelry, drama, drums in church, competitive sports, and a slackening of Sabbath keeping. It appeared to me that many members view secularization as something that liberal members are wrongly bringing into the church and therefore that it warrants a circling of the wagons in response to these threats from secularization.

As I had done my research, my study indicated that secularization has more to do with how we think about life, how we make decisions, how we view our church and community, and how we allocate the resources of time and energy in the living of our lives. My study indicated that secularization was probably having a major effect on all church members in these areas of life regardless of whether they consider themselves to be liberal or conservative.

If indeed it was true that secularization was having a greater effect on the lives of even my good, upstanding, mainstream members than what they consciously recognized, then I wanted the participants of my seminar to see that early on. If true, it would be essential to recognize this in order for the participants to be then able to move on to develop strategies for carrying the gospel to our secular communities.

As I reflected on these questions I decided to start my survey with a series of four situations where my members would have to choose how they would respond to a particular problem. I chose situations that I thought would bring potential biblical responses into tension with potential secular responses. See the survey instrument in appendix B.

The survey starts with a situational problem called *Saving My Child*. In the Bible neither Paul nor Elisha send for medical assistance when faced with dead boys. What do we do? Do we differ from the Bible model? If so, why?

This is followed by the situational problem *Finding Success at Work*. Daniel's success was built upon his relationship with God. What effect does the time I spend developing my relationship with God have on my success in life?

The third situational problem is *Rebuilding My Marriage*. In the Old Testament we find Israelites going to family heads, tribal leaders, judges, kings, and prophets to solve their problems and answer their questions. In the New Testament we find local church leadership serving this function. Where do we turn today when we face marital problems? Do we turn to the church or are we influenced by the pragmatic, result-focused orientation of our secular society?

The last situational problem is *Problems at Church*. To what degree has the pluralism of our society influenced how we look at deviation from the collective norm in our church? Working on Sabbath is a basis for being disfellowshipped according to our church manual. How likely are we to apply this penalty to a member of our own church?

In the first half of page two I wanted to allow our members the opportunity to state their opinion of secularization's impact on our church and its effect upon themselves. I was curious to see if our opinion of the level of secularization in our local town would differ from our opinion of the level of secularization in our country at large. I also wanted to see how we would rate the level of secularization in our SDA education system with the level of secularization in public education. I wondered if we viewed our schools as relatively safe from the effects of secularization? Finally I was interested to

know how we viewed the level of secularization in our own life as compared to the level of secularization we saw in the lives of our neighbors, our church family, and our nuclear family.

Also on the second page I asked ten true/false questions. These ten true/false questions were to indicate the level of secularizing factors that we experience in our daily lives. I wanted to measure the strength of these secularizing factors so that I could compare them with the strength of secularizing factors in the local church.

On the bottom of the second page I asked the participants to prioritize a list of responses to indicate what they consider is important when evaluating claims made by a company about their product. What do we feel is relevant when considering the purchase of a secular product? I wanted to see how this would compare with what our community might feel is relevant when considering listening to the claims of an Adventist speaker?

The top half of page three has two sections listing a group of lecture topics. In the first section I ask the participant to prioritize the list based on what would get him/her out of the house, into the car, and on the way to the meeting. In the second section I ask the participants to prioritize the same list but this time to base it on what would get members of their community out of their homes, into their cars, and off to the meeting.

I wanted to see if church members thought that people living in our communities were interested in the same topics that they are. If not, I wondered what topics our church members thought the community might be interested in. I was also interested in comparing the topics selected here with the participant's view of what the basic needs of secularized people are, which would come on the next page.

At the bottom of page three I had ten more true/false questions. These ten questions touched on the same secularizing factors used in the true/false questions on page two but this time they were put in a church setting. How secular is the church where we hold membership? I wanted to know how the level of secularizing factors in our church world would compare to the level of secularizing factors in our daily life. Has our church world been affected more or less than our life in our community?

The first section on page four asked the question, "What do you find to be the most attractive aspects of Adventist faith and life." I wanted to compare these responses with what people listed as the topics that would get them out of the house (survey page three) and with how they would spend evangelism money (survey page five).

The middle section on page four took the same question but applied it to our communities, "Which of these aspects of Adventist faith and life do you believe are the most appealing to people in your community." I wondered if our outreach choices on page five would correlate with what we think is attractive to others about Adventist faith and life.

At the bottom of page four, from a list of ten needs, I asked the participants to select the five most important needs that they thought secular people feel. I wanted to see if there would be an accurate assessment of the needs of secular people. I wanted to see if there would be a correlation between what we believe their needs are and what topics we think they would come out to hear. Also I wanted to see if there was a correlation between what we think they would find most appealing about our church and what outreach activities we would choose to use in reaching out to them.

On page five I had a section entitled *Spending the Money*. Here I asked people how they would allocate a \$3,000.00 evangelism budget. They could choose from a list as well as write in their own choices. The list contained most of the traditional approaches we have taken over the years in evangelizing our communities. The list contained both Bible-centered proclamational events and community contact events. I wanted to see how they would spend a limited amount of money. Faced with the choice, would they put more of their money into Bible-centered proclamational activities or into community contact events. I was interested in seeing what the ratio of dollars would be between these two basic areas of outreach.

When people actually have to make choices about spending money, what would they do? How would these choices correlate with the choices made regarding what they believed would appeal most to the community about our church? What did they think the community would come out to hear us talk about? What did they believe the needs of the people in our community would be?

Organization of the Program

My next step was to determine the organization of the seminar. Since I wanted something that could be presented over the period of a day and a half I settled on four presentations of forty minutes each. I decided that I would administer the five-page survey the week before the seminar when I would also use the worship time to preach an introductory sermon on the Pauline theme of "Saving Some." The titles of the sermon and presentations are as follows:

Introductory Sermon: *Saving Some: Reaching the Secular Community*

Session 1: *Secularization and How It Affects the Reality of Our Lives*

Session 2: *Secularization: Its Challenge to the Mission of the Church*

Session 3: *The Secular Mind as an Avenue to the Soul*

Session 4: *Church Life and Outreach to Our Secular Community.*

In our church bulletin each week we have a section for a meditation thought from the writings of Ellen White. During the weeks of my seminar I was able to tie these meditations to the theme of the presentations. These meditations can be found in appendix A at the beginning of each of the four presentations.

In addition to a meditation corner we also have a pastor's corner. During my presentations I was able to use this corner to summarize key thoughts from the previous week. These pastor's corners appear in appendix A. The pastor's corners come right after the meditation and before the main body of each of the four presentations.

Each week I also used the Scripture and the call to worship to tie in with the themes of the seminar. For visual aids I prepared overheads that I used when making the presentations.

I considered three different options in looking at how to schedule the actual seminar presentations. One option was to hold the seminar over one weekend, Friday evening to Sabbath afternoon. Another option was to hold the seminar one session a week for four weeks. The third option I looked at was to hold the seminar two sessions a weekend for two consecutive weekends.

I chose the third option. I felt that it would be difficult to maintain the level of attendance I wanted by doing all of the seminars on one weekend. If I was going to build on previous presentations then I wanted my highest attendance to be at the first session. If I started on Friday evening then the first session would probably have a lower attendance

than Sabbath morning. If I started Sabbath morning I would have a higher attendance but it would be exhausting to cover four sessions in one day and there would be little time to absorb the material between sessions.

I decided against stretching it over a four-week period because only 40 percent to 50 percent of our regular attending church members would be likely to be in church for four consecutive Sabbaths.

Over a two-week period I figured I could expect to reach 75 percent to 80 percent of our regular-attending adult members. A two-week period would also allow one week for members to absorb the material from the first two sessions before concluding the seminar.

The next question was how best to schedule these two sessions each Sabbath. I discussed two options with my church board. One option was to have a session during the worship service, then have a potluck and then another session. The other option was to use the Sabbath school time and have both sessions in the morning. The board felt comfortable either way. I told them I would give it more thought and make a decision.

I did not want to have an afternoon session because not everyone stays for potluck. I thought I would lose some people right there if I went that route. Also, our potlucks are usually lengthy affairs and by the time they are done I might well lose other people who had finished eating and did not want to wait around for another hour while others ate and vacuumed the floor and cleaned up the kitchen. Also families with small children might find it to be too long of a day.

I also did not want to hold a session during Sabbath school. Many of the leaders of our church help in the children's divisions. If I held the first session during Sabbath

School then they would miss the first session and I would not have the base I wanted to build on in the second session. I thought about trying to put all the children together with just one or two leaders during the Sabbath School time so that most of the adults could attend my seminar. The difficulty here would be to do that for both Sabbath School and then again for church.

In the end I decided to have both sessions in the morning but not to interfere with Sabbath School. Our Sabbath School meets from 10:00 to 11:00. I would leave this alone. From 11:10 till 11:25 we have a family feature time. It begins with praise songs and concludes with a special feature. From 11:30 to 12:30 is our worship service.

My solution was to combine the family feature time and the worship time into one 80-minute period. I would divide this 80-minute period into two 40-minute sessions with no break between the two sessions. The potential drawback would be attempting to put too much into this limited time frame of 80 minutes. I decided to go ahead with this time schedule in spite of its limitations.

Next I arranged for childcare for all children under high-school age. I asked my wife to take this group, figuring I would be able to keep her updated on my presentations easier than anyone else. She agreed.

We were planning to show Doug Bachelor's satellite evangelistic meetings that were starting October 15, 1999, on Friday evening. The church board thought that my seminar and the meetings would tie together well so I scheduled my seminar for October 9 and October 16. This would allow the presentations to come at a time when we might be able to put some of the ideas into practice as we tried to engage the community.

Unfortunately, because of other events, these dates were pushed back to October 16 and October 23. At the time this appeared to work well with everyone's schedule.

With those dates set, I planned to administer the initial survey during our family feature time on October 9. My introductory sermon would follow during our worship service on the 9th. My follow-up survey would be a part of my fourth presentation scheduled on the 23rd. At the time, everything seemed to be in order and ready to go.

Narrative Description

On October 9, 1999, at 11:10 the children went out for a story and I passed out the 5-page survey to the adults in the sanctuary. I had estimated it would take 15 minutes to fill out the survey. After 15 minutes most people were not finished. At the 20-minute point people began finishing. After 25 minutes 80 percent of the people were done.

Several people appeared unhappy. Althea Grey, a graduate student from Jamaica, told me, "My brain has been working too hard all week, I just can't think anymore right now. I'll finish it later." Valarie Bellas, a doctoral student from Trinidad, said, "I've finished the parts of the survey that I can on the Sabbath, and I'll do the rest later."

From the looks on the faces of several others I realized that at best they were not enjoying the work required to fill out the survey. At worst they felt I had impinged on their Sabbath keeping. I went to the front and announced that those who were not done could finish after the worship service.

I began the service wondering if I had already gotten off on the wrong foot with at least some of the members. We proceeded with worship. I presented my message "Saving Some" based on Paul's words to the Corinthians that he "became all things to all men so

that at least he could save some.” We concluded worship with a hymn. With some degree of trepidation I went to the back door to shake hands.

There were more comments on the sermon than normal. The comments were positive. A number of people said they were looking forward to the seminar. Althea Grey said she would be sure to get the survey done and get it back to me. Valarie Bellas was one of the last ones to come out. After she shook my hand she handed me her completed survey. She said she was looking forward to the seminar.

From the responses I received I believe that the interest I created with the sermon was greater than the discomfort I created with the survey. I was happy with the foundation I was able to lay for the following week. I received 45 completed surveys that day.

We have a very mobile congregation. Each week 10 – 25 percent of our regular members are traveling or visiting elsewhere. On Monday I sent out a mailer to those regularly attending members who had been gone October 9. In the mailer I included a copy of the survey and a copy of the sermon. I included instructions to do the survey before reading the sermon.

The following Sabbath I received an additional 7 surveys from members. The chairman of our church board, Steve, was one of the members who had been absent the previous week. I asked him if he had received my letter. He had. I asked him if he had read the sermon. He said he had not since I had written not to read the sermon unless the survey was first completed. I thanked him for following directions and asked if he would be willing to complete the survey before the seminar started. Steve completed the survey during Sabbath School and turned it in to me.

During Sabbath School I learned that my letter had offended Gertie King. Gertie has been a member of our church for more than 20 years. She is 89 years old and in great physical shape. Her mind is sharp, she enjoys talking with people, and she is an ardent Chicago Cub's fan. As Gertie had read my sermon she had concluded that I did not want her to come to the seminar. What had caused her to feel this way?

The previous Sabbath at the end of my sermon I had talked about the upcoming seminar. I explained that we would be in more of a classroom format than a traditional worship format. I had acknowledged that some might prefer a regular service and if they chose to visit another church for the next two weeks I would not be offended. Immediately after the sermon two different people had asked if I had said that for psychological reasons. I had asked what they meant. They felt that inviting people to visit another church had made them even more interested in coming to the seminar. I reassured them that I had not spoken with that intent. It had just come out that way. They had smiled and said it had had that effect anyway.

However, as Gertie had read my invitation in the letter she had concluded that I did not want her to come to church. She came anyway since she could never allow me to tell her what to do but at the same time she was offended. These feelings were conveyed to me by my head elder who had received them from his wife who had received them from Gertie. I immediately searched out Gertie and gave her a very warm welcome to church. I did not mention that I was aware of her hurt feelings since it had not been her intent that I know. Gertie did not fill out a survey but she did attend the seminar.

At 11:05 Audrey, my wife, began a children's church in the fellowship room with 35 children. At the same time my seminar began in the sanctuary with 70 adults. The age

of the adults ranged from 15 to 90 with 20 percent having grown up outside of the United States.

I worked from the front with a lectern and overhead projector. I would rather have hooked my computer directly into our video projector but I do not have the software to create that type of program, so I made do with overhead transparencies.

As I was ready to begin one of our members raised her hand and asked if she could say something. I invited her forward. She came to the podium and explained to the audience that she had a presentation to make. Before going further she sent someone to get my wife. When Audrey returned the lady from our congregation proceeded to make a presentation to Audrey and myself on behalf of the church. They thanked us for our work in the congregation, gave us a plaque, and told us they had made arrangements for us to spend a weekend up north in November. We were surprised and thanked the congregation for their thoughtfulness and kindness. Audrey returned to the children's church and I began the seminar.

I was ten minutes behind now and felt the need to make up for lost time. I talked and moved through the material rapidly. The audience was focused and interested. Their feedback told me that they were understanding the concepts I was presenting. We worked hard until 12:30 and stopped.

Much of the material in the first two presentations raises questions and presents the challenges which secularization throws at us. I wanted my members to think seriously about these challenges during the week. At the same time I did not want them to be discouraged about the difficulties caused by secularization. I ended with the challenge to

wrestle with the difficulties and uncover the exciting new opportunities that these difficulties also present.

After church I shook hands and talked with people in the foyer. Comments were positive. The children seemed happy too. It had been a warm day and they had gone to the park for a part of their service. I felt a sense of relief.

As the foyer was thinning Dick Harwood came up to me. Dick works at Michigan State University. He has an endowed chair in the agriculture department and is considered one of the leading experts worldwide in the field of sustainable agriculture. He sits on boards for the United States Department of Agriculture and flies around the world to speak at conventions and meetings. He is a brilliant man and world-renowned in his field.

Dick said to me, "This week I'm going to develop a model to show you how the ways of thinking you identified as typical of secularized man are in fact consistent with the Bible and with knowing God."

We did not have the opportunity to discuss the matter further. I was happy with his response even though it appeared he did not agree with where he thought I was going. I had been presenting the problems secularization had caused for traditional religion. He may have thought that I was going in the direction of a wholesale condemnation of secularization and all that it entailed. He obviously did not see secularization as an agent of evil barring the door to the progress of the church. I did not either, but my thoughts on that question would come out next week. I was eager to see what he would think at that point. The bottom line was that he had become seriously engaged with the material I had presented. I was happy.

On Sunday a problem came up. Gary Heilig told me that the next Sabbath Doug Bachelor would be giving his personal story. It would be broadcast over satellite for the 11:00 worship hour. He was already talking about it during the evening meetings. What did I plan to do?

Gary has been in charge of our satellite evangelism for the past four years. He orders the supplies, arranges for greeters, takes care of refreshments, arrives early to make sure the downlink is working and then sits at the controls during the evening. I knew it was important to work this conflict out in a way he would find acceptable.

I explained that it was important to finish the seminar I had started. We looked at three or four different options. We decided to tape the broadcast and play it before the evening meeting. In addition we would make the tape available for people who wanted to borrow it and view it at home. Gary seemed satisfied with this arrangement.

Tuesday evening trouble hit. On the big screen Doug Bachelor announced that the next Sabbath morning he would be broadcasting his story of how he had become a Christian. Doug aggressively promoted it and encouraged people to plan to come.

After the broadcast my head elder, Viv Shull, met with me. In no uncertain tone he said, "We need to show Doug's presentation live on Sabbath morning."

I was not happy. No one had told me this presentation would be coming on October 23. I felt it was more important to finish the seminar than to be preempted by a story on a screen that could just as easily be shown later in the day or even the next Sabbath morning.

During past satellite meetings Sabbath broadcasts had never begun before the end of the second full week. This one was starting a week earlier. The previous meetings had

used the Sabbath services to present additional material to complement the evening presentations. In the past, these meetings had been an option for local churches and people would not miss any key subjects if they did not see them. Sometimes these Sabbath sessions were not even mentioned directly to the audience so that the local church would have the full discretion of deciding whether or not they wanted to use them.

This year, however, Doug had incorporated four Sabbath services directly into his series. He was using three of these to present core subjects and he was promoting them aggressively each night to his audience.

We had eight nonmembers attending these meetings. They had already grown fond of Doug. They appeared to want to come to the Sabbath morning service if Doug was on the screen. We also had 30 members attending. They also wanted to see Doug on Sabbath. I knew it would be valuable to have our nonmembers attend church that Sabbath morning but I still did not want to disrupt what I was trying to accomplish with my church members.

After discussing several other options with Viv we decided to talk about it again in the morning. Gary had already gone home. I told Viv I would run some of the new options past Gary in the morning. I would also see what ideas Gary might have and then call Viv back with a decision.

By morning I had mellowed out a bit. I decided I would agree to show Doug on Sabbath if Gary and Viv would agree to not show him October 30 and November 6. Everybody was happy. We would show Doug in church on October 23 and November 13, which was the last day of the meetings. On October 30 and November 6 we would show Doug in our conference room for the benefit of our nonmembers. On those two dates I

would use the Sanctuary and finish presenting my seminar. It seemed the best I could do under the circumstances.

Friday morning I was at the church office working on the bulletin. Kellie Tompkins had some questions about my seminar. Kellie works as our communications director, she edits our church newsletter and puts together our bulletin. Kellie wanted to know my definition of "culture" and "language." We discussed the meaning of "culture" and "language" as well as other aspects of the seminar.

Sabbath morning at 10:10 I started to talk with Dr. Harwood in the foyer. He was on duty in the foyer as a greeter and so we talked together until 11:00. He had not had time to put his thoughts on paper but it was clear that he had worked on them in his mind.

The previous week I had listed "compartmentalization" as an affect of secularization. He felt that his life was more unified than it would have been under the previous era of the "town." He felt that the academic/professional circle he moved in was wired together very closely, and that what he did in other areas of his life was known and did affect him in his professional sphere.

The previous week I had also talked about the decline of religion as a result of secularization. He disagreed. He stated that our church in East Lansing was the most spiritual church he had ever been a member of even though it was the least traditional church of all the churches he had ever known. I argued that there was a difference between spirituality and religion. Spirituality referred to our relationship to God. Religion referred to the role and place in society of our corporate experience.

Dick then went on to discuss his concerns about the corporate church. He questioned whether "religion" should be used to describe the corporate church. He stated

that he and other members questioned the authority that our church has placed in our conference and institutional leaders. He said that it was often with great difficulty that he and some others paid tithe to the local church knowing that it would go on to the conference, union, and division. He did not have a great deal of trust in how some of those leaders thought or the decisions they sometimes made. In spite of that, he continued to pay tithe, but it was more of a Kierkegardian "leap of faith." I argued that the relationship he was describing between member and church was radically different from that of previous generations and was indeed exactly what I had been talking about the previous week.

We went on debating vigorously in this way for 50 minutes. Sabbath School was now ending and I am not sure I had swayed Dick in any of our areas of discussion. It appeared that Dick had equated my presentation of the past week with a call to fight against secularization and all of its effects. Unfortunately, Dick was going to be gone the next two weekends when I would present the opportunities that secularization presents for outreach, for personal faith, and for the corporate church.

Not wanting to leave on a note of disagreement I turned to Dick and said, "You know Dick, you are a role model for us." This caused a look of concern to come to his face. "What do you mean?" he replied. "You have experienced the effects of secularization and yet have found a powerful way to integrate your faith with all areas of your life. You have been challenged to rethink what it means to be a Christian and rather than discarding Christianity, you have distilled an essence that can be shared with secular man. This is exactly my purpose in this seminar. We may not come out to exactly the same conclusions that you have but each of us needs to work through the same process.

We need to understand the changes in society, in our way of thinking, in our personal life, and in our relationship with the church. As we work through these issues we need to come out to a stronger personal faith and a clearer idea of what we have that is valuable to share with secular man. You are already there. Over the next two weeks I want others to see how they too can work through the challenge of secularization and come out stronger at the other end. Thank you for taking the time to talk with me this morning. Let's do it again."

Church began. Doug Bachelor shared his story. The service ended and I was again talking with people in the foyer. Karmon Causwell came up to me and asked if I had copies of last week's presentations. Karmon and her husband Todd came to our area a year ago. They had graduated from Andrews University and she is currently enrolled in the Veterinary program at MSU.

During the past week Karmon had been talking with a friend down in Jackson about the seminar I was doing in East Lansing. Karmon's friend, an elder in the Jackson church, had asked for copies of any material she might have. He was very interested in the discussion. I gave Karmon copies of the presentation to pass on to her friend.

October 30, 11:30, I began my third presentation. The reason for spreading the last two presentations over two weeks was that I knew a number of church families were going to be gone on the 30th. The Michigan Conference had a special men's program going on at the academy that day and the Bethel church had a special women's program going on that day and some of our members would be at each of these services. Having the third presentation on October 30 allowed me to continue the seminar and to keep

things moving while putting the fourth presentation back November 7 allowed me to have more people present for the conclusion of the seminar.

Of the four presentations I made in the seminar, this third presentation was the weakest. I felt this personally while I was presenting the material and also noticed a drop off in the tenor of the personal responses I received in the foyer afterwards.

On November 6 I concluded the seminar with the final presentation. I took a different approach with my introduction to this presentation. I began by asking for a volunteer from the congregation. Keith Evans came forward.

Keith and his wife Joyce are recently retired and are in the process of moving to North Carolina. They have been members at East Lansing for the last 15 years.

I told the congregation that we were going to send Keith away as a missionary and asked them to choose a country for his destination. They chose Mongolia. I then asked what preparation we should give Keith before sending him to Mongolia. The congregation proceeded to list all the things Keith would need to do/bring/study in order to be successful. People participated actively and with enthusiasm in this part of the seminar.

I thanked Keith and the congregation for their help and allowed Keith to return to his seat. Next I presented the challenge of creating a new paradigm for our outreach to the communities in which we live based on the model of our proposed preparation for Keith's work in Mongolia. With about 20 minutes left we broke up into small groups to allow for a response time.

There were two parts for the response. One part was to think creatively as a small group. How can we reach our community? The second part was personal. How much time am I willing to commit to being a part of outreach to our community.

There was a good buzz in the sanctuary as the groups talked. To close, we came back together. I made some closing comments and we had prayer. The mood in the foyer was upbeat. Members seemed eager to try out some of the ideas they had discussed in their small groups.

Evaluation

Seminar Survey

I was satisfied with the survey instrument as a tool for introducing the process of secularization to my congregation and as a means of gathering information on their responses to that process. The survey allowed me to gather a wide spectrum of material about the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of the participants. The information it gave me has been helpful in understanding the effect that secularization has had on members of my congregation.

The length of the survey was appropriate considering the questions that had arisen from my research. However, I would shorten the survey instrument if I were to give this seminar on a regular basis. Also, in the future, I would like to do a statistical analysis of the survey results.

I would also be interested in comparing the results I received from my congregation with the results I might receive from other congregations. How typical were the responses given here in East Lansing? What differences or similarities would I find in comparing Seventh-day Adventist churches from different parts of the country?

Seminar Content

I feel like I tried to cover too much material over the course of just four presentations. I was successful in getting through all the items on my outline, but the result was that it did not leave enough time for participants to respond or to ask questions. If I were to present this seminar again I would want to reserve more time to actually talk with the participants, which would mean I would need to cover less material or to cover the same material but with less depth.

Some parts of my presentation could be simplified if I were to present the seminar again. I think I had a tendency to get into a greater technical depth than I needed to in some areas of my presentation.

One area that I believe I did not communicate as clearly as the rest of the seminar regarded the differing views of the sacred/secular relationship. I need to rework my presentation in this area. I believe that the nature of the concept is critical to successful work among secularized people, but I need to find a simpler way of conveying the essential elements of that relationship.

Scheduling

My scheduling did not flow as planned. I was forced to change and adapt during the course of the seminar. As it turned out I really did not mind the 2-1-1 format for the seminar presentations. The problem was having what amounted to a two-week break between the first two presentations and the third presentation. I would definitely avoid that scenario in the future. Moreover, running the Doug Bachelor downlinks during my third and fourth presentations meant that I did not have all of my attending members with

me in the sanctuary. There was nothing I could do at the time, but I would not do it that way again.

I think I would lean towards doing one presentation a week over a period of four weeks, which would actually come out to five weeks including the Sabbath where I preach the introductory sermon. In this format I would make sure I mailed out a copy of the presentations to all the members who might miss any one week and even call them in the middle of the week to see if they had received the mailing and if they had any questions.

Scheduling this seminar for another group would depend on the interests of that group and the time available. Five presentations over the course of a weekend would be interesting especially if the group were on a retreat where you could spend time responding to questions between sessions or during the mealtimes. This type of setting would also keep the attendance relatively constant, which is a problem when the seminar is spread out over a five-week period. Presenting the material over the course of a week could also work well as long as the audience is consistent in its attendance.

Presentation Format

The presentation format I chose to use was a classroom lecture style. In the first three presentations it was primarily a lecture. The fourth presentation incorporated an equal opportunity for participation and feedback from the audience. In a future presentation I would attempt to bring the first three presentations closer to the style and format of the fourth. I would work to open up more time for the audience to participate and discuss the ideas I am presenting.

I would work to do this by lengthening each presentation from 40 minutes to 60 minutes. Also some of the material I included in my presentation could be simplified with additional detailed information included in handouts.

I liked the dynamic of the audience participation in my introduction of the fourth presentation. I would look for more ways to start each session with that type of participation. For example, some of the situations described on the first page of the survey could be used as an audience-participation type of introduction for the first presentation of the seminar.

The small group work at the end of the fourth presentation is also something I would like to see happen in each of the other three presentations. The opportunity to discuss ideas with each other was valuable for the participants and was helpful for me to gauge their level of understanding.

Summary

The many comments expressed to me outside of the seminar time itself indicated to me that the topic of secularization is relevant and interesting to my members. Their response gives me reason to believe that there would be value in further refining the contents of the seminar as well as the seminar presentation process.

CHAPTER 6

APPLICATION

My interest in the topic of secularization was first whetted in the fall of 1989 while serving as the English Language School director in Japan. That fall I was invited to go to a seminar on secularization that Dr. Oosterwal was presenting in Hiroshima, Japan. Attending the seminar were delegates from three unions in the Far Eastern Division of Seventh-day Adventists, the Japan Union, the Korean Union, and the Taiwan Union.

During the five years I was in Japan I attended a number of meetings and seminars that were presented in Japan by church leaders from Singapore and the United States. The Japanese were always appreciative hosts at these seminars but as they talked among themselves I could tell when a presentation had really gotten their interest. In Japan as anywhere else, leaders are looking for what will be of most help for the problems they actually face.

It was with great interest that I watched the unusually strong response on the part of the delegates from all three countries to what Dr. Oosterwal was saying about the nature of secularization, its impact on the church, and the need to create new responses to this worldwide phenomena.

In Japan I was responsible for eight English language schools that were staffed by forty student missionaries. Each year our teachers, in addition to teaching conversational English, also taught Bible classes and looked for opportunities to share the gospel with

their students. What Dr. Oosterwal had said about secularization and its impact on people's values and ways of thinking correlated strongly with what our teachers were experiencing in their interaction with our students. The approaches that our teachers found successful in reaching their students with the gospel also correlated strongly with the new types of structures and approaches that Dr. Oosterwal was suggesting in his presentations.

The next year I went on permanent return to the United States where I took a position with the Michigan Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, working with the University Seventh-day Adventist Church in East Lansing Michigan.

As we adjusted to life in our new setting I wondered if the same challenges we faced in Japan's overtly secular society were also present in East Lansing? I wondered if the changes in how secular people think had affected our own church members even though to all outward appearances they expressed a strong religious orientation?

This project was an outgrowth of those questions and this chapter is an evaluation of what I found.

Observations and Conclusions

In this section I make observations and draw conclusions based on the survey results. I start at the beginning and go over each section of the survey in its turn. Each question or option in each section has a point value assigned to it. This point value is a result of adding and averaging each of the survey responses. In some sections, the respondents were asked to prioritize a selection of choices. I am now listing these choices in the order in which they were chosen in the surveys.

For example, in the first section *Saving My Child* the first response listed has the number 1.0 in front of it. This means that this response was unanimously chosen first by the respondents. In the second section *Finding Success at Work*, the first response listed has the number 2.0 in front of it. This means that while some respondents may have listed it as #1, others listed it as #3 or as #4 but the average came out to 2.0. The number 2.0 lets us see that while it headed the list of responses, it did not do so in the dominant, unanimous way that we see in the section *Saving My Child*.

For true/false sections, the numbers have a different meaning. In these sections, 1.0 would correspond to a unanimous selection of *False* for the corresponding question. At the other end, 2.0 would correspond to a unanimous selection of *True* for the corresponding question. The scale moves in tenths between the two extremes. In the middle we would have 1.5, which would indicate that respondents were equally split on their response to the question.

Each page of the survey is presented as a table so that the results can be more easily seen. After the table is presented the individual sections are discussed and compared. See table 5 for the first page of the survey results.

Four Life Situations

In *Saving My Child* respondents clearly responded in a different way from either Elisha or Paul. We turn first to science and secondly to the state in this crisis situation. Science and the state are two of the primary agents of secularization. As Adventists we are usually highly critical of what we perceive to be the secularization of belief and practice. Yet the responses here indicate that our dependence on the power of science and on the power of the state is much greater than we might realize. Perhaps our own

TABLE 5
SURVEY RESULTS: FOUR LIFE SITUATIONS

Score	Response
Saving My Child	
1.0	Call 911 and ask for an ambulance.
2.5	Call the police and give them the license number of the hit and run car.
3.2	Call my pastor and ask for him to come quickly.
3.3	Call the leader of my church's prayer chain and ask for prayer to begin.
4.5	Call my lawyer.
Finding Success At Work	
2.0	The quality of the actual work I perform at my job/profession.
2.4	Meeting or exceeding the expectations of my bosses.
2.5	The number of hours I spend developing my walk with God.
3.5	Having excelled at the academic preparation required for my work/profession.
3.5	Working hard to fit into the culture of my company/profession.
Rebuilding My Marriage	
2.4	Get referrals from the conference on Adventist marriage counselors near us.
2.8	Call the nearest Adventist pastor and ask if he will counsel with us.
2.9	Get referrals on marriage counselors with the best reputations for rebuilding marriages.
2.9	Look for a directory of Christian counselors in my area.
3.0	My friend at work had a similar problem a year ago. He talks highly about the help he and his wife got. Get the name and number of his counselor.
Problems at Church	
2.0	Appeal to take no discipline but to love Ted back into full Sabbathkeeping.
2.2	Move to table the issue and ask the pator/head elder to keep working with Ted.
2.6	State that we must each answer to God and that it is not for us to tell Ted what to do.
3.5	Vote to go to Ted as a board of elders. If ignored, regretfully take church discipline steps.
3.7	Ask whether this issue is public knowledge and if not then suggest the board leave it be.

responses to this situation give us a better understanding of why, for so many others of our countrymen, the role the Bible plays in their lives has shrunk ever smaller during the closing decades of the twentieth century.

In humility we must look anew at what it means to live as a Christian in our day and age. The solution here is not to ignore science and the state. We cannot respond any differently than from what we find in the survey responses. We must recognize the power and place of both science and the state. We must acknowledge how they have changed our lives. The challenge rather is to discover how our response to such an emergency can be bathed in prayer and grounded in the spirituality of our lives.

I believe that Daniel's success was built upon his relationship with God. When Daniel risked his career and his life to be true to God, the end result was even greater national honor and acclaim. In *Finding Success At Work* the responses indicate that while the hours we spend with God are very important, there are several other factors that are even more important. One reason why many secular men and women ignore organized religion is that they see little or no connection between what a person believes and how they actually live. How strong is that connection in our lives?

These responses drive us to reevaluate the connection between our devotional life and our work life. Our devotional life must be transforming how we live. How we treat people and how we perform our responsibilities must reflect the inner beauty, courage, and joy that marks our walk with God. "Success" for a Christian in the twenty-first century must be defined in the context of how fully this transformation occurs.

In the Old Testament we find that Israelites went to family heads, tribal leaders, judges, kings, and prophets to solve their problems and answer their questions. In

Rebuilding My Marriage we find the respondents going first to the conference office for a referral. The preference is first for an Adventist counselor to help us solve our problem. Going to our pastor or to a good marriage counselor for help received an equal response. Close behind was the choice to find a Christian counselor on our own, and last to turn to our friends for a recommendation. There is not a large difference between these five options with the range going from 2.4 to 3.0. The secularizing tendency towards pragmatism is not strongly reflected since the option of turning to the counselor who helped our friend came in last on the scale.

It is clear that we view marriage as a key biblical institution. If there is a problem, we want to get help from a fellow believer. However, it is also clear that we want a specialist to help us in this area. Going to our pastor for help gets only about 20 percent of the vote. This aspect of the response is consistent with living in a secularized society where specialization is one of the distinguishing factors, as is the loss of authority of pastors and religious leaders.

In *Problems At Church* the responses indicate that we do not want to disfellowship Ted at this particular point. At the same time we do not want to just stick our head in the sand as indicated by the 3.5 and the 3.7 scores, which these options averaged. The first two choices indicate that we want to take an active approach in getting Ted to conform to what we understand to be biblical behavior. Whether we do it as a congregation or whether we assign our leaders that responsibility is almost equal. The third choice, which is close behind the first two, is to back off entirely because we do not believe that any further steps lie within our prerogatives as Adventists.

The individualistic nature of secular society is reflected here. In this case more people are willing to grant the individual the right to choose his or her behavior while remaining Adventist as opposed to the smaller group which would act in accordance with the church manual to disfellowship. The responses here correlate with the loss of authority and control found among religious institutions as one of the results of secularization.

Rating the Degree of Secularization

Moving on to page 2 (see table 6) we see in the top section that there is a significant drop from how the members perceive the level of secularization in our country (8.65) to how they perceive the level of secularization in our local city (7.90). Secularization is something that appears to loom larger the further removed it is from our own personal lives. This tendency continues to be reflected in our view of our church, our neighbors, and ourselves.

Members see the level of secularization in our public educational system as greater than that of our country as a whole. When they look at our own church schools (5.18), they see them as a relatively safe place largely removed from society's secularizing influences.

It might be that this evaluation is based primarily on the conviction that our school's philosophical foundation and biblical perspective are radically different from that of the public school system. This is in reality a comparison of the philosophy of secularism with the philosophy of Adventist education that might not be an accurate assessment of the level of secularization in the two systems.

TABLE 6
SURVEY RESULTS: RATING THE DEGREE OF SECULARIZATION

Effects of Secularization	Slight	Moderate	Strong
To what degree has secularization affected our society?			
Unites States			8.65
Lansing			7.90
Public Education			8.78
SDA Education		5.18	
To what degree has secularization affected the people you know best?			
My Neighbors		6.27	
My Church		5.44	
My Family		5.25	
Myself		5.33	

Note: The higher the score, the greater the degree of secularization. Scores are based on a 10-point scale, with 1 being "untouched," and 10 being "very strong."

The effects of secularization are not limited to those who subscribe to the philosophy of secularism. I believe that the effects of secularization touch the minds and lives of Christians as well as secularists. My conclusion then is that secularization has made much larger inroads into our school system than we realize. In order to fully assess the inroads which secularization has made, we must first become more aware of the factors and effects of secularization.

It is interesting to note below that the gap between how the members view their church (5.44) and how they view their neighbors (6.27) is much closer than the gap between how they view their schools (5.18) and how they view public schools (8.78).

Since the primary contact time at school is with other students, I believe that the reality of secularization has almost as much impact upon the real-day lives of our church school children as the children in public schools. The lives of teachers and students in both institutions are being shaped by the same secularizing trends. As a result, I believe that the gap between what a student experiences at church school and public school is much smaller than the gap that exists between the philosophical foundations of these two institutions.

The respondents view their neighbors (6.27) as significantly less secularized than their city (7.90). How much of our view of secularization is influenced by people/media/the church telling us that the world out there is very secular? The people whom we know on a personal basis, such as our neighbors, seem much less secular than the picture we have of our city or the picture we have of our country.

It is interesting that the members rate themselves (5.33) as marginally more secular than their own family. Part of this can be explained by looking at an age group breakdown. Those under 30 saw themselves as much more secular than the church or their family. Those over 50 saw themselves as much less secular than the church or their family. Those between 30 and 50 saw themselves in the same range as their church and family.

Secularizing Factors in Our Lives

On the bottom of page 2 (see table 7) in the true/false section, the four questions where a *false* answer would correlate with a secularizing trend in our society are listed first. The responses show extremely strong secularizing factors in evidence here.

The next six questions are those where a true answer would correlate with a secularizing trend in our society. The responses show strong to extremely strong secularizing factors in evidence here.

When we average out all 10 responses, we get a score of 8.2 on a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 would stand for a living environment with very strong secularizing factors. This

TABLE 7
SURVEY RESULTS: SECULARIZING FACTORS IN OUR LIVES

Point Value	Question	Original Ques. #
<i>Secularizing factors we experience in our daily lives.</i>		
1.2	Religion plays a larger role in people's thinking/behavior than in the past.	1
1.0	I know by name most of the clerks at the stores where I shop.	4
1.1	I spend the majority of each day with people who live in my neighborhood.	6
1.1	I have more respect for people who go into politics than my father did.	7
1.8	The church sanctuary is not treated with the holiness it used to receive.	2
1.8	Fewer people look to the Bible as the source for their happiness than before.	3
1.9	I find more belief systems/lifestyles accepted today than when I was a child.	5
1.7	People are more interested in spirituality than in religious affiliations.	8
1.6	I would classify my work/profession/trade as a specialty or subspecialty.	9
1.8	People are more concerned if their beliefs help them than if they are true.	10
<i>Our primary concerns when faced with a new product.</i>		
1.8	Does it work? Does it do what it claims to be able to do?	1
3.2	Will it make my life easier or better?	5
4.3	Can I return it easily if it doesn't meet my expectations?	6
4.7	Can I trust the person selling the product?	3
4.8	Has it received the endorsement of experts in that field?	7
5.5	Are its performance claims greater than the those of its competitors?	4
7.1	How impressive are the packaging and advertising of the product?	2

8.2 secularization rating correlates closely to that of our city (7.90) and also to that of our country (8.65). This 8.2 rating is higher than that of our neighborhood, which is (6.27).

These responses indicate that respondents see much of their own personal world as secularized as the big city nearby or the country as a whole. I believe that we rate our neighborhoods and our own lives as less secularized because we do not recognize what those secularizing elements really are, hence the lower score.

When looking at the responses to what their primary concerns are when evaluating a product the members, first of all, want the product to work (1.8). This criterion stands well ahead of all the others. Their second concern is whether it will make their life any better (3.2). Truth claims (5.5) and packaging (7.1) come at the end of the list.

It is interesting to compare this list with how we approach people in public evangelism. Much of the time in public evangelism we rely heavily on packaging and advertising to get people in the door. Once people have come out to our meeting we approach them primarily through truth claims (correct doctrine) and expert endorsements (the Bible and the writings of Ellen White). These are the very approaches the respondents find least appealing when evaluating other people's products. To reach secular people we must begin to orient our public evangelism and community outreach to start with the pragmatic *Does It Work*.

What will your religion do to make my life and my family's life better? This is the question being asked by secular people. Since there is also a strong concern about *returning it easily* if it does not meet expectations, our evangelism and community

outreach must be sensitive to the fear secularized people have of getting involved in relationships that are not easy to break off.

They may be thinking, can I go into that church building and walk out again without new complexities being added to my life? Will people in there try to get my name and address? Will they start mailing me things or coming over to my house? Will they try to get me to join their group? Will they want my money? Secularized people want to be able to easily exit the building and/or the new relationship if they are not happy with what is going on. High dropout rates reflect this same tendency to want to return the item, in this case church membership, and go back to life as it was before. For these reasons initial contact with people in our community works easier if we meet them on neutral ground or better yet if we go to their turf and meet them where they are comfortable and safe.

The third criterion is, Can I trust the person selling the product? For secular people to trust us they must first have the opportunity to get to know us outside of any type of church-sponsored activity. If they see us only when we are inviting them to a church activity, even if it seems as innocuous as a picnic or cooking school, they still have no basis upon which to judge our integrity or trustworthiness. We take great pride in our media outreach, and yet TV preachers/evangelists are one of the least trusted categories to the secularized people we are trying to reach.

Having a physical presence in the day-to-day lives of the community is the biggest challenge that Adventist churches have in their mission to the secular. We do not get to know them at school because we send our children to church schools. We often do not seem to meet them on the streets because we live in the country or commute to our

church from a neighborhood 10 miles away. And, we do not pass them in the car on the way to church because we worship on a different day. We must carefully and consciously choose to find mediums through which we can come into contact with our community and develop a basis for trust.

Getting Out and Life at Church

In table 8 we see that the more doctrinally oriented messages are less likely to draw us out of the house. Our interest in individual spirituality and personal fulfillment with a family orientation are consistent with the secularizing trends we find in society. In a subsequent section, respondents chose *biblical truth* as the aspect of Adventism that they find most attractive. The responses in this section would indicate that the aspects of biblical truth that respondents find most interesting are those that ground their personal and family lives.

When comparing what members would go out to hear with what they think their neighbors would go out to hear, we find that the respondents select the same three topics in each instance. The only difference is the order in which they are selected.

The respondents put *Six Keys to Family Happiness* first as a draw for their neighbors while putting *Developing Your Spiritual Walk With God* as the most attractive topic for themselves.

Know What Will Happen at the End Time moves up from sixth on the respondents list to fourth on what they think their neighbors would be interested in. Is this an expression of what respondents think their neighbors need more than what they actually would come out to hear? Why would they be more interested in this subject than the respondents would be?

TABLE 8
SURVEY RESULTS: GETTING OUT & LIFE AT CHURCH

Score	Response	
<i>What draws Adventists out of their homes.</i>		
2.9	Developing Your Spiritual Walk With God.	
3.8	Six Keys to Family Happiness.	
4.0	Raising Your Children to Know God.	
4.3	How to Find Spiritual and Emotional "Rest" on the Sabbath.	
5.3	The Truth of the Adventist Message!	
5.4	Know What Will Happen at the End Of Time!	
6.3	The Seal of God vs. The Mark of the Beast!	
<i>What Adventists think draws friends out of their homes.</i>		
2.6	Six Keys to Family Happiness.	
3.4	Developing Your Spiritual Walk With God.	
3.8	Raising Your Children to Know God.	
4.1	Know What Will Happen at the End Of Time!	
6.4	The Seal of God vs. The Mark of the Beast!	
6.6	The Truth of the Adventist Message!	
6.6	How to Find Spiritual and Emotional "Rest" on the Sabbath.	
Point Value	Question	Original Ques. #
<i>Secularizing factors we experience in our church lives.</i>		
1.2	More people come to help with Ingathering than when I first became an Adventist.	1
1.1	There are more sermons on distinctive Adventist doctrines than when I joined.	5
1.4	There are more discussions about what constitutes "truth" than I used to see here.	8
1.1	Elders are more willing to hold people accountable to Adventist "Standards" today than I remember them doing in the past.	9
1.3	Our members are more committed to Adventist education than a few years ago.	10
1.7	There is less respect for church leaders today than when I first became an Adventist.	2
1.9	There are more lifestyle practices in the church today than when I was baptized.	3
1.6	There is less support for public evangelism than when I first came into the church.	4
1.8	Fewer people spend a week at camp meeting than when I became an Adventist.	6
1.6	I spend less time in the week in church related gatherings than I did growing up.	7

The respondents moved *How to Find Spiritual and Emotional "Rest" on the Sabbath* back to seventh place as a topic attractive to their neighbors while they had it in fourth place for themselves. Given the accuracy of the respondents in selecting the *Five Most Important Needs of Secular People* it surprises me that the Sabbath was changed to seventh place on this list. It appears that members do not think their neighbors would find this an attractive subject.

This may be more a reflection of how the church presents the Sabbath or how members experience the Sabbath in our own personal lives. Based on the needs secular people experience, I believe that the theme of finding spiritual and emotional rest would have a strong attraction and should move towards the top of the list.

In the bottom section on page 3 of the survey, the first five questions are those where a *false* answer would correlate with a secularizing trend in our church relationships. The responses show a range of moderate to extremely strong secularizing factors to be present in our church relationships.

The second group of five questions is those where a true answer would correlate with a secularizing trend in our church relationships. Again the responses show a range of moderate to extremely strong secularizing factors present in our church relationships.

When we average out all 10 responses, the average score is 7.5 on a scale of 1 to 10 where 10 would stand for a living environment with very strong secularizing factors. This 7.5 is approximately 10 percent lower than the 8.2 score for the secularizing factors members are experiencing in their community relationships. This is a much smaller gap than was found when respondents were asked to rate their city (7.90) and their church (5.44) where we found the church score to be 30 percent lower than the city score.

It appears that secularizing factors are stronger in our church relationships than we realize. Perhaps a lack of knowledge about what those secularizing factors are contributes to thinking that there is a greater difference between the community and the members than what actually exists.

Attractive Aspects and Important Needs

Table 9 combines the first two sections from page 4 of the survey to make a comparison of the two easier. The first column lists what we find most attractive about Adventism. The second column lists what we think the community would find most attractive about Adventism.

The largest difference is for statement A, *Adventist doctrine is true and Bible centered*. Members clearly find this the most attractive aspect about Adventism. However, they do not think their neighbors will find it nearly so attractive. If they are viewing truth as a doctrinal construct, then this conclusion might be warranted. If they view truth from its experiential aspect, as something that makes our everyday lives better, as a basis for how we live and carry on relationships with our family and community, then it would warrant a much higher rating in terms of being attractive to secularized people.

We must look for ways to present the experiential aspect of truth to our secular communities. There is tremendous opportunity in this area. Truth works! And truth that works, especially in the area of relationships, is a great need in our communities today. As people come to experience this truth for themselves they will be drawn to explore the doctrinal constructs that undergird what they have already experienced.

TABLE 9

SURVEY RESULTS: ATTRACTIVE ASPECTS AND IMPORTANT NEEDS

SDA Score	Community Score	Attractive Aspects of Adventist faith
1.8	4.9	A. That Adventist doctrine is true and Bible centered.
3.8	4.3	G. Sense of fellowship/community you experience in an SDA church.
4.3	2.8	F. The Adventist health emphasis encompassing vegetarianism, exercise, anti-smoking/drinking
4.5	5.3	D. The light the S.D.A. Church has about what will happen at the end of time.
5.2	5.5	B. The Sabbath School programs we offer for children.
5.8	5.3	C. The junior camp programs we run during the summer.
6.2	5.1	H. Media outreach of the church, satellite evangelism, TV, radio, publishing.
6.5	7.2	E. The boarding academies we run where children can go to receive a Christian education.
Score	Important Needs for Secular People	
2.5	The need to sense personal meaning in one's own life.	
3.9	The need for fellowship.	
4.3	The need to find values to live one's life by.	
5.2	The need to experience an abundant life.	
5.7	The need for a sense of salvation.	
8.6	The need to know what end-time events lie in the immediate future.	
8.9	The need to know revealed truth about God found only in the Bible.	
10.3	The need to order one's according to God's law.	
10.5	The need to keep the Sabbath.	
10.6	The need to be a participating member of a Bible believing church.	

Members believe that the media outreach of the church is more attractive to our community (5.1) than it is to them (6.2). In light of the near universal distrust of TV preachers and the limited audience that tunes in to religious programming, this rating is unwarranted. I believe this is a reflection of the respect Adventists have traditionally had towards the media as an avenue for successful evangelism. That respect is not warranted today as we look for ways to reach secular people. The media outreach of the church can only complement our work once we have built strong bridges of trust with the members of our communities.

In the last section on page 4, members picked the five needs of secularized people out of a group of ten choices. Of the respondents, 95 percent picked all five of the needs correctly out of this group of ten. This reflected in the previous section where members chose a sense of fellowship/community and health needs as the two aspects of Adventist faith that would be most attractive to our community.

The challenge for members and pastors here is threefold. First we must understand the definition secular people give to personal meaning, fellowship, values, an abundant life, and salvation.

Second, we must explore new creative approaches to these critical needs of secular people in addition to the traditional approaches many of our churches have already experimented with in the past.

Lastly we must be consistent in using this hierarchy of needs when planning our outreach strategies so that we use the bridges people are traveling on when we try to reach them.

If we present the gospel in response to the needs of “secular man,” we will find an audience. If we live out the biblical responses to these needs, we will make disciples.

Spending Evangelism Monies

When asked to allocate money from an evangelistic budget (see table 10), members picked community contact events to truth-centered events at a ratio of 2.7 to 1. The ratio for spending money on community events as opposed to truth-centered events was a ratio of 2.2 to 1. This showed a clear awareness of the need to meet people first on the basis of personal needs and interests. The ratios of money and programs reflect an intuitive awareness of how to approach evangelizing the community that has not been reflected in local church budgeting.

Over the last three years the University SDA Church has spent \$25,000 on evangelism. Of this total \$23,000 has been spent on public satellite evangelism. The ratio for our church over the last three years has been 11.5 to 1 in favor of truth-centered proclamational events. We have almost totally ignored funding community contact events.

Of the \$23,000 spent on satellite evangelism, \$9,000 has come from the conference evangelism budget. The only way we can get this money is to spend it on public evangelism. We are not allowed to use this money for any other purpose. If we subtracted this money from the total we would have spent \$14,000 on satellite evangelism out of a total of \$16,000 available in our church budget. This would translate into a ration of 7 to 1 in favor of truth-centered proclamational events.

This ratio is still far removed from the 2.2 to 1 ratio in favor of community contact events that emerged in the initial survey responses.

TABLE 10

SURVEY RESULTS: SPENDING EVANGELISM MONIES

Type of Evangelism	Number of Times Event Was Selected	Total Amount Spent on This Event
<i>Truth-Centered Events</i>		
Evangelistic meetings	14	28,000.00
Passing out <i>Steps to Christ</i>	13	6,500.00
Daniel Seminar	7	3,500.00
Revelation Seminar	<u>7</u>	<u>3,500.00</u>
	41	\$41,000.00
<i>Community Contact Events</i>		
Vegetarian Cooking School	22	11,000.00
Talking With Your Teens	19	15,000.00
"Be All That You Can Be" featuring Ben Carson	13	26,000.00
Student Services Fair	12	12,000.00
Stop Smoking Seminar	11	5,500.00
Parenting Class	9	4,500.00
Communicating With Your Spouse	7	4,000.00
Training Members to Reach Their Community	7	7,000.00
Grief Recovery	4	2,500.00
Environmental Seminar	3	3,000.00
Bird-Watching Club	1	500.00
Bird-Watching Web Page	<u>1</u>	<u>500.00</u>
	109	\$91,500.00
<i>Other Events Added by Members</i>		
Training to give Bible studies	1	500.00
Video series to loan	1	300.00
Send non-SDA kids to camp	<u>1</u>	<u>2,000.00</u>
	3	\$2,800.00

Personal Responses

I will now move to an examination of the responses I received from the first page of the exit survey given at the end of the fourth seminar presentation. See table 11.

The first section on the exit survey elicited more response than any of the other sections on the first. Even the one respondent who checked the statement *I didn't like the concepts presented* went on to add in the margin that while he did not like the concepts he did believe them to be true. The seminar appears to have been helpful in informing and educating the seminar participants regarding the question of secularization and its effect on the church.

The second section seemed to bring the most disagreement from respondents. These responses might indicate a lack of clarity in my presentations on the nature of the gap we face today in reaching out to secular people. Nevertheless, a study of the nature and challenge of mission in Paul's day in comparison to our own day would better enable us to reach our communities regardless of whether we agreed on which gap was larger.

In the third section I saw strong agreement that new opportunities for ministry are opening up as a result of the process of secularization. Members also appear to feel that time would be time well spent to further explore the new areas of opportunity that have opened up in our secular communities.

In the fourth section again I saw strong agreement that new forms and approaches are needed in reaching out to secular people. There did not appear to be any fear of trying new approaches. Some members mentioned creative new ideas they would like to see us try. It appears that our members are interested in taking a world-oriented approach here in our local church.

TABLE 11

EXIT SURVEY RESULTS: PERSONAL RESPONSES

Score	Statement	Score	Statement
<i>The Widespread Affect of Secularization</i>			
31	I agree	3	I changed my thinking in this area
2	I disagree	4	I would like to know more about this
8	I found this very interesting	4	I had questions about this
10	I learned some new concepts	1	I didn't like the concepts presented
<i>The Gap Is Larger Today</i>			
20	I agree	1	I changed my thinking in this area
6	I disagree	2	I would like to know more about this
7	I found this very interesting	0	I had questions about this
3	I learned some new concepts	0	I didn't like the concepts presented
<i>The Role of the Church Has Decreased</i>			
30	I agree	1	I changed my thinking in this area
2	I disagree	4	I would like to know more about this
6	I found this very interesting	0	I had questions about this
1	I learned some new concepts	0	I didn't like the concepts presented
<i>New Forms Needed</i>			
29	I agree	0	I changed my thinking in this area
2	I disagree	6	I would like to know more about this
3	I found this very interesting	1	I had questions about this
1	I learned some new concepts	0	I didn't like the concepts presented
<i>Being Bridges</i>			
32	I agree	0	I changed my thinking in this area
2	I disagree	1	I would like to know more about this
7	I found this very interesting	2	I had questions about this
2	I learned some new concepts	0	I didn't like the concepts presented

The challenge for each of us to “be” the bridges of God’s grace to our secular communities elicited strong support from the respondents. They recognize the need for each of us as members to become bridges to our community. We cannot rely on satellite speakers, public advertising, church institutions, trained professionals, and the content of our beliefs to be the opening wedge in our approach to our communities.

We become bridges to our communities by first becoming active members in groups that represent the concerns and aspirations of our communities. This may mean joining a group working to save the ecology. This may mean volunteering in the local public schools to help tutor children. This may mean participation in the local arts and crafts fair or any other number of diverse projects or groups.

A bridge is useful only if both ends are on different sides of a chasm or stream. To be a bridge to our community we must have a major part of our life planted firmly in that particular community. The possibilities are limitless. The results could be transforming.

Close to one third of the participants who filled out the exit survey took time to write out personal thoughts and comments. These responses from both older members and younger members can be found in Appendix B under *Seminar Responses*.

I appreciated the willingness of my members to share their thoughts with me. I believe that there is clearly a strong interest from them in making our outreach more relevant to our secular community.

Spending Evangelism Monies Rethought

This interest is also expressed in the changes shown in the final page of the exit survey, *Spending the Money*. See table 12.

TABLE 12

EXIT SURVEY RESULTS: SPENDING EVANGELISM MONIES RETHOUGHT

Type of Evangelism	Number of Times Event Was Selected	Total Amount Spent on This Event
<i>Truth-Centered Events</i>		
Evangelistic meetings	4	8,000.00
Passing out <i>Steps to Christ</i>	8	4,000.00
Daniel Seminar	5	2,500.00
Revelation Seminar	<u>5</u>	<u>2,500.00</u>
	22	\$17,000.00
<i>Community Contact Events</i>		
Vegetarian Cooking School	18	9,000.00
Student Services Fair	17	17,000.00
Parenting Class	13	7,500.00
Stop Smoking Seminar	13	6,500.00
"Talking With Your Teens"	12	9,000.00
"Communicating With Your Spouse"	10	6,500.00
"Be All That You Can Be" (Ben Carson)	5	10,000.00
Grief Recovery	6	3,000.00
Training Members		
to Reach Their Community	1	1,000.00
Bird Watching Club	1	500.00
Bird Watching Web Page	<u>1</u>	<u>500.00</u>
	97	\$70,500.00
<i>Other Events Added by Members</i>		
Sponsor a community sports team	2	1,000.00
Advertise our Christmas program	2	500.00
An Easter program for the Community	2	500.00
Develop a ministry for the deaf	1	500.00
Open church weekdays for 2 hours and provide refreshments & reading material	2	2,000.00
Develop Sunday service	2	3,000.00
Non-doctrinal neighborhood study group	2	1,000.00
Bible teaching training seminar	1	1,000.00
Sponsor support groups (divorce, etc.)	1	500.00
Study lounge/reading room for community	1	1,000.00
<i>Signs of the Times</i> news boxes	<u>1</u>	<u>500.00</u>
	17	\$11,500.00

In the exit survey program ratios and spending ratios have changed significantly when compared with the initial survey. The ratio of spending moved up from 2.2 in the initial survey to 4.1 in the exit survey. The ratio of programming moved from 2.7 in the initial survey to 4.4 in the exit survey. The number of programs contributed by ideas from the members went from 3 in the initial survey to 17 in the exit survey.

The results indicate that the members have a heightened awareness of the need to meet secular people in areas of their own interests and concerns. These ratios will be helpful guidelines in planning future church budgets and programming.

Reflections and Recommendations

The Effect on the Congregation

I have found that our congregation is genuinely interested in exploring the questions and issues raised in this seminar. It appears that our members have a better grasp on how secularization has impacted both their personal world and the community around our church as a result of this seminar.

The initial resistance I met when giving the pre-seminar survey quickly was replaced with a focused attention as I began my presentations. My members were, on the whole, open and measured in their evaluation and response to the presentations.

While my members agreed with much of what I presented, they were also quite willing to challenge me, disagree with my conclusions, and/or ask questions for clarification.

I do not believe that they were primarily concerned with defending the traditional ways our church has done evangelism, but neither did they appear anxious to jettison what we have done in the past in order to jump to a new approach or methodology. They

do seem better equipped to start to recognize the opportunities secularization has created in their neighborhoods and in their families. Based on the survey responses, I believe my congregation is willing to try new approaches as they reach out to those who live near our church and homes.

Their openness and interest have allowed this seminar to be not an end but a beginning. I see their openness as an opportunity for a continued exploration and experimentation with the outreach work of the East Lansing Church in our community.

The challenge to reflect the gospel more fully in the context of our personal lives has been taken to heart. I believe that our members want to become a bridge between the secular world and our Father in Heaven.

The Use of Ratios

One area where this seminar is having an immediate impact is in guiding how we spend our outreach dollars. Over the last four years 90 percent of our outreach dollar has gone for satellite evangelism. Now we would like to apply the ratios found in our survey to both the types of programs we run as well as the amount of money we spend.

As we plan our programming we would like to have four community contact events for every truth-centered proclamational event. We would like to spend \$3.00 on community contact events for every \$1.00 we spend on truth-centered proclamational events. This may be too big of a step to take all at one time. We may need to make a more gradual transition as we work towards these ratios.

In making this commitment we do not want to just reverse the amount of money or time spent in truth-centered proclamational events vs. community contact events.

Rather we want to increase the amount of money and time spent in these areas as a whole.

In order to do this we need more people willing to give of both their time and money. On the bottom of the last page of the exit survey we asked for specific commitments of time to support the programs they felt our church should be operating. We will be using the information we gathered from this part of the survey to help with the staffing of new and additional community contact events.

Implications for the Church

Today we face a world that is in many ways unified, not by a political empire, but by a way of thinking. Our world has found common ground in a shared experience of living, a common set of values that spans the divide of culture, language, and history

Secularization has caused far-reaching changes in our communities, in our personal lives, and in how we understand and experience the church. This process of change called secularization presents one of the greatest challenges that the Seventh-day Adventist Church faces in the twenty-first century.

The Creative Gale of Destruction

There is no question that secularization has wrecked havoc on church institutions, traditions, and personal religious faith. It would be natural to want to batten down the hatches or find some protective harbor where we could safely ride out the storm. These natural responses will only thwart the object of our mission, to reach secular people with the gospel.

Our world will never go back to the days of the 19th century when colonial structures supported and encouraged our missionary endeavors. Our world is not going

back to the era of the tall steepled church standing at the center of the town physically, socially, or educationally. Our world is not going back to any bygone era when, at least in our collective memory, life was orderly and controllable.

The nature of life in our world is chaotic. Embrace the chaos. Find life in the chaos. Harness and ride the chaos for it is a gift of God.

When you drain complexity and chaos out of any living system (as The Order of St. Roberts, master plans, "orders from headquarters" can do), you snuff out that system, for you damage the organism's natural immunological ability to adapt to new conditions and future-fit itself for unprecedented challenges.¹

Chaos is a better strategy for survival than order. It is not just that order can be reached out of chaos, or that one can only perceive chaos in relation to some perceived order. The emerging science of complexity, the generating science of postmodernity, argues that chaos is essential to the emergence of order. Chaos and order coexist and emerge from one another

In a state of equilibrium, nothing happens! Enduring organisms embrace a strategy toward a life of disequilibrium over stability. They expect and sustain disruption. Organisms that stagnate and die settle into equilibrium and harmony. Stability is less to be desired than resilience

A 'chaord' has been defined as 'a self-organizing, adaptive, nonlinear complex system (whether physical, biological or social) that simultaneously exhibits characteristics of order and chaos, that exists between rigidity and flexibility.' The church is by its very definition a chaordic organism – an organic, free-form community driven by mission and responsive to its indigenous environments. The early church was almost a textbook definition of 'chaordic': fluid, flat, fast off its feet, and strong on its feet with control at the edges only.

Any network or partnership, any alliance or institution, can become 'chaordic' if it in some ways fights the forces of order and planners and embraces change and chaos. Chaordic leaders see change and chaos as their friends, not enemies.²

¹Sweet, *Aquachurch*, 187-188.

²Sweet, *soulTsunami*, 80-81.

This chaotic nature of life is a blessing not a curse. It means we are alive and have the potential to move into the future. A part of riding this chaos, a part of moving into the future, is a recognition that death is an essential part of the ongoing regeneration of life.

For the Seventh-day Adventist Church to speak the gospel with power and clarity the church must be willing “to reproduce the creative gale of destruction inside their organizations” so that they will be able to “cope with the creative gale outside.”¹

The fact that aspects of any institution must die in order for that institution to move into the future is nothing new. That this is a creative act is also not surprising. What is unique to our day is that change must occur under “gale like” conditions.

The “gale like” conditions are of themselves neither right nor wrong. It simply symbolizes the pace and nature of life in the twenty first century. Peter Drucker writes that “every organization of today has to build into its very structure . . . organized abandonment of everything it does.”²

Today adaptive change is assumed from the beginning and institutions are structured to anticipate, incubate, and integrate this ongoing life of change. “There is no alternative . . . to leaving behind perfectly good products, expensively developed technology, and wonderful brands and heading down to trouble in order to ascend again in hope. In the future, this forced march will become routine.”³

The “creative gale” of the twenty first century requires us to leave the era of the

¹Gary Hamel, “Today’s Companies Won’t Make It,” *Fortune* 142, no. 5 (2000): 388.

²Peter Drucker, *Post-Capitalist Society* (New York: Harper Business, 1993), 59.

³Kevin Kelly, “New Rules, New Economy,” *Wired* (September 1997): 194.

aircraft carrier and return to the era of the fish. Jim Zurn, head of Intel, says top-down management is like piloting an aircraft carrier, "You turn the wheel and it sort of turns . . . real . . . slow. We're more like a school of fish. A school might have tens of thousands of fish in it, but they can change together, instantaneously, and go in a new direction."¹

The ability to move as a school of fish is an apt model for the church in the twenty first century. We must move without sacrificing or compromising the essential nature of who we are as the church of Jesus Christ. We must move with great speed. We must move with unity and strength. These characteristics must be reflected in our institutional thinking and structure as well as in the worship and outreach of our local congregations.

Churches that are nonhierarchical in their authority flow, rather flat in their administrative structure, and democratic from the ground on up will make it easier for secular people to find a home within their doors. These structural characteristics will allow them to be highly experimental and extraordinarily flexible without compromising the core values that make us Adventist and that make us Christian.

At Mission Institute we were told that the three prerequisites for mission service were "adaptability, adaptability, adaptability. Mark Driscoll, pastor of the Mars Hill Fellowship, a ministry to Gen-Xers in downtown Seattle, says

It used to be that the big would eat the small. Now it's the fast eating the slow. Survival is more about speed. How quickly can you learn? How quickly can you adapt? If you're resistant to that, then you start to atrophy and die—whether as a person or as a congregation.

In a pluralistic context—where the world is morphing and moving in many directions—you can't talk about culture. It's not about Gen-X culture or postmodern culture. It's about cultures. Plural. Many cultures changing rapidly.

¹Roger Dow and Susan Cook, *Turned On* (New York: Harper Business, 1997), 257-258.

Churches need pastors who continually adapt to the local context. If there is a skill set needed for this time, it's adaptability.¹

Adaptability sounds simple, but it is not an easy task. In the early 1990s within Adventism we saw the storm of criticism directed at churches that put song lyrics on their screens and used praise groups to lead the singing. The anger and passion evoked by these changes in worship style remind one of the fury that Christian Jews directed against Paul's ministry to the Gentiles.

Yet if a congregation is committed to the vision of cross-cultural ministry fast paced ongoing change is a given. There is no turning back the clock. We must move forward with the knowledge that "what works today won't work tomorrow. The galelike forces of technology and globalization are turning the world upside-down and inside-out. The most successful churches at the close of the 20th century weren't even a glint in some guru's eye 50 years ago."²

The "creative gale of destruction" can be fought or ridden but it cannot be denied. Let us use it to bring our institutional structures to the point of irreducible complexity, creating organizations that are lean, nimble, and effective. The Adventist Church can be a powerful agency in bringing the Third Angel's Message to our secular communities.

Contextualizing the Gospel

Eric Reed writes about a congregation in Seattle that is bravely trying to reach out to a group of young artists and young professionals. Eric describes the service:

¹ Mark Driscoll, interview by Marshall Shelley and Eric Reed, "Warrior, Chief, Medicine Man," *Leadership* (Fall 2000): 48.

²Sweet, soulTsunami, 159.

The young woman standing before us looks a lot like Morticia Addams. Like the classic TV character, her hair is long, black, and stringy. Her skin is typing-paper white, except for her lips, which are painted black, matching her floor-length sheath. She is pierced. She is the worship leader.

In this incarnation, Morticia's warm contralto is replaced by an intense soprano that hugs a melody line of only three or four notes. Her tango is a rich, rhythmic amalgam of classical, grunge, and funk, produced by the band behind her: cello, bassoon, violins, flute, keyboard, guitar, bass, and drums. The sound is neo-classical funk, a little bit Celtic, a little bit rock-and-roll; Isaac Watts' hymns set to new tunes. To untuned ears, it is strange, stirring, not that singable, and in this setting, very right.

This is Seattle.

The place is a Seventh-Day Adventist sanctuary, rented on Sunday for two services. The congregation—numbering about 150 in the early service—is mostly under 30, college students, a few artists, perhaps, and young professionals, some with small children. The service depends heavily on liturgy, including the Lord's Prayer, the Nicene Creed, and a question from the Heidelberg Catechism.¹

The sponsor of this service was a local Presbyterian church. No doubt if this service had been held in the mother church many of its members would have been uncomfortable with the proceedings just as we might in our church.

What is exciting is that these Presbyterian members were willing to take on the financial sponsorship of a ministry geared for the needs of people other than themselves. They recognized the difference in cultures within their own community.

Their ministry was geared for men and women who were citizens of the same country, lived in the same town, spoke the same language, shopped in the same stores, and sent their children to the same schools but were part of a different culture.

These Presbyterian members were willing to radically adjust the forms of worship in order to reach their target group. They had a vision to plant an indigenous church and were not threatened by the differences. In this respect they are an example of what even a

¹Eric Reed, "Ministering with 'My Generation'," *Leadership* (Fall 2000): 49.

traditional denominational church can do if it grasps the vision of reaching out to its secular community.

We must be careful to distinguish between contemporary worship and indigenous worship. "Contemporary worship basically means either 'Boomer worship' or 'what's-happening-now' worship. When worship is indigenous, it swells from the waters in which it is brought to life. Indigenous worship is incarnation, not imitation or replication. It is ministry by embodiment, not ministry by mimicry."¹

In an interview Mark Driscoll was asked, "You approach your work as a missionary. Is that one of the changes in the pastor's role today?" Driscoll replied

Context determines the pastor's role. If you're in an area that has tremendous poverty and injustice, pastors may need to play a prophetic role. If your community is reeling from some trauma, then a shepherd is needed. I reject any concept of a universal approach to ministry.

The only way that we can talk about church in a pluralistic context is to talk about its mission, its goal and values, and its Savior. But practice? We can only talk about that locally.

That means the way I pastor is driven by the setting. If I were somewhere else, I would have to adapt my skills to fit that culture.²

What culture do we face in our communities? Churches that are engaged in secular ministry, either in their sanctuary, or through the financial and spiritual support of a unique ministry in their community, must contextualize the gospel to the culture of their target group. This usually involves strong horizontal networks, lay led ministries, and a powerful community focus. These churches will follow in Paul's steps, using as their primary evaluative criteria of structure, programs, and content the commitment to be "all things to all persons in order to save some."

¹Sweet, *soulTsunami*, 390-391.

²Driscoll, 47, 48.

A New Personal Vision

Jesus says that he came into this world: “So that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind” (Jn 9:39). “Our problem is not that we can’t see, but that we don’t want to become blind to old ways of seeing. We must first do some unlearning before learning to see anew. We ‘know’ too many things that aren’t true or that are partial truths.”¹

Much of our church worship, evangelism, local officer structure, use of authority, view of doctrine, and understanding of service flow from a nineteenth-century model that reflects the concerns, attitudes, and structures of its day. We are trained to think that staying close to these models is safe and that change is risky, or heretical. Are we willing to become blind to some of these old ways of seeing so that a new vision may emerge?

There is much to value and treasure from what we have inherited. Indeed we cannot afford to lose the core that lies at the heart of our traditions. This core must be reborn in each succeeding generation. The heart of who we are as a people must be the leaven from which a new vision rises, nevertheless, a new personal vision must arise and “critical creativity” should play a central role.

The need to prepare for ongoing adaptive change makes innovation and creativity the key survival skills in navigating the chaotic world of the 21st century. How embarrassing that the institution that worships the Creator is so often bankrupt of creativity! Where ought the world’s most creative space to be if not the church? The definition of ‘creativity’ . . . is that of critical creativity: It aims not at novelty, but at innovation that specifically continues the divine work of creation. Not everything ‘new’ is creative. To be truly creative, one has to be in touch and in tune with the ongoing mysterious, miraculous powers of divine creation.²

¹Sweet, soulTsunami, 160.

²Ibid., 159.

Too often we look to the vision of others and then homestead it as our own. A programmatic response is common. We want to coin what was successful for one pastor or church or conference and duplicate it so that it will work for us as well. If in the past there have been periods where this was true we need to recognize that it is true no longer.

Sweet observes that unfortunately "ministry by imitation, replication, and reproduction gets applauded. Ministry by imagination, innovation, and production gets made a guillotining matter. It's time the church ceased prowling around for institutional and programmatic fixes and used its imagination instead. Creativity is the church's ultimate subversive weapon."¹

Creativity provides a platform to challenge and rethink the way we do church. Creativity pushes us to take a look at the world through the thought forms of secular people and the worldview of our secular communities. In the past such thinking has often drawn the label of heretic. So be it. Let us teach people to think as "heretics" so that they will feel free to leave cultural concerns behind as they create a ministry that reaches out to the secular world.

Paul's encourages thinking as a heretic when he writes to the Corinthians,

To those not having the law I become as one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law) so as to win those not having the law." For a Christian there can be few things more heretical than to think in this way and yet this is exactly what Paul tells us to do in if we are going to save people who have no knowledge of God's law. (1 Cor 9:21)

Ellen G. White supports this approach to our work when she writes about how Paul varied his approach to people wherever he worked:

¹Sweet, *Aquachurch*, 217.

The apostle Paul varied his manner of labor, always shaping his message to the circumstances under which he was placed. . . . When working among Jews, he gave due honor to the ceremonial law. . . . He approached the gentiles, not by exalting the law, but by exalting Christ. . . . We must also learn to adapt our labors to the conditions of the people, to meet men where they are.¹

There is not anything easy about this work. It involves intense soul searching and sometimes gut-wrenching changes. We must recognize that “our problem is not a need for leadership to add sanity and order to an insane, irrational system. The church is bursting at the seams with rationality, decency, order, dignity, and predictability. What it needs is the holy intoxications of foolishness, humor, craziness, outrageousness, creative disorder, and passion.”² These were the characteristics of the New Testament Church. When the Holy Spirit was poured out at Pentacost it was the conclusion of most that these disciples were stark raving mad or at best, drunk.

In his work with cell-group churches Ralph Neighbour wondered where the leaders got the vision for these churches.

I have asked every cell-group pastor I have met on my journeys, “When you started, did you make a trip to see a model of what you have here? Did you attend someone’s seminar before you started?” In each and every case, the answer has been, “No, I went to my knees . . . I had no choice. God taught me as I went along.”³

“God taught me” can not be packaged as a 7-step program. “God taught me” is personal, it is raw, it allows for no shortcuts.

Driscoll comments on our tendency to look for shortcuts. He was attending a Gen-X ministry convention and said,

¹Ellen White, *Gospel Workers* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1954), 300-301.

²Sweet, *soulTsunami*, 82.

³Ralph W. Neighbour Jr. and Lorna Jenkins, *Where Do We Go from Here? A Guidebook for the Cell Group Churches* (Houston, TX: Touch Publications, 1990), 8.

I felt like the speakers were selling their journey rather than encouraging other people to go on their own journey. They took descriptive situations and made them prescriptive.

Most of today's well-known postmodern ministry leaders didn't begin with some grand strategy. They began on their knees—with God, with the gospel—and God turned it into something glorious. But suddenly they were assuming that the things they had been through in starting a new ministry were normative for all people. . . . In the church today, there is such a glaring need for someone to define how to reach Gen-X and how to do postmodern ministry. That's what everybody wants to hear. But as soon as I start talking about the gospel, Christology, and the pastor's missionary contextualization, they say, 'No, no, no, just reduce it to something simple.'

It can't be done. You need to open your Bible. You need to wrestle with God.¹

You need to open your Bible. You need to wrestle with God. You need a new personal vision of the ministry God is calling you to.

Revitalizing Sodalities

Ralph Winter writes extensively about the relationship between modalities and sodalities in the evangelism and mission of the church. He defines modality as

the structure that we call the New Testament church which is a prototype of all subsequent Christian fellowships where old and young, male and female are gathered together as normal biological families in aggregate. On the other hand, Paul's missionary band can be considered a prototype of all subsequent missionary endeavors organized out of committed, experience workers who affiliated themselves as a second decision beyond membership in the first structure.²

This "missionary band" where membership required a "second decision" beyond that of becoming a Christian, is what Winter calls a sodality.

As he examines the history of the Christian church he finds that the modalities and sodalities complemented each other. Modalities gave structure and leadership to the

¹Driscoll, 48.

²Ralph D. Winter, "The Two Structures of God's Redemptive Mission," *Missiology* (January 1974): 122, 123.

church. Modalities defined the shape and style of both worship and church life.

Modalities are what we would today call denominations.

Sodalities are the primary instrument for mission to the unreached as well as the primary force for renewal within the denominational structure. Sodalities are outside of the traditional administrative structure and are able to hold the denomination accountable to higher spiritual goals. The monastic movements are examples of sodalities during the medieval age while missionary societies are examples of sodalities in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These organizations challenged the denominational church to fulfill its biblical obligations and provided a means for that fulfillment. Often after the first generation these sodalities are folded back into the church. Most of the missionary societies of the early twentieth century had come under denominational control by the middle of the twentieth century. When this happened new sodalities sprang up for when sodalities were absent from the church mission and renewal soon ceased.¹

In his studies Winter came across a structure that stood, in a sense, halfway between a modality and a sodality. These were movements such as the Pietists, the Anabaptists, and the Mennonites. These movements “typified the desire for a ‘pure’ church, a ‘believers’ church, and constitutes a most significant experiment in Christian structure . . . since it has the constituency of the modality (involving full families) and yet, in its earlier years, may have the vitality and selectivity of a sodality.”²

As Adventists we identify closely with the Pietists, Anabaptists, and Mennonites. We too were born as a movement of renewal to the church at large. In the Advent

¹Ibid., 122-132.

²Ibid., 130.

movement was fused both traditional denominational structure and fervent missionary zeal. We were able to cover both bases at the same time. Times have changed.

Today we are a denomination ten million strong. This is wonderful. We have also experienced the spontaneous evolution of numerous sodalities to keep us honest and further our mission.

Adventist Frontier Missions is an excellent example of a sodality that has sprung up to do what we as a denomination stopped doing decades ago, sending missionaries in to unreached people groups to do grass roots ministry and evangelism. Many other examples could be given of the excellent work that lay groups, sodalities, are doing for the Adventist church around the world.

As a denomination we need to encourage these sodalities. We especially need to encourage sodalities to develop to assist in the work of cross-cultural ministry to our secular people groups. This type of vertical networking could greatly facilitate our work.

As a local church here in East Lansing, we are one of eight churches which comprise district 7 in the Michigan Conference. While we have things in common with our sister churches, none of them serves a secular university campus with its 45,000 university students and the attending support structure of teachers, staff, and administrators that we do. While we derive value from the local fellowship, we need to be connected with churches that share our mission and demographics. We need to connect through e-mail, web sites, video conferences, and in person.

The work and effect of regional conferences is an example of the power and value of connecting churches that share a mission, demographics, and target audience. If not for

the growth in the regional conferences and among ethnic minorities, the church-growth statistics in North America would be even more sobering.

What would happen if churches were aligned based more on common problems, common demographics, a common mission and a common target audience, rather than geography? Would that increase the effectiveness of their ministry? It certainly has done so in the regional conferences.

While it is unlikely that our geography based conferences will be reconstituted to create regional conferences for rural churches, regional conferences for urban churches, regional conferences for church plants, or regional conferences for churches reaching out to secular people; could we do something to encourage sodalities to develop that would fill the void that our current administrative structures do not fill?

At the least we need a web of horizontal connections spanning the globe that allow congregations to share ideas, personnel, resources, and funding.

An Enabling Structure

To encourage new personal visions among our members, to facilitate the development of lay-led sodalities, to move with power into the secular world, we must be willing to reevaluate the structures supporting our local congregations.

As currently configured, a church remade to reach secular people such as the one in Seattle described by Eric Reed might feel like an orphan in its own local conference. It might have different music, meet at a different time, have a different style of worship, want to draw on the conference's evangelism budget for different purposes, structure itself in different ways, and want a different type of pastoral staffing. The local conference might or might not be sensitive to these needs. If a local church has the

courage and vision to rethink and remake itself in order to reach secular people, it deserves a corresponding institutional structure to fit within that it can call home. Can we give it the support it needs to fulfill its mission?

In the Mid-America Union a new strategy is being utilized in planting churches. A pastor through a local conference may apply to plant a church in the Union. If the Union's church planting committee approves the request it will fund the pastor's salary for the first four years at the declining percentage rate of 100%, 75%, 50%, and 25%. The local conference will pick up the balance and in the 5th year will assume full responsibility for the pastor's salary. In exchange, the church plant will pay 100% of its tithe for the first four years directly to the Union. This tithe will be put into a fund where it can be reinvested in more church plants.

In addition to the clear change in funding flows this strategy employs, the Union also serves as a buffer for creativity. During the first four formative years, if other local churches or members are unhappy with the creative approach or worship style of the church plant they can bring little pressure to bear through the local conference office. The church plant is under the care and direction of the Union so it enjoys a greater degree of freedom and autonomy from local politics than would be the case otherwise.

Specialists in church planting from the Union work directly with the pastors and members of these new church plants. Several times a year all pastors in the Union who are participating in this program are brought together for training, sharing, and fellowship. Could a similar model also be developed for churches committed to developing a ministry to secular people? Could this be a first step in creating a broader

understanding of the nature of ministry to the secular? Could this begin a rethinking of how current administrative structures can become enabling structures for evangelism?

There is a need at every administrative level to reevaluate existing structures, administrative practices, and institutional thinking in the light of reaching the secular world of the twenty-first century. The “creative gale of destruction” must blow as freely and productively here as it does in the work and structure of the local congregation.

The most important administrative priorities, policies, and processes involving the allocations of money, the flow of authority, strategic planning, budgeting, and evangelism must be evaluated to see if they contribute to the goal of reaching secular people or if they unwittingly act to preserve the status quo.

What would happen if we sat down with a clean sheet of paper with the intent to design a church structure to reach secular people. What would it look like? While it may not be possible for a complete and immediate makeover could we create a model and work towards it even if the progress was slow, and the changes, at first, rather small? Could we at the least start to ask the question, “If we did not do this already, would we do it now, knowing what we now know?”¹

If we are willing to sit down and begin this work we must seek to recognize and remove the bias each carries to the task. Words such as liberal, conservative, congregationalism, and traditionalism must prayerfully be laid aside so that the Holy Spirit can be free to work in our midst. We need to think with clarity and with courage.

¹Drucker, *Post-Capitalist Society*, 59.

We must recognize that “leadership is less about employing people than empowering people. Leadership is less about controlling people than releasing them.”¹

We need to look at the great spiritual movements in Christian history and use them as a model for our day and age. The explosion of Christianity from Israel to the world, the Protestant reformation that transformed Europe, and the Advent movement that has spread across the globe, each has much to teach us. How did these movements think? How were these movements controlled? How were these movements structured? How did these movements make decisions? How were these movements financed?

Each organization must have a structure, but that organizational structure must be subservient to the mission and message of the church. The organizational structure our church adopted at the turn of the century enabled the passion of the pioneers to move more effectively across the face of the earth as they preached the Third Angel’s Message.

The organizational structure of the church today should be so adapted that it is the best vehicle possible for the expression of the pent-up spirituality of our church members that is pounding on the door to be let out. If we sense that there is no pounding on the doors to get out, in all probability the spiritual fervor of our forefathers has cooled as we have become comfortable serving as keepers of the gate.

Renewal

If our spiritual ardor has cooled because we are keeping someone else’s gate, how much more will the problem grow if the same methods and structures are expected to cover yet a third or a fourth generation. Leonard Sweet raises the question, What are you willing to lay down so that your grandchildren will pick up the life of faith?

¹Sweet, *Aquachurch*, 188.

Ask those who have grandchildren to please raise their hands. You will see a lot of proud hands go up very quickly. Now ask those with their hands up if they want to reach their grandchildren for Jesus? 'How many of you want the church to be as central to the lives of your grandchildren as it is for you?' Once again you will see every hand raised high. The Platinum Rule then asks the question, what are you willing to lay down? If you are doing unto others as Christ has done unto you, then you are laying down some things to reach these grandchildren for Jesus.

Like Peter . . . these generations quickly boast that they would give their lives for their grandchildren. They would sooner do that than lay down some other things—their musical preferences, their worship styles, their institutional control, their hard-earned reputations. . . . Every generation has different cultural experiences, knowledge bases, and aesthetic sensibilities. Each generation operates in a different linguistic, sartorial, and myth system from the preceding generation. In religious terms this means that every generation must be reached for Christ differently. If we are to pass the baton of a living faith in Jesus Christ on the next generation, we must find ways of handing it off to them in ways whereby they can receive it. Just as Jesus 'laid down' his life for us, so we are to 'lay down' some things in order to pass the gospel 'from generation to generation.'¹

Are we willing to lay down methods and practices enshrined by our forefathers so that our grandchildren will be consumed by the fire of a living faith in Jesus Christ? Are we willing to challenge the status quo so that our own lives will be filled with such a faith? A keeping of someone else's gate eviscerates the power of the gospel in our own hearts and lives. For the safety of our spiritual lives and the lives of our children we must move out from behind the traditions of our fathers so that we might find and experience the faith of our fathers. This faith must continue even if its expression changes.

Stepping out from behind the traditions of our fathers, we must walk out to face the swirling gales of our own secular day. As we feel the winds of change that blow against our skin, we must lift our eyes to the heavens and ask with sincerity, What is present truth for this secular age? Then, with a faith that has been formed from our own

¹Sweet, Ibid., 175.

personal struggle and with the voice of God in our ears, we must exert every energy to bring that faith to secular people through the forms best suited to that task.

In our evangelism we call people back to the doctrinal purity of the New Testament Church. In our work for secular people let us also call ourselves back to the models of mission used by the New Testament Church. Those structures and elements of mission that worked so well for Paul and the Apostles are amazingly well suited for reaching out to the secular world today. New Testament Christianity can transform our institutional structures and processes just as they have transformed our personal lives.

The Rest of the Story

On October 11, 1999, our church board was notified that a new development was being proposed for the two-block area on either side of our church. In November, shortly after I had completed my seminar presentations, representatives from our board met with the developers to find out what their plans were and how their development might affect our church.

The proposed development would put in fifty 2-story townhouses on either side of the church as well as a 14-story building one block away. The bottom 2 stories would be for retail space, the next 9 stories would be condominiums, and the top 3 stories would be office space.

If the plan is approved, it will bring over 400 new family units to within one block of our church. The developers said they want to make our church the centerpiece of their project. They would be willing to redo our entire landscaping to tie in with their development. They would also be willing to maintain our landscaping, take care of our leaves, cut the grass, and shovel the snow, etc.

In addition they would allow us free access to the common areas/meeting rooms/ in the 14-story building that they would be erecting. The developers said the church would be a stabilizing influence in the community and that they viewed us as an asset to their development.

Since meeting with the developers, our board has been discussing the potential impact of their project on our church. Our head deacon suggested that since there would be so many new families and that since they would probably be used to thinking of Sunday as a day to worship that we consider reaching them at their point of understanding by providing a service on Sunday mornings to meet their needs and the needs of their families.

As we continued to talk he became more excited about what could happen if we would start a Sunday outreach service and where that type of service might lead. At that point Althea, one of our elders, turned to me, smiled, and said, "Well, pastor, I guess this is the type of thing you were talking to us about in your seminar last month, wasn't it?" "You're right, Althea," I said, "you are absolutely right."

POSTSCRIPT

How does religious meaning flow from one person to another in the changing times in which we live. This is the question that lies at the heart of evangelism.

There is a plethora of books trying to explain this process. Many are attempting to understand the many changes in our society and what those changes mean for the church.

Sometimes authors analyze the characteristics of succeeding generations. Some of the terms used are post-war generation, the baby boomers, the baby busters, the Gen-xers, and the Mosaics. While certain general characteristics may be observed of different generations I do not find this approach to be extremely helpful. There are simply too many exceptions to the general conclusions drawn about a particular generation. Even the beginning and ending point of a particular generation is usually quite arbitrary.

In dealing with real people from any of these age groups I find them to be much more complex than the generalizations made about them. More importantly this approach does not explain what connects these different generations. What is the common ground they share in the face of chaotic sociological change and upheaval? Is there a common thread that runs through these different generations from which the changes in general characteristics flow in a rational and logical development?

From my study I find that common thread to be the process of secularization. This process continues to work itself out through succeeding generations and constitutes a common ground, a common culture that all generations share.

Today many are writing about postmodernism. How do postmoderns think? How do we understand postmoderns? How do we reach postmoderns? How do we plant churches among postmoderns? These are all good questions to ask but most writers seem to view postmoderns as radically different from moderns. I do not.

It is said that the postmodern way of thinking is relative, temporal, and contingent. Yet this way of thinking goes far back into the twentieth century. It was written about extensively in the 1960's by those working to describe the process of secularization.

Postmoderns may behave differently. Postmoderns may express their values differently. The essential difference however is not that they think differently but that they have recognized that they are innately spiritual beings. They recognize that neither science nor technology can meet that spiritual need and they are not afraid to go in search of something that can.

I find that postmodernism is the coming to fruition of the same factors and ways of thinking that have been transforming our society throughout the whole of the twentieth century and is continuing now in the twenty first century. Secularization is the underlying thread, the common culture.

The process of secularization gives understanding to both modernism and postmodernism. The process of secularization highlights the common ground which all recent generations share. A broad understanding of secularization allows us to make sense of both our world and our father's world as well as to understand the world that is evolving in the lives of our children. Secularization is not a catch word to describe a generation but a process that goes on in front of our very eyes and within our own lives.

Secularization gives us a glimpse behind the scenes so that we can make sense of the momentous changes occurring in our social structures and personal relationships.

It is the unknown that gives rise to fear. Differences in how we express our beliefs or values causes us to question whether the other is a friend or a foe. We become afraid. We are suspicious of the brother sitting in the pew ahead of us. We mistrust our leaders. We question the direction our institutions appear to be heading. While there are legitimate concerns to be afraid of we must first be certain we understand the true nature and intent of what is happening around us.

This is what my study of secularization has done for me. It has given me a window on the world that allows me to hear and understand what people are saying and allows me in turn to talk with people both inside of the church and outside of the church.

Secularization goes beyond generational analysis or postmodernism. Secularization allows me to see and to use the bridges that connect our cultures, our generations, and our world.

The most important element of my seminar for any church is to begin to see these connecting links in our culture and society. To see these links is the first step in understanding. Understanding then opens the door for true communication. True communication in turn gives us the opportunity to pass on the life transforming meaning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

There is a growing number of books written to help churches effectively pass the gospel of Christ to their secular communities. Some of the informative books that I have come across since writing this paper are-

Leith Anderson and Lyle E. Schaller, *Dying for Change* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1998).

Tim Celek and Dieter Zander, *Inside the Soul of a New Generation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996).

Tom Clegg and Warren Bird, *Lost in America: How You and Your Church Can Impact the World Next Door* (Group, 2001).

Walker Percy, *The Message in the Bottle: How Queer Man Is, How Queer Language Is, and What One Has to Do with the Other* (Farrar Straus and Giroux, 1954).

Rick Richardson, *Evangelism Outside the Box: New Ways to Help People Experience the Good News* (InterVarsity, 2000).

Michael Slaughter, *Living on the Edge* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998).

Steve Sjogren, *Servant Warfare* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant, 1996).

Web sites offer even more up to date information about what is happening in churches with a heart for ministry to the secular. Much can be learned from the web sites of the following churches.

Saddleback Valley Community Church, Mission Viejo, California, pastor Rick Warren, at <http://www.saddleback.com/home/welcome.asp>

Community Church of Joy, Glendale, Arizona, pastor Walt Kallestad at www.joyonline.org

Community Presbyterian Church, Celebration, Florida, pastor Patrick Wrisley, at <http://www.celebration-florida-celebration-usa.com/church.html>

Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham, Alabama, pastor Gary Fenton, at www.dawsonmemorial.org

NorthWood, a Church for the Communities, Keller, Texas, pastor Bob Roberts at www.northwoodchurch.org

Wooddale Church, Eden Prairie, Minnesota, pastor Leith Anderson, at www.wooddale.org

For a more specific focus on outreach to postmoderns take a look at the following church web sites.

Bay Marin Community Church, San Rafael, California, pastor Sam Williams, at www.baymarin.org

Harambee Center, Pasadena, California, pastors Rudy Carrasco and Derek Perkins, at www.harambee.org

Hills Christian Life Center, Sydney, Australia, pastor Brian Houston, at <http://www1.hillsong.com/>

MarsHill Fellowship, Seattle, Washington, pastor Mark Driscoll, at www.marshall.fm/

Mosaic Church, Los Angeles, California, pastor Erwin Mcmanus, at <http://www.mosaic.org>

Warehouse, a ministry of St. Michael's Church, York, England, at www.abbess.demon.co.uk

In our desire to reach the world with the gospel let us not neglect our own churches. What seems at times to be a growing divide within our membership can also be bridged by the same approach we take with our community.

We need healing within the church as well as without. The ability to hear, understand, and communicate between old and young, liberal and conservative, black and white, national and expatriate bring us to unity in Christ.

This unity in Christ, this process of becoming one is not just a command of Jesus but is our most powerful witness to the world. We must become one as a church and then share that oneness with the world.

This unity, this oneness does not require a general reorganization of the church. It is a change in relationship that can start with any member and grow to encompass the whole.

Our world is starved for authentic spiritual experience. The exploration of eastern religions, new age movements, and the transformation of traditional worship settings all illustrate this fact.

People used to be drawn to the truth of Christian doctrine and from that conviction make a commitment to Christ and to His body, the church. Today people are drawn to Christian community, and from the truth they encounter relationally, they are convicted to make a commitment to Christ and to church doctrine. This is a significant reversal which must inform every aspect of church life and work.

Since commitment to doctrinal truth comes last we must recognize the wide range of belief systems, values, and worldviews that will be present sometimes for years after people have been regularly attending church services. This is because they are being fed by their encounter with experiential truth which over time will go on to transform their theoretical belief system as well.

Never has there been a greater need for the church of Jesus Christ to be a living body in a world of broken lives. Never has there been a greater opportunity for the church to be the bread of life, quenching the thirst and satisfying the hunger in a world acutely aware of its spiritual need.

APPENDIX A

SEMINAR PRESENTATIONS AND RESOURCE MATERIALS

Saving Some

“To those under the law I become as one under the law so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I become as one not having the law so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I become weak in order to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all means possible I might save some.” I Corinthians 9:20-23

Our church represents a diverse cross section of people. We are from all parts of the world, all walks of life. Many have made significant changes to become Adventists. Now that you are Adventist, what changes have you made to, as Paul says, “save some?”

What changes have you made in your lifestyle, your own religious expression, your relationships with people in your family/community? What changes have you made in how you present the gospel? What changes have you made in what you present as the gospel. What changes have you made in order to “save some?”

Paul speaks of three groups he tried to reach. The Jews, with God’s special revelation; the Gentiles, without a special revelation from God; and weak Christians, weak because their faith was limited, they were not able to enter in to the full freedom of the gospel.

To reach each of these groups Paul took on their worldview, their cultural concerns, and their theological understanding of God. To reach them he lived and spoke as if he was one of them. Paul made any change necessary, short of violating the moral law of God, in order to bring the gospel to his target audience in their language and in their cultural context.

Today Paul would call these three groups Christians, non-Christians, and weak Adventists. Christians, having a special revelation from God; non-Christians, living without a special revelation from God; and weak Adventists, weak because their faith is limited and they have not entered into the full freedom of the gospel.

So, what have you done lately to adapt to the language or cultural context of any of these three groups? How have you taken on their worldview, their cultural concerns, and their theological understanding of God?

When Paul ministered to the Jews, he was primarily opposed by the Jews. When Paul ministered to the “weak Christians,” he was primarily opposed by “weak Christians.” When Paul ministered to the Gentiles, he was opposed by all three groups. Since Paul’s special calling was to bring the gospel to the Gentiles, the opposition he faced appears constantly in scripture.

Working in Gentile cities, Paul was often beaten and jailed by the rulers. This was done mostly because Paul was viewed as a social nuisance. The idol making trades, and other related groups, saw Paul as a threat to their livelihood. They pushed the politicians into action. Rulers took steps to deal with the social unrest. Politicians want happy constituents. The Gentile opposition to Paul was not from a deeply rooted philosophical basis. He was simply a person seen to be stirring up trouble and the easiest thing to do was to send him packing.

Paul’s ministry to the Gentiles aroused more deep-seated anger from the Jews. Paul had been one of them. Many Jews had gone along with a belief in Christ. The Christian church operated largely from a Jewish context. Most Jews viewed Christians as a splinter group that was breaking off from the main body of Judaism. Jewish leaders attempted to bring back this offshoot group by any means possible. While they hated what Christians were doing they hated Paul most of all. Not only was he a follower of Christ but he was welcoming Gentiles into communion on an equal basis with Jewish believers. As a result, when Paul was in Israel his life was in danger. Outside of Israel, Paul had less to fear from the Jews although in some places they did exert a degree of control over the civil authorities.

The greatest opposition Paul faced in his ministry to the Gentiles came from “weak Christians.” The term “weak” almost seems a misnomer. These were Christians who would rather go hungry than eat meat that had been blessed by priests at a pagan temple. These were Christians who sought to keep all of the laws God had given by special revelation to the Jews. These Christians were aggressive in advancing their views. They fought Paul at every opportunity. They sought to undermine his authority and to undo his work. They did more harm to the churches Paul planted than any combination of Jew and Gentile.

In Acts of the Apostles chapter 19, Jew and Gentile , you find Ellen White writing that “The Jews feared that if the restrictions and ceremonies of their law were not made obligatory upon the Gentiles as a condition of church fellowship, the national peculiarities of the Jews, which had hitherto kept them distinct from all other people, would finally disappear from among those who received the gospel message.”

Later in the chapter, on page 197, Ellen White repeats this concern. “When they saw the Christian church departing from the ceremonies and traditions of Judaism, and perceived that the peculiar sacredness with which the Jewish customs had been invested would soon be lost sight of in the light of the new faith, many grew indignant with Paul as the one who had, in a large measure, caused this change. Even the disciples were not all prepared to accept willingly the decision of the council... They regarded Paul with disfavor,

because they thought that his principles in regard to the obligations for the Jewish law were lax.”

Should we be surprised if similar accusations follow when we share the gospel in a new cultural setting? It is true that a change in lifestyle can occur because the non-Christian world is influencing the Adventist world. We have seen this happen in the last twenty years. On the other hand, what changes should legitimately be taken to follow the footsteps of Paul and make ourselves like the non-Christian world so that we might “save some?” What is the nature of the distinctiveness that Paul seems concerned about as he writes to churches in the New Testament?

Was it possible for Paul to reach out to the Gentiles without upsetting members and leaders of his church? Theoretically we might posit a yes, but in practice it did not prove possible. Paul could have taken no other course than he did without compromising the gospel. The problem lay with the Christian members and leaders who had such a limited understanding of the gospel that they tried to erect barriers to Paul’s work.

For those who have been called to bring the gospel to the non-Christians world today, is it possible that people in the church will become upset with their approach and their methods?

While we hope not, we have to face the reality that there are real perils if we choose to follow in Paul’s steps. When anyone tries to speak the gospel in the language of another unbelieving culture, we risk upsetting and irritating our own members. Any change to the expression of faith we have built up over the last 150 years may be viewed as a heresy to be fought with every weapon available.

Developing new ministries to the unreached can be a lonely work. Paul was self-supporting everywhere he went. HMS Richards had to do the same thing when he went into radio ministry. He could get no institutional support for this new ministry. He had to go out on a limb by himself.

Is God calling you to reach out to non-Christian people around you? Is God calling this church to such a ministry? If so, what have you done lately to adapt to the language or cultural context of your target group? How have you taken on their worldview, their cultural concerns, or their theological understanding of God? Are you going to meet them where they are or are you waiting for them to come to you?

What would happen if the next time the U. Of M. played M.S.U. we canceled our regular service and went over to the tailgate party to mingle with people in the parking lot there? Would you like that or would you feel uncomfortable because you are not at your regular worship in church?

What if a survey in the community found that people would come to church if we had a Friday night worship service? What if the board brought a proposal to move worship to

Friday evening? Would you get excited at the possibility of new people coming to church or would you be opposed? Perhaps some would stand up and say that such a change would actually be wrong!

Paul chose the time and place that made it easiest for the Gentiles to listen and respond. Do we? What are we doing to meet people in their world, speaking their language?

Paul's desire to bring the gospel to people in their language and cultural setting involved risking the approval and support of his Jewish Christian brothers. Are we willing to risk disapproval in order to speak the gospel to our community according to their language and their cultural setting? Are we willing to become like the non-Christian world around us so that we can bring the gospel to them? What risks are we willing to take? Will fear keep us from going forward? What will we do in order to "save some?"

For the next two Sabbaths we will look at this question. The next two weeks will not be church as usual. We will work in a teaching format. If you need a more traditional service you might want to visit another church for the next two weeks. You are welcome to come but I don't want you to be disappointed or offended.

In Paul's day the Gentile world he faced had been united in many ways by the Roman Empire. Rome's roads made it possible to travel to far off cities and lands. Rome's legal system made it possible to be treated with consistency whether you were in Jerusalem, Athens, Alexandria, or Rome. Roman values had worked their way into the lifestyle of the cities and countries that Rome had conquered. Hellenistic culture gave a common bond to more and more of the diverse groupings of tribes and peoples that had been absorbed into the Roman Empire. Into this milieu Paul brought the message of the gospel with a power that transformed the world.

Today we face a world that in many ways has been unified, not by a political empire but by a way of thinking. A world that has found common ground in a shared experience of living. A world that has come to a set of values that spans the divide of culture, language, and history.

What is that way of thinking that unifies our world? What is that shared experience, that set of values that spans cultural divides? What is the underlying glue that brings our world together and how has that glue affected us? What is the language of our community? We will look at these questions next week.

The following week we will look at the challenge of being a Christian church in a secular community. What are the implications of Paul's words for us here in East Lansing? What would it take for us to speak the language of our community? How can we unleash the power of the gospel so that it will transform our world?

Session 1

Meditation

The apostle Paul varied his manner of labor, always shaping his message to the circumstances under which he was placed . . . When working among Jews, he gave due honor to the ceremonial law . . . He approached the gentiles, not by exalting the law, but by exalting Christ. . . We must also learn to adapt our labors to the conditions of the people, to meet men where they are.
GW 300, 301

Pastor's Corner

In Paul's day the Gentile world he faced had been united in many ways by the Roman Empire. Rome's roads made it possible to travel to far off cities and lands. Rome's legal system made it possible to be treated with consistency whether you were in Jerusalem, Athens, Alexandria, or Rome. Roman values had worked their way into the lifestyle of the cities and countries that Rome had conquered. Hellenistic culture gave a common bond to more and more of the diverse groupings of tribes and peoples that had been absorbed into the Roman Empire. Into this milieu Paul brought the message of the gospel with a power that transformed the world.

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The Nature of Secularization and How It Affects the Reality of Our Lives

Introduction

"Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles," I Corinthians 1:22,23.

Paul preached the gospel of Jesus Christ to both Jew and Greek. The primary stumbling block for the Jew was different than it was for the Greek. For this reason Paul said, "to the Jew I make myself as a Jew ... To those not under the law I make myself as one not under the law..."

Paul adapted to the cultural language and the theological understanding of his audience. What are the cultural language and the theological understanding of our audience, our community?

In Paul's day the Gentile world he faced had been united in many ways by the Roman Empire. Rome's roads made it possible to travel to far off cities and lands. Rome's legal system made it possible to be treated with consistency whether you were in Jerusalem, Athens, Alexandria, or Rome. Roman values had worked their way into the lifestyle of the cities and countries that Rome had conquered. Hellenistic culture gave a common bond to more and more of the diverse groupings of tribes and peoples that had been absorbed into the Roman Empire. Into this milieu Paul brought the message of the gospel with a power that transformed the world.

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What is that way of thinking that unifies our world? What is that shared experience, that set of values that spans cultural divides? What is the underlying glue that brings our world together? What is the language of our community?

I propose to you this morning that the language of our community is the language of secularization. Secularization best describes the far-reaching changes we find in our communities and in our personal lives here at the end of the 20th century. Secularization has changed each of our lives and presents the greatest challenge that the Seventh-day Adventist Church faces as we enter the 21st century.

The Evidence of Secularization in Our Communities

What are some of the ways we can see the effect of secularization in our communities? What are some of the ways of thinking that make up the "secular mind?" What are some of the factors that have brought about this process of secularization?

(Turn on first overhead, "Secularization." The material in italics is shown on an overhead transparency)

Secularization

<i>What We See In Society</i>	<i>The Secular Mind</i>	<i>Contributing Factors</i>
<i>Decline of Institutionalized Religion</i>	<i>Functionalism</i> <i>"Truth is what works"</i>	<i>Modern State</i>

The Decline of Institutionalized Religion

One of the first things we notice is the decline of institutionalized religion. For those of us who have grown up in Michigan we need look no farther than our own conference. In the 1970's there were three strong Adventist boarding academies in Michigan. Today there is one. Church membership growth over the past 10 years has been less than biological growth (approximately 2%). In terms relative to the population, the Adventist Church is smaller than it was 10 years ago. A few years ago there were full time literature evangelists across the state. Today, full time literature evangelists are virtually nonexistent. In the 80's Adventists came by the tens of thousands to camp meeting in Grand Ledge. How many will show up for a full 10 days this summer at Cedar Lake? Once there was a powerful medical work in Battle Creek. Today?

Religion has declined as a factor in our lives and communities. The status and influence religion wielded 100 years ago has largely disappeared. Membership declines while institutions struggle to survive. Meanwhile people look elsewhere to find their values and beliefs.

The secular way of thinking that underlies this is called "**functionalism.**" The reasoning goes like this. Truth is what works. Institutionalized religion is not solving our problems therefore it is not working. Since it does not work it is not true. Let us move on to find something that functions, or works better.

Major Factor : The Development of the Modern State. One hundred years ago the State's duty was to protect its citizens and promote trade. Today the modern state runs many functions formerly cared for by religion. Social boundaries, civil law, health care, marriage/divorce, caring for the poor, the widowed, and the elderly. As the modern state has grown the church has declined. The church has lost many of its roles and functions in society.

The Loss of the Sacred in Life

<i>The Loss of the Sacred in Life</i>	<i>Relativity</i> "Nothing is absolute"	<i>Cultural Captivity</i> of the church
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Another thing we see in our communities is the loss of the "sacred" in life. I heard it as a boy and I hear it today. "We don't treat the church sanctuary with the reverence that we used to." There are many other examples.

The wedding vows are taken as a social contract rather than a sacred commitment before God. Magazines such as Adventist Today, and Adventist Forum raise questions and bring criticisms about church symbols, values, traditions, persons, and ideas once considered "holy" or "sacred" in our community of faith. For many, these symbols, values, traditions, persons, and ideas lose their place in the practice of our faith.

In society, the flag becomes a garment to wear, honesty and integrity are optional, we are forced to look back to the W.W.II generation to learn about concepts such as honor, and we find the sanctity of life itself is questioned by our involvement in euthanasia, abortion, and genetic planning.

The secular way of thinking that underlies this is called “**relativity.**” It starts with this assumption. Nothing is absolute. The norms, values, and truths of our parents were tied to their culture, times, and needs. To bind them on us would be bondage. We must search for the norms, values, and truths that will be relevant for our own culture, times, and needs.

Major Factor : The Cultural Captivity of the Church. A powerful factor in the loss of the sacred is the church’s captivity to a particular culture. We read the New Testament and we find that the “church” was a radical and vibrant social entity. The “church” shattered social boundaries. The “church” created new ways of living and thinking.

Unfortunately, what was once vibrant, radical, and free can eventually become sterile. Through our attempt to preserve it exactly as it was we cut off it’s roots and stop its interaction with society. The end result often is that the once dynamic institution now has no more transforming power than a fossil in a museum.. Any institution that lives in the past risks becoming irrelevant to the present. The Amish of northern Indiana are only one example of how this can happen.

Cultural change requires new adaptations. In the history of man there has never been as much cultural change as has occurred in the last 100 years. The thinking, attitudes, language, organizations, and institutions of the church must adapt to these cultural changes. Clinging to the past causes the new generation to view the church as irrelevant and outdated. The loss of the sacred quickly follows.

The ability of the church to differentiate between the gospel and it’s own cultural adaptations is essential if the church is to grow and transform it’s community. New Testament examples of this are found in Acts 15; Galatians 2; 1 Cor. 9:19-23. Ellen White talks about this in *gospel Workers*, pp. 297-305.

The Challenge to Faith in God

The Challenge to Faith in God
Science/Technology

Contingency

“A natural cause for everything”

Something else we see in our society is the challenge to faith in God. Adventist youth are challenged as never before to simply believe that God exists. Many Adventist members, while maintaining a belief in God, often indicate by their values and actions that they are hedging their bets.

Where do we go to find safety and security in our lives? Where do we look for happiness and well-being? Where do we turn to make critical decisions in our lives? Do these lead you to a supernatural being we call God?

Among university students in Japan over 90% do not believe in any supernatural reality! Similar figures are quoted also for Europe and Australia. The religious orientation formerly found worldwide has been replaced by a secular mindset towards what works, what can be verified by our senses, and what can be explained by human thought and reason.

The secular way of thinking that underlies this is called “contingency.” It is assumed here that every natural phenomena is caused by another natural phenomena. This leaves no room for God. This leaves no room for any religious explanation of anything that happens in our world or our life. The evolutionary theory is an example of this thinking as it is applied to the question of “origins.”

Major Factor : Science and Technology. Science has done more than any other factor to cause the modern secular way of thinking. Science provides fertilizers and pest controls, farmers stop depending on prayer as the primary tool to ensure a successful harvest. Science heals diseases formerly untreatable, patients turn to their doctor for help rather than petitioning their priest, their pastor, or their God. Science develops a method of dating the age of skeletons and rock formations, church members stop believing some of the stories of the Old Testament. Science proposes a theory of origins, many Christians stop believing in creation. Some stop believing in God. Science builds up credibility with all of us in the areas where it touches our lives and makes them better. As a result many are led to question the Bible when scientific theory points to a different answer.

In response, religion has often fought pitched battles with science. The result has been the exodus of many scientists and intellectuals from Christian churches. Others may remain in the church but with their confidence in the church severely weakened.

A professor once told our class this story. He was traveling in Africa with a national worker. They came upon a man who was badly hurt. He said to his companion, “Quick, we must get medical help!” His companion replied, “No, first we must kneel and pray.” “But, he’s dying?” “First we must kneel and pray.”

Which of these responses would represent the Biblical World? What did Elijah do when faced with a dead boy on the bed? What did Paul do when the boy fell out of the window? What would we do today?

Where do we turn first in a crisis? Science or religion? Science has made inroads in all of our lives. It has become automatic. Areas formerly the domain of religion are now the domain of science and we don’t even notice the change has taken place.

The Individual as the Hub of Life

The Individual as the Hub of Life

Autonomy

Urbanization

"Accountable only to myself"

Let's go on. Another affect we see in our neighborhoods is that the individual has become the hub of life. We have changed from a community-based way of life to one based on the skills, interests, and choices of the individual.

Our lives do not revolve around a sense of oneness with or accountability to the people in our actual neighborhood or even our own church. In personal matters we feel accountable only to our self or our spouse. In spiritual matters we feel accountable only to God.

We commute to work sharing the road with countless strangers. If we recognize someone in another car it is an unusual experience. We purchase products at large stores and warehouses where we rarely learn the names of the people who serve us or even ever see them again. I have been going to our local Meijers for nine years. I don't know the name of a single person in that store.

That's a guy thing? Maybe. Actually you raise a valid point. We're going to touch on that in a few minutes.

You know, I don't even need to speak to a clerk now that I've gotten used to using their automated check out lanes. I like to use them because I find them faster. That's pragmatic don't you think?

We talk to our parents, brothers and sisters occasionally on the phone but a full reunion of parents, grown children, and grandchildren may happen once in a decade. I know some of you do better. A family reunion with all the cousins, aunts, and uncles may occur once in a lifetime if ever.

The groups we belong to and the activities we engage in are entirely based on personal choice with the only limitations being imposed by the needs of our spouse and children that are still at home.

In this community of the individual the church, while it may be viewed as important, fills just one compartment of our busy and hectic life.

The secular way of thinking that underlies this is called "**autonomy.**" Man determines his own destiny. Man is accountable to no one else but himself. Using the power of reason, the discipline of science, and the tools of technology, man has no limits. Man creates his own world and these are his choices.

Major Factor : Urbanization. A hundred years ago 70 to 80 percent of the population was in the country and small towns. Today our lives revolve around the city. Even those who live in small towns often commute to the city for work and for shopping. The small town is no longer a self-contained sphere of social life. The city has changed our living environment, our workplace, our family's activities, and all the attending relationships.

Personal "Angst"

Personal "Angst"

Temporality

"There's only one life"

Industrialization

We are continually searching for what will work in our age. We are relentlessly debunking and tearing down the values, norms, and truths of our parents. Everything in our personal world is constantly changing. Nothing is absolute. It is really no surprise then to find that secular men and women have experienced a loss of personal meaning in their lives.

We know that we do not live in a coherent world. Many philosophies are bandied around. Yet it seems so hard to find a core belief that integrates all the realities of our life and our world. We often are at a loss to make sense of even the basic questions pertaining to the nature of human existence.

Psychology, psychiatry, psychoanalysis, and other therapies have developed over the course of the last century in an attempt to address this loss of meaning in our lives. Unless we are able to find a sense of meaning in our lives we begin to lose our hope and optimism for the future.

The secular way of thinking that underlies this is called "**temporality.**" Our lives and everything in our world is limited by time and space. We have a beginning and we have an end. There is nothing else. There is no Heaven. There is no Hell. There is also no lasting value from anything we do or say. Our accomplishments are just wisps of smoke, dispersed into the nothingness of time.

Major Factor : Industrialization. Tremendous wealth resulted from the industrial revolution. Unfortunately that wealth was not shared. A great gap developed between the working class and the rich. The owners of the factories paid as little as they could while working men, women and children mercilessly. The Church did not side with the workers. The Church sided with the wealthy owners.

One result was the development of new political parties such as communism and socialism. These parties defended the rights of the poor that the church had ignored. As these parties threatened the status quo western democracies passed civil legislation to enforce justice for the working classes. Again the church was not involved on the side of

5	4	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	4	5
<i>urban</i>										
<i>rural</i>										
<i>men</i>										
<i>women</i>										
<i>20 - 35 year old</i>										
<i>over 50</i>										
<i>college educated, uneducated</i>									<i>medium</i>	
<i>educated</i>										
<i>intellectuals; higher professionals</i>									<i>lower</i>	
<i>professionals</i>										
<i>laborers</i>									<i>skilled</i>	
<i>workers</i>										

*high/low income groups
income*

medium

Where we live, our gender, our education, our profession, and our income group are some of the factors affecting the strength of secularization's impact on our lives. These are not determinative, merely indicative. For example, you might live in the country, rural, but commute into the city for work, church, and recreation. Even when home you might spend much of your time on the Internet, reading books/magazines with a secularized slant, and getting your cultural exposure from TV shows and movies that exemplify the thinking of the "secular mind."

Our church is located two blocks from Michigan State University. The strength of the secularizing factors surrounding us is at the top of the scale. Your survey results show that your communities are highly secularized. Your survey results also show that your church community reflects most of these same secularized traits. Secularization is a phenomena that we experience in our daily lives.

Conclusion : Who Has Been Secularized?

Secularism is a philosophy. It's primary beliefs stand in opposition to the basic tenets of Biblical belief. We run little risk of becoming secularists. Secularization however, has a wide-ranging effect on many groups that would not consider themselves secularists.

(The material in italics is shown on an overhead transparency)

People Affected by Secularization

<i>The relativist</i>	You can be a relativist and still be secularized.
<i>The materialist</i>	You can be a materialist and still be secularized.
<i>The pragmatist</i>	You can be a materialist and still be secularized.
<i>The indifferent</i>	You can be indifferent and still be secularized.
<i>The secularist</i>	You can be a secularist and be secularized.
<i>The atheist</i>	You can be a atheist and still be secularized.
<i>The humanist</i>	You can be a humanist and still be secularized.

The former church member

1. <i>Who drifted away</i>	You can drift away and be secularized.
2. <i>Who rejected the church</i>	You can reject your church and be secularized.

3. *Who was disappointed*
4. *Enticed by non-Christian values*

You can be disappointed and be secularized.
Still can be secularized.

The Christian

And could we write this in -
You can be a Christian and be secularized.

Could we also add this to our list?

The Adventist

You can be an Adventist and be secularized in how you think and act.

There are Adventist groups who have gone back to the farm in a very literal sense. They live in rural communities on somewhat communal terms. Their interaction with their local communities is limited. Their contact with the larger social fabric of North America is also minimal.

Others have gone before them in the attempt to hold on to a way of life that is largely gone from our country. The Amish of northern Indiana are just one example of how a particular way of life can be preserved. The cost of this approach is the ability to share this way of life with the secularized communities surrounding them. Is the power of the gospel flowing through these communities and transforming the world around them? Or in Paul's words, are they becoming all things to all men in order that we might "save some?"

Most of us do not live in these types of rural communities. We live in a society that bears the imprint of secularization. It is a process changing the world around us and in us. We see the changes in how we think. We see the changes in our way of life. To paraphrase the famous line from pogo, "We have met secularized man and he is us."

In our next presentation we will explore the history of secularization, what secularization has done to religion's role in our society, and the gap that exists between the Christian world and the secular world.

Session 2

Secularization: Its Challenge to the Mission of the Church

Introduction

We live in a society that bears the imprint of secularization. It is a process changing our world and our lives. "We have met secularized man and he is us."

In this presentation we will explore the history of secularization, we will look at what secularization has done to religion's role in our society, and we will define the gap that exists between the Christian world and the secular world.

Secularization : A Break from the Past

(The material in italics is shown on an overhead transparency)

From Tribe to Town to City

Harvard Theologian Harvey Cox uses tribe, town and city to represent three stages of development in how people think about and express their spirituality.

The tribal era finds religion to be an experience of the power and truth of God. Abraham's hand being stayed from killing his son, Moses hidden in the cleft of the rock as God revealed himself by shaking the mountain, and Elijah being fed by the hidden brook are three examples.

The era of the town takes the experience of religion, structures it, organizes it, and institutionalizes it. Churches, priests, pastors, theologies, and systems of belief come into existence. God and truth are explained in a rational and logical way.

The era of the city challenges the place and role of religion. Religion must earn its way by demonstrating functional value rather than ontological proofs. For many it is swept to the fringe of life where religion exists as a compartmentalized personal reality.

Specialization and differentiation, pluralism and individuation determine the nature of man's relationships. A coherent world to guide one's life is often a casualty of the city.

Let's trace out this progression in social structures, economic life, relationships, ways of thinking, values and religion.

	Tribe	Town	City
<u>Social Structure</u>	<i>Small Scale undifferentiated egalitarian closed community isolated</i>	<i>Part of Larger Whole differentiated class structured open community integrated</i>	<i>Large & Complex compartmentalized institutionalized open society differentiated</i>

The small tribal group of Abraham and Lot, their families and servants stands in contrast with the class structured, integrated community of Jerusalem in Jesus' day. Both are markedly different from the individual living in a townhouse in downtown East Lansing.

<u>Economic Life</u>	<i>Food Gathering</i> hunting, fishing Cultivating self-sufficient Undeveloped Technology	<i>Agrarian</i> dependent on land subsistence farming labor-intensive pre-industrial technology	<i>Urban, Industrial</i> market oriented work specialization capital intensive advanced technology
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We look at the nomadic life of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to the settled life of Jesus' family working in the carpentry trade in Nazareth. Today multi-billion dollar corporations have grown up developing wood products and their applications.

<u>Social Relations</u>	<i>Based on Kinship</i> group oriented personal, reciprocal	<i>Based on Primary Group</i> group-oriented personal	<i>Contractual</i> individual oriented impersonal, technical
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Joseph's brothers were stuck with him. They could not just move away and keep him at a distance. Jesus on the other hand was not limited to picking disciples from among his extended family. He chose from a wide range of persons with very different backgrounds. Today it is the consumer who does the choosing. Whether we surf the web or make written application to the groups we wish to join.

<u>Way Of Thinking</u>	<i>Supernatural</i> holistic inclusivistic concrete	<i>Looking for Answers</i> integrated exclusivistic concrete	<i>Functional/Pragmatic</i> analytical, rational exclusivistic abstract; scientific
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In the Old Testament God says, "I send the rain and the pestilence, I send blessing and destruction, I send life and death. In Adventist theology we say "God allowed..." In the city we use the scientific method to give explanation.

<u>Values</u>	<i>Traditional</i> absolute	<i>Conservative</i> absolute	<i>Constantly Changing</i> relativistic/temporary
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The 10 commandments were as absolute in Ellen White's day as they were in the time of Moses or the time of Paul. Today, we look to see if they are still relevant. Ted Turner said recently, "if I were going to pick the 10 most important rules to live by I don't think I would squander one on the question of adultery."

<u>Religion</u>	<i>God in Everything</i> central to all life integrated	<i>God-Man Relationship</i> organized, institutions differentiated	<i>Man Determined</i> privatized compartmentalized
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In the Old Testament God gives explicit instructions to guide in every aspect of life. In the town the worldview of the people was grounded in their theological understanding of God's relationship with man. Today religion is what we choose it to be.

Life in East Lansing bears little relationship to that of 19th century small town America. It bears even less relationship to life as it was lived by the heroes and heroines of the Bible.

Understanding the changes that have become a part of our society is essential in grasping the gap that exists when we try to take the gospel of the Bible and bring it to "secular man." Before looking at that gap let's first take a closer look at the shrinking of Religion's piece of the pie.

Secularization : Reducing Religion's Piece of the Pie

(The material in italics is shown on an overhead transparency where each of the titles shown here constitutes one piece of a pie with a circle around the whole)

In the Time of the Tribe

For the tribe every event came under the auspices of religion. The head of the tribe would stand as the religious leader as well as the head of state. The tribal leaders set the social boundaries, determined the nature of family relationships, settled disputes, set the time

for tribal celebrations, educated the young, cared for the sick, provided for the elderly, the widowed, and the orphans, gave explanations for the meaning of life, the mysteries of nature, and the expectations of the gods.

We go around this circle and see that every piece of the pie came under the domain of religion.

In the Time of the Town

We move to the age of the town. If you go to New England today, what is the largest building in each town? It is the church. The worldview provided by the church was the basis for everything that happened in the town. The church integrated all aspects of life. The church set social boundaries. The state, while independent of the church, was morally accountable to the church. The code of civil law was an application of the moral law found in the Bible.

Holidays were primarily spiritual celebrations. The church evaluated philosophic proposals as well as scientific findings. The church cared for the sick and gave help to the poor. The church defined marriage, divorce, and family life. The church provided for education. Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Brown, and Dartmouth are just some of the schools built by churches to raise up Christian leaders for society. Even when the state became involved in education it did so under the moral supervision of the church. Prayer in school is one example.

We go around this circle and see that every piece of the pie was integrated by the theological underpinnings that religion gave to life.

In the Time of the City

We move to the age of the city. The secular age. Here the "modern state" and the "scientific enterprise" have assumed most of the roles which religion held in the age of the town. Who controls schooling? The state, except as local churches like ours choose to run their own educational programs. Who takes care of health care, Medicaid, Medicare? The state. Who determines the grounds for marriage and divorce? The state. Who sets the boundaries for acceptable social behavior? Civil law? There was a judge in the news recently because he refused to remove the 10 commandments from the wall of his courtroom. Who cares for the widows, the orphans and the poor now? The state, through the development of social programs.

Who has the primary influence on people's worldview? Christianity is just one of many institutions attempting to shape the worldview of our society. The church still has influence but its once dominant role of integrating the many varied aspects of our lives is gone. We live in a different world. We go around this circle and see that there's almost

no pie left. Even the piece called “religion” has shrunk under the challenge of the scientific method.

How do we as Christians respond to these changes? Before responding to this question lets clarify the gap that exists between the Christian world and the secular world.

Secularization : Has the Gap Grown Larger?

Take your Bibles and turn to Acts chapter 10. A pivotal moment in the history of the Christian Church occurred when Peter received the vision starting in vs. 9. Peter goes up to the roof to pray. He becomes hungry and wants something to eat but falls into a trance. He sees Heaven open, a large sheet comes down filled with all kinds of unclean animals. Then a voice speaks, “Get up Peter, kill and eat. He says, “No, Can’t do it!” The voice speaks to him a second time, “Don’t call anything impure that God has make clean.” It happened three times, finally Peter goes, directed by God to Cornelius who has been praying that God will reveal himself to him. God does so through the ministry of Peter. This establishes a door between the Jewish-Christian and Gentile worlds. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Gentiles is seen as a sign that God has accepted them on an equal basis in with Jewish Christians.

Now turn to Acts chapter 15. The question that remains for the Christian church is, O.K. Gentiles are accepted on an equal basis but what should be required of these Gentile believers as regards Jewish law and custom. Should they be circumcised? Should they keep the feast days? Should they follow all the dietary laws? Should they follow all of the other instructions that God had personally given to the Jewish people through the ministry of Moses?

We find here a counsel being held in Jerusalem. Paul and Barnabas are representing the Gentile believers. We have Peter, James, and the other leading members of the early Christian church mediating the discussion. The debate goes back and forth. The counsel comes to the conclusion that only four requirements will be made of Gentiles who become Christians. They can’t eat meat that’s been strangled. They must abstain from blood. They can’t eat meat that has been polluted by being blessed at a pagan temple. They are to avoid all forms of immorality.

Ellen White writes that many of the apostles who had followed Jesus for 3 ½ years did not agree with this decision. For one, God had given these laws. How could man make of no effect the laws of God? Secondly, if these laws were not kept, all that made the Christian distinct from the Gentile world would be lost. They were very upset with Paul and his followers for these reasons.

In spite of the strong opposition Paul never wavered in his commitment to bring the gospel to the Gentiles free of the cultural context of the Jewish Christians. The gap between the Jewish world and the Gentile world was large and deep. The gospel of Jesus Christ could bridge that gap but not if it was burdened down with Jewish law no matter how rooted it was in the revelation of God in the Old Testament.

I'd like to ask you the question, "Was it a bigger jump for Paul to go from the Jewish-Christian world of his day to the Gentile world? Or is it a bigger jump for us to go from our Adventist-Christian world to the communities that surround our churches?"

(The material in italics is shown on an overhead transparency)

***A Comparison
Which Gap is Larger?***

	<i>Gentile World</i>	<i>Christian World</i>	<i>Secular World</i>
<i>Is there a god?</i>	<i>Many gods everywhere</i>	<i>Only one God</i>	<i>No gods anywhere</i>

You ask the question, Is there a God? The Gentile world says gods are all over the place. There's the god of the mountain, the god of war, the god of fire, the god of peace, the god of rain, the god of war, there are lots of gods. Paul says there's one God. Today the secular world says, "There is no God!" The Christian world is closer to the Gentile world of Paul's day than it is to ours.

<i>Origin of Life</i>	<i>Work of the gods</i>	<i>Work of God</i>	<i>Random chance</i>
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Where did life come from? Most cultures point back to a work of the gods. It might seem strange and fanciful and funny but the gods are involved. Paul would say it is the work of the one true God. Today people would say it's random chance. Which culture is closer. Once again, the Christian world and the Gentile world.

<i>After Death?</i>	<i>Life after death</i>	<i>Life after death</i>	<i>Nothing after death</i>
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What happens after death? What about all of those pyramids? They had elaborate preparations for life after death. Paul would say yes there is life after death but it's a lot different from what you guys think it is. Today secular man says, life after death? It would be nice wouldn't it but I don't think so. Once again the Christian world and the Gentile world are closer.

<i>Religious Duties?</i>	<i>Please the gods</i>	<i>Obey God</i>	<i>What works for me?</i>
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What about religious duties? People in Paul's day knew they needed to please the gods. They thought they could do it with exterior rituals. Paul says, sorry, it's not just going to the temple and sacrificing, you have to give heart obedience to the one true God. Today? Religious duties? Religious duties revolve around finding things that I believe help me in

my life. Once more, the Christian world was closer to the Gentile's world than to the Secular world.

<i>How am I Saved?</i>	<i>Sacrifice at the temple</i>	<i>By the death of Jesus</i>	<i>I don't need salvation</i>
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How am I saved? Gentiles would go sacrifice at the temple. That's how you're saved. Paul says, no, by the death of Jesus only can we be saved. Modern man says, Salvation? Who needs to be saved? You need to be saved from the irrelevant religious concepts of the past. The Gentile world and the Christian world are closer in this area.

<i>Rules?</i>	<i>Priests/Rulers determine</i>	<i>God determines</i>	<i>None are absolute</i>
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What about rules? In Paul's day there were rules. Priests and rulers set out rules that were binding on people. Paul would say God is the one who makes the rules that are binding. Today we would say that there are no rules that are absolutely binding. Once again the gap is larger in our day than in Paul's day.

<i>Where is Hx going?</i>	<i>Endless cycle, sometimes gods affect it</i>	<i>Focused on God's coming God controls</i>	<i>Going nowhere man controls</i>
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What about history? The Gentile world would have said it's a cycle that keeps going around and around, it's not going anywhere in particular. Christianity and Judaism said you're wrong! History is going someplace. The Jews say history is going to the age of the Messiah. Christians say history is going to the return of the Messiah. What do we say today? History has no ultimate meaning. It's going nowhere. Here we find the Gentile world and Secular world to closer to each other than either is to the Christian world.

<i>Value of Individual?</i>	<i>Negligible</i>	<i>Infinite</i>	<i>Central</i>
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What value does the individual have in society? Look at all the millions of Chinese that died to create the great wall. Look at the masses of poor Egyptians that slaved to make the pyramids. The worth of the individual was not something of significance in the Gentile world. The Bible says that man has infinite worth. Man is so full of meaning that God sent his own son to die just for us. What does society say today? The value of the individual is central. It may well be that this is a result of Christian influence. Nevertheless, we do have more in common with secular man on this question than Paul had with the Gentile world.

<i>View of Nature?</i>	<i>Irrational</i>	<i>Ordered</i>	<i>Consistent</i>
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Most of the Pagan world viewed nature as irrational. The gods played tricks on man through nature and could not be trusted. The Bible says that nature is ordered and consistent. You can study nature. Science came out of this Christian framework. So we have more in common with our secular age than Paul had with his Pagan age.

*Relation to Oneness
Nature?*

Steward

Oneness

Here the Pagan view of “mother earth” has come full circle. Today many feel that the rights of animals and the rights of the natural world are just as important as the rights of man. Christianity and Judaism say, no, we are the stewards, we are significantly different from the rest of nature. We are of a different kind and a different order. We are to rule as stewards, not to exploit but still to rule. Here we find that the gap in Paul’s day was just as great as the gap in our day.

Conclusion

What are we to conclude? In many significant areas, the gap is larger today than it was in Paul’s day. The challenge for Christian mission to the secular world is immediate and imposing. Success will come as we follow Paul’s model for reaching the Gentile world. That model is to use only the gospel of Jesus Christ to bridge the gap to the secular world. We should not impose any additional requirements no matter how helpful they have been to us. Lastly, opposition from within our ranks must not stop us. To keep our mission in a form that is comfortable to all of our own members’ risks making it irrelevant to the people we are trying to reach.

Today we face a world that in many ways has been unified, not by a political empire but by a way of thinking. A world that has found common ground in a shared experience of living. A world that has come to a set of values that spans the divide of culture, language, and history.

If we are willing to speak the language of the secular world we too can have access to all the people groups represented. The secularization of our world presents an unparalleled opportunity for sharing the gospel. If we seize these opportunities then the greatest days of Adventist mission lie before us.

How do we move in this direction? That is the question we will address in our final two sessions.

Session 3

Scripture : Deut. 4:39

Acknowledge and take to heart this day
 that the Lord is God
 in heaven above
 and on the earth below.
 There is no other.

Meditation

The varying circumstances
 taking place in our world
 call for labor
 which will meet
 these peculiar developments.
 MS. 8a, 1988

Pastor's Corner

Secularization and Faith

Secularization expresses itself in a large variety of forms. In Europe it is mostly external. In the United States, where church and state have been firmly separated, secularization is mostly internal. People do remain part of a religious organization; churches, religions and cults flourish. But, the contents of religion and commitment are eroded. In non-Christian areas, such as Japan or China, the process of secularization, again, takes on different forms. All these differences are intimately related to the socio-religious context in which the process occurs.

Though originally a Western, Christian term, today, secularization is no longer synonymous with "de-Christianization" or "becoming unchurched." It is a universal process that affects people of all religions: Hindus and Buddhists, Muslims and Shintoists. The whole process seems inevitable, part of the whole process of modernization: the development of the modern state; urbanization and industrialization; the development of science and technology. This does not mean that religion will disappear altogether. It does mean, however, that its forms are changing, and that its activities and institutions are losing the social and political and economic significance they once had. In this connection it is important to make a clear distinction between "faith" and "religion." Faith refers to an attitude, a commitment rooted in a person's trust in and dependence upon God or a supernatural reality. Religion stands for man's activities, man's thoughts, and man's work. To the extent that secularization liberates man from these often all-too-human formulations (creeds), institutions, and activities; it opens up the way for a genuine faith. However, this genuine faith has become very rare (cf. Luke 18:8).

Dr. Gotfried Oosterwal

The Secular Mind As an Avenue to the Soul

Introduction

“Acknowledge and take to heart this day that the Lord is God in heaven above and on the earth below. There is no other.” These words from Deuteronomy 4:39 must underlie our study of secularization. God is in control. Secularization is not an evil to be feared. It is a process to be understood in the context of God’s redemptive work towards man.

Secularization is a powerful process that touches all of us. In our first session we looked at the way “secular man” thinks. We studied the factors contributing to secularization and we saw the evidence's of that secularization in our communities.

In our second session we looked at the history of secularization as expressed in the “tribe-town-city” paradigm. We examined how “religion’s” piece of the pie has changed and we recognized that the gap between biblical thinking and secular thinking is greater than what existed between biblical thinking and pagan thinking in Paul’s day. The challenge of crossing that gap is imposing.

In this session we will look at tools for bridging that gap. First we will look at the relationship between the sacred and the secular. Our understanding of that relationship is central to the doing of mission among the secularized. Secondly we will examine how the early Christians did mission among the Gentiles. Would their methods be appropriate in our mission to the secular? Lastly we will consider the primary needs “secular man” experiences in his life and community. Can these needs serve as bridges to reach the secularized communities around us?

The Sacred and the Secular

As religious systems, organizations, and institutions have declined their power to control the thoughts and lives of their adherents has weakened. Today tens of millions of people who once were bound by the restraints and misconceptions of their religious traditions are now free to consider the claims of the gospel. The challenges facing religion as a whole are being used by God to prepare men, women, and children for his second coming.

To fully see and utilize the positive aspects of secularization we must reexamine the dichotomy too often drawn between the sacred and the secular. Why do we think of the sacred as being in opposition to the secular? Where does this thinking come from? Look at what was being said during the medieval age.

(The material in italics is shown on an overhead transparency)

Medieval Thinking

<i>Spirit</i>	vs.	<i>Matter</i>
<i>Religious</i>	vs.	<i>Profane</i>
<i>Church</i>	vs.	<i>World</i>
<i>Sacred</i>	vs.	<i>Secular</i>
<i>Soul</i>	vs.	<i>Body</i>
<i>Clergy</i>	vs.	<i>Laity</i>

We recognize and fight the idea that the soul and body are in conflict. Why do we accept the others? They come from the same philosophical base in Greek thinking. What do you think of this statement?

*"There are two kinds of people: clergy and laity
two sorts of life: spiritual and fleshly
two powers: priesthood and kingship
two jurisdictions: divine and human"*

Do you agree with this? Is this biblical? Most of these words are found in the Bible but does the Bible use them in this way? How about this statement -

"What the soul is to the body, the clergy is to the laity" (Gratian)

We would jump on that one pretty fast. We are very sensitive to any statement using soul and body in this way. To be consistent should we not oppose the last part of this sentence with equal strength? This last statement is made by Boniface the 8th -

"The Religious sphere is always superior, and the secular, that is the realm of government of the professions, and the arts and sciences, is always inferior. For that reason, laymen ought to obey the clergy." -- Boniface VIII, Unam, Sanctum, 1302

How far would this go at our next business meeting? Why do we reject the submission of laymen to clergy but accept the idea that the secular is to submit to the sacred?

Is it possible that we have swallowed more Greek philosophy than we have realized? If our approach to the secular community is premised on an erroneous base, could that explain some of our difficulty in reaching secular people? Let's look at this traditional view and also some alternate views.

(The material in italics is shown on an overhead transparency)

The Sacred is Opposed to the Secular

<i>The Secular</i>	<i>Secularization</i>	<i>The Church</i>	<i>Mission</i>
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<i>Sacred</i>	<i>inferior; evil</i>	<i>threat to the church</i>	<i>above the world</i>	<i>soul winning,</i>
<i>opposed to</i>	<i>pollutes the believer</i>	<i>illegitimate</i>	<i>called to come out</i>	<i>crusade evangelism</i>
<i>Secular</i>	<i>needs to be avoided</i>	<i>increases worldliness</i>	<i>God's fortress</i>	<i>calling people out of world, specialists</i>

This view is Catholic in its essence and development. Why has it so readily been accepted by Adventist churches? Where is the biblical base for this view? The dichotomy of mortal body to immortal soul is unbiblical. The dichotomy of exalted priesthood and common laymen is unbiblical. Isn't the dichotomy that sets the sacred against the secular also unbiblical? Here is a view that became popular among the Protestant Reformers.

The Sacred and the Secular Exist in Mutually Autonomous Spheres

	<i>The Secular</i>	<i>Secularization</i>	<i>The Church</i>	<i>Mission</i>
<i>Sacred vs.</i>	<i>realm under God</i>	<i>fruit of the gospel</i>	<i>fulfilled in world</i>	<i>work of the laity</i>
<i>Secular</i>	<i>own divine calling</i>	<i>God at work</i>	<i>incarnate in world</i>	<i>part of whole life</i>
<i>Paradox</i>	<i>complements/corrects</i>	<i>necessary process</i>	<i>participates in worldly</i>	<i>integrated in all they do</i>

The Reformers did not like the Catholic view of the secular. The Protestants looked at the secular as autonomous from the sacred. They saw God as Lord of the secular. The secular was under God and independent of the church. The secular was to complement and correct the church. The callings of secular man, government, the arts, the professions, and the sciences, were considered divine callings.

The Renaissance and the Reformation broke the domination of the secular by the sacred. With the freedom given to the realm of the secular, changes came at breakneck speed. Scientists were free to investigate the physical world. Their discoveries could not be controlled by the power of the church. The application of that research was followed by the development of new technologies. The arts and literature flowered under the new freedoms both were granted. The western world was changed and there was no going back. There were some unforeseen consequences of the freedom given to the secular realm. The full brunt of these consequences was not felt for several centuries. As the secular realm became more and more powerful another view of the sacred/secular relationship came forward.

The Secular Sphere is Won over by the Sacred Sphere

	<i>The Secular</i>	<i>Secularization</i>	<i>The Church</i>	<i>Mission</i>
<i>Victory of</i>	<i>claimed by sacred</i>	<i>impoverishes society</i>	<i>heart of all culture</i>	<i>claiming people</i>
<i>Sacred over</i>	<i>conquered by sacred</i>	<i>decline of culture</i>	<i>guide of all culture</i>	<i>and activities for</i>
<i>Secular</i>	<i>subjected to sacred</i>	<i>prevents church growth</i>	<i>expand to all areas of life</i>	<i>God and for the church</i>

This view seeks the triumph of the sacred over the secular, the latter being "incomplete" and in need of the sacred. Perhaps this is a gentler form of the Medieval view of the sacred/secular relationship. It attempts to respond to the apparent excesses coming from

the autonomy granted to the secular by the Reformers. However, those pushing the frontiers of the secular were not standing still. A further development of the autonomy of the secular came forward.

The Secular Sphere Reaches Its Zenith and Becomes the Sacred Sphere

	<i>The Secular</i>	<i>Secularization</i>	<i>The Church</i>	<i>Mission</i>
<i>Decline of the Sacred</i>	<i>the only reality religion hinders man coming of age</i>	<i>process of liberation helpful to man's true nature/existence</i>	<i>part of culture part of social life quest for ultimate</i>	<i>penetration of life works "underground" makes "anonymous Christians"</i>

Here the "traditional sacred" is swallowed up by the secular. The secular ultimately becomes the "true sacred." In this context the "traditional sacred" is the barrier which secular man must cross to reach his true fulfillment in the image of God. In this scenario the secular reaches it's full potential as all of life is done to the "glory of God."

Each of these views has elements that appeal to the hopes and fears in each of us. Each of these views draws upon biblical elements and responds to certain biblical concerns. Do any of them however express a biblical view of the relationship between the sacred and the secular?

Should we look for a new paradigm?

The Sacred and the Secular: A New Paradigm

	<i>The Secular</i>	<i>Secularization</i>	<i>The Church</i>	<i>Mission</i>
<i>Sacred Thru Secular</i>	<i>not separate of sacred God's good creation fallen and redeemed</i>	<i>evidence of "Gr. Con." Christ vs. Satan. Man participates in</i>	<i>bridge tween God-Man Tween sacred-profane God's colony on earth</i>	<i>proclaim & serve reconcile man to God, hasten the judgment</i>

This view seeks to deal with the same elements of unity and individuality that we find in the doctrine of the trinity. In the doctrine of the trinity we say that God is fully three and at the same time absolutely one. These two concepts must be held in a necessary tension. If either of these two elements comes to dominate then the nature of God is distorted with disastrous results.

When we look at the relationship between the sacred and the secular we must apply these same two elements. The realms of the sacred and the secular are fully independent and autonomous. At the same time these two realms are one expression of the love of God for man. They cannot live without each other, neither can they live in domination of each other. They are mutually supportive and each acts as a correcting agent to the other. Both realms can feel the corruption of sin and both can be avenues of the divine as it transforms our life and world.

Summary

If we use a non-biblical base for our mission we will experience limited success. With a non-biblical base we risk expending the majority of our energy fighting non-issues, securing allegiance to nonessentials, and building programs and institutions that neither fit society nor transform it. Our view of secularization must be Biblically based in order to bring the gospel effectively to the secular world.

The Methods of Paul

How did Paul go about building his mission to the Gentile world? What were the characteristics of Paul's mission activity?

New Testament Factors of Mission

(The material in italics is shown on an overhead transparency)

New Testament Factors of Mission

**Fervent faith of the believers*

The power of the experiential faith of the Christian church burned quickly across the empire.

**A lay movement*

The Holy Spirit fell upon all the believers and they worked together according to their gifts.

**Relevance of message*

Into an era ripe with messianic expectations and looking for a meaning that paganism could not supply, the gospel of Jesus Christ was a draft of fresh air.

**A holistic ministry--proclamation; service-care; fellowship*

Christian ministry was one of healing, caring, gathering in prayer, sharing of personal goods, and proclamation. The message that was preached was made real by the life of the body of believers.

**Local church the center*

Plans, programs, and directives did not come over from Jerusalem, Antioch, or Alexandria.

**Home churches--small groups*

The personal nature of the church is evident in the letters of Paul. The personal greetings he gave everywhere he wrote testified to the nature of the church.

**A charismatic movement--spiritual gifts*

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit inaugurates the work in the book of Acts. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit validates the inclusion of the Gentiles in the household of faith.

**High quality of Christian faith*

Faith strong enough to move mountains. Faith firm enough to withstand the persecution of the empire.

**A flexible organization*

With the local church as the center, self funded and self directed, new initiatives could be put into place immediately.

**Christian unity*

The diversity and plurality of the early church was bound together by their unifying commitment to Jesus Christ and his gospel.

**Home and family emphasis*

The words of Paul to his churches continually focus on how the gospel must transform the nature of family relationships.

**The work of the Holy Spirit*

The work and leading of the Holy Spirit is integrally wound up with the growth and ministry of the early church as recorded in the book of Acts and the letters of the apostles.

The factors of mission, which bridged the gap in the time of Paul, will also be effective in our secular age. Do we practice these currently? Have we tended towards an approach to mission that allows many of these crucial factors to diminish? Let us compare for a moment two styles of mission. One style is "church-oriented, the other style is world-oriented. Which one of these styles depends more heavily upon the New Testament factors of mission?

Two Ways of Mission

(The material in italics is shown on an overhead transparency)

Two Ways of Mission

	<i>Church-oriented</i>	<i>World-oriented</i>
Purpose	<i>church growth; expansion</i>	<i>evangelization; reaching the</i>
<i>unreached</i>		

In the New Testament the church experienced tremendous growth but growth was not the object. The object was to tell people about Jesus Christ. The object was to have the gospel of Jesus Christ transform the web of relationships that surrounded each person in society. There is a difference between planning for church growth and experiencing the outflow of faith to the community around us.

Evangelism	<i>program centered, institutional</i>	<i>personal part of life</i>
	<i>special time, place and occasion</i>	<i>spontaneous</i>
	<i>campaign; crusade; come-structure</i>	<i>witness; go-structure</i>

There were no "Bible Says" lesson guides in Paul's day. There were no worldwide evangelistic meetings for the churches to tune into. There was no local paid professional to plan and execute the outreach strategies for the church. A program-centered approach to evangelism has minimal impact on our secular communities. It would have had minimal impact on the pagan world of Paul's day as well. The charismatic nature of the early church involved each member in personal, spontaneous acts of witness.

Message	<i>absolute; unaffected by changes</i>	<i>related to changing</i>
	<i>in culture and society</i>	<i>circumstances and conditions</i>

The gospel, as it went to the Gentiles, broke in a radical way with the beliefs and practices of Jewish Christians. Paul's presentation of the gospel was relevant to the lives of Gentiles. This gospel presentation, attacked viciously by many Jewish Christians, worked a transformation of Gentile society. Like Paul, we must recognize the core of the gospel and be willing to leave our own traditions and cultural applications behind. Only then can the gospel move with power among our secular neighbors.

Ministry	<i>proclamational, truth centered</i>	<i>incarnational, need-oriented</i>
	<i>calling people out of the world</i>	<i>sharing and caring within the world</i>

Jesus became a man in order to minister to men. Paul became like unto the Gentiles in order to minister to the Gentiles. We must become like the secular in order to minister to the secular.

Organization	<i>centralized, hierarchical</i>	<i>decentralized, democratic</i>
Structure	<i>vertical</i>	<i>horizontal</i>

In Paul's day the local church was the center. Church organization was very flexible. Today we find a more vertical, centralized structure in our church. This structure has its advantages but reaching the secular community is not one of them. A decentralized, democratic structure will aid in our outreach today just as it did in Paul's day.

World	<i>evil, inferior;</i>	<i>God's good creation, redeemed in Christ</i>
	<i>passive in function</i>	<i>active in function</i>

We must move from the dichotomy of the medieval age to a balanced biblical view if we are to maximize our opportunities of witness to the Secular.

Church	<i>God's holy fortress</i>	<i>salt, yeast of world</i>
	<i>focus, aim, center</i>	<i>instrument, tool</i>

There was nothing special about the church buildings of Paul's day. Small home churches were more the norm. The primary focus was not to get people to attend a particular church meeting. The body of Christians gathered to build faith and prepare for their ongoing work in the world. Their primary focus was to lead people to Jesus Christ and to a life of submission to him.

Missionaries *specialists: minister* *every believer*
evangelist, church workers *through their gifts of the Spirit*

Our missionaries are specialists and paid professionals. We must return to a lay missionary movement with every believer using the gifts that the Holy Spirit has given them.

Goal *building up the church* *restoration of the Kingdom*
perfecting the believers *hastening the judgment*

When every member is actively engaged in personal, spirit-filled ministry, the church will be built up and individual faith will be perfected.

In Paul's day a "world-oriented" approach to doing mission bridged the gap to the pagan world. If we are to bridge the gap today we must build "world-oriented" approaches to our secular communities.

The Opportunities Provided by Secularization

We must build our mission on a biblically correct understanding of secularization. We must use the New Testament approach in reaching out to our secular communities. We must also recognize the needs that the process of secularization has created in our secular communities.

Basic Needs of Secular People

(The material in italics is shown on an overhead transparency)

Basic Needs of Secular People

****Fellowship/Community***

Secular man has become accountable only to himself. He has become lost in the concrete jungle of the secular city. There is a tremendous need for deep fellowship and community. Secular man has plenty of casual friends and relationships. He needs a place to hang his hat. A place to let down his hair. A place he can call home. The New Testament church, with its close knit home churches, provided such a place. Can we do the same?

****Meaning (*Personal Dignity; Identity)***

Science seems to explain away meaning from our lives. We are after all the result of random chance. Technology has gone about replacing the work many people used to do. Is there really any need for us? All of life runs on the basis of cause and effect, is there any room left for God?

The Bible puts an infinite value on each and every man, woman, and child. An opportunity exists here to make relevant the gospel of Jesus Christ. Are we willing to start our evangelism from this point?

**Values*

Nothing is absolute, all is relative. This line of thinking has taken from secular man any permanent trustworthy rules to base his life upon. True biblical values, presented in the cultural context of our own age, can speak with power to this need.

**Need for Salvation/Messiah*

Institutional religion has declined. The modern state has taken on many of the prerogatives formerly the realm of religion. The modern state however, has failed to heal the evils that reside in the heart. Secular man hurts deep within. Secular man experiences pain that he cannot remove. Where is he to turn to find healing? Can the Church become a house of healing, a place of salvation, for the hurting hearts of our secular communities?

**Abundant Life (Health, Prosperity, Social Acceptance, Freedom)*

"I only have one life, thinks 'secular man,' how can get everything I want out of it?" What constitutes the "abundant life?" Can the contentment of Paul, no matter what he faced or what befell him, be brought to the experience of our secular communities?

If we present the gospel in response to these specific needs we will find an audience. If we live out the biblical responses to these needs we will make disciples.

Each aspect of secularization presents new and exciting opportunities for Christian mission! Perhaps the greatest thing about secularization is that we can no longer do business, religious business, as usual. We cannot depend on institutions, leaders, programs, or even doctrinal truth to be the means by which mission is accomplished. The life and witness of the body of Christ is the only means by which our mission can be accomplished.

Secularization forces us to return to the life and practice of New Testament Christianity. The only other option is to pass slowly into obsolescence.

Conclusion

A biblical understanding of secularization challenges us to appreciate and respect what God is doing through this process. Accepting the New Testament approach to mission

challenges us to personal, active, involvement. Seeing the needs in our secular communities gives us a direction for our personal involvement.

The bottom line is that our own personal lives are the bridges needed to reach the people around us. In our next session we will look at the spiritual challenge this brings to each of us. We will also look at strategies for our church and their implications for our work in East Lansing.

Join us next week as we finish our study.

Let's pray.

Session 4

Meditation

"A revival of true godliness among us is the greatest and most urgent of all needs. To seek this should be our first work." 1 SM 121

Theme

Being Bridges

The bottom line is that our own personal lives are the bridges needed to reach the people around us.

Pastor's Corner

The Opportunities of Secularization

As religious systems, organizations, and institutions have declined, their power to control the thoughts and lives of their members has weakened. Today tens of millions of people who once were bound by the restraints and misconceptions of their religious traditions are now free to consider the claims of the gospel. The challenges facing religion as a whole are being used by God to prepare men, women, and children for his second coming.

Each aspect of secularization presents new and exciting opportunities for Christian mission! Perhaps the greatest thing about secularization is that we can no longer do business, religious business, as usual. We cannot depend on institutions, leaders, programs, or even doctrinal truth to be the means by which mission is accomplished. The life and witness of the body of Christ is the only means by which our mission can be accomplished.

Secularization forces us to return to the life and practice of New Testament Christianity. If we present the gospel in response to the needs of “secular man” we will find an audience. If we live out the biblical responses to these needs we will make disciples.

Church Life and Outreach to Our Secular Community

Introduction

I need a volunteer. Thank you Keith for coming forward!

Friends, we’re going to send Keith as a missionary. Where do you want to send him? Australia? That would certainly be a challenging place to go and work but I think Keith wants to go to a non-English speaking country. Isn’t that right, Keith?

Did you say Mongolia? That would certainly qualify. What do you think about Mongolia, Keith? That certainly touches close to home for me. Brad Jolly, who went to Mongolia about eight years ago, worked with us in Japan for two years as a student missionary. I always looked forward to reading his reports.

O.K. then, Mongolia it is. Now, if we are going to send Keith to Mongolia, what does Keith need to do before he goes to increase the likelihood of having a successful ministry once he arrives?

Bring warm clothes? Thank you Althea. Keith needs to find out what the weather will be like and pack with that in mind. What else?

Study the language? Yes, you are right about that. Keith would probably have a very hard time just getting around the country if he doesn’t learn the language. Keith, how much Mongolian do you know? You’re willing to start studying though aren’t you? That’s good. What else?

Learn what offends people there? That would be important don’t you think Keith? You don’t want to inadvertently offend the people you’re trying to reach, do you? What? You’re wondering if you are going to need to be able to milk a yak? I don’t know. Maybe you’ll need to be able to ride one as well. Are you willing to try? Good, so in addition to your language study you’re going to do some research into their customs, traditions and values? Excellent!

He’ll need to bring medicine? Probably you won’t have a lot of pharmacies over there. You will have to figure out what medical supplies you will need to bring with you. What else?

Learn what days are holidays? That would fit in with studying the culture. Usually the holidays in a country are tied to important events in the countries past. You can learn a lot by studying the holidays.

Get into the country? Yes, how are you going to get into the country Keith? I remember when Brad and Kathy first went in they had to go on student visas. The church could not get them in on missionary visas. We wouldn't want you to get off the airplane only to discover they won't let you through immigration.

Learn about the money? O.K., yes, what do you know about the economy in Mongolia Keith? You need to find out what things are going to cost so you have enough funds to accomplish your mission. Anything else?

He's going to have to be adaptable? Things might not go as planned? Absolutely! At mission institute they said there were three requirements for mission service, adaptability, adaptability, adaptability. Get ready to adjust on the fly Keith. Anything more you want to add for Keith's benefit?

Yes, Florence? You say that you taught two Mongolian students last year at Philippine Union college? Keith, can you believe it. We have someone right here in church today who can start working with you directly. She's had personal experience working with Mongolians. That's great! Any more?

Spiritual preparation? You think that is important? You do? Do you agree with that Keith? It's quite a challenge to go as a missionary? Before you go to Mongolia you'll want to spend a lot of time on your knees and in Bible study. You want to be sure God is indeed guiding you and that He is empowering you. Don't get on the plane without that preparation Keith! Any final thoughts?

Energy? Youthful energy? Why do you say youthful, Althea? Karmon is disagreeing with that. What? Karmon you say you worked at Jr. Camp as a Counselor and after three days you were totally exhausted. After that God provided the strength for the rest of the summer because you didn't have it? Well Keith, you may meet circumstances that push you beyond your limits but God is able to sustain you. Keep that promise close.

What's that you're saying Joyce? You're not sure you want to go with Keith? But he's your husband! You say you'll support him from back here in the States? I see. What do you think about that Keith? You won't go without her? Does that mean you are withdrawing your candidacy? You are? Well thank you for coming forward this morning. I appreciate your willingness to help me.

Friends, you have thought in a wonderfully clear and insightful way this morning. You came up with suggestions and advice that would have been absolutely essential for Keith's success in Mongolia.

For this last month we have been looking at the question of doing mission among secularized people. Today is our last session on this subject. If everything else I've said gets lost in your memory banks, remember this one thing, - **we must apply the same clear and insightful analysis to doing mission in our own neighborhoods as we do when thinking about going to a country like Mongolia.**

The powerful process called secularization has created tremendous change right here in our own neighborhood. To cross the street today is the equivalent of crossing the ocean a generation ago.

In crossing the ocean as missionaries we would automatically study the language, the culture, the economy, and the social structure of the country we would be entering. We would automatically , check out the legal requirements for entry, create support groups for our mission, and look for existing cultural bridges that could carry gospel themes to the people. Personal spiritual preparation would be a given.

In crossing the street today we must learn to automatically ask the same types of questions. What language do they speak? What values do they have? What social structures is the community built around? How do I gain entry into this community? What is taboo here? What parts of the gospel will they be most receptive to? How can I prepare myself spiritually for this mission? These types of questions are prerequisites for doing mission in a secularized society.

You cross the street, you cross an ocean, act on it!

The Nature of Mission : A New Paradigm

The gap between biblical thinking and secular thinking is greater than what existed between biblical thinking and pagan thinking in Paul's day. The challenge of crossing that gap is imposing. It requires our very best attention and effort.

The challenges facing religion as a whole are being used by God to prepare men, women, and children for his second coming. The very process of secularization has opened powerful avenues for bringing the gospel to our communities.

In your surveys you picked out the five most important needs of secular people. You had no problem distinguishing these needs. Here is how you ranked them.

What are the Five Most Important Needs that Secular People Feel?

2.5 The need for personal meaning.

The need for meaning cannot be filled merely with a doctrine or a theory. Secular man needs to come into personal contact with men and women whose lives radiate with a sense of meaning and direction that he does not have. An institution cannot give this. A

program cannot provide this. Our lives must be the prism through which this meaning is seen.

3.9 The need for fellowship.

Fellowship cannot be passed over a TV screen. Fellowship cannot be passed via a pamphlet, brochure, or book. Fellowship is passed on when we stand face to face with another human being. Fellowship must be experienced in person. A crowd can enjoy a dynamic speaker but they cannot know a true sense of community with that person. God has asked each of us to stand in his stead. God has asked us to become one with the community around us.

4.3 The need for values

The fact that a set of values has been espoused by a large group of people in the past is not sufficient persuasion for secular man to accept them. The fact that I can show how my values are rooted in the Bible is of trifling significance to secular man. He wants to see the impact these values actually have in my life.

How do they enable me to survive the dog eat dog context of the workplace? How do they keep my marriage together? How do they help my children to adapt and thrive at school? How do they improve the life of my community? None of these observations can take place if my personal life does not cross within the sphere of his own.

5.2 The need for an abundant life

The products advertised on TV promise to make us happy in every way. If we will just buy this, drink that, wear these clothes, drive that car, then our lives will be good. Secular man is highly skeptical of such advertising. He is even more skeptical when faced with TV preachers promising the abundant life in exchange for a small tax-deductible donation.

Our communities want to see the abundance of our lives as we work around the house, walk our dog, and play with our children. Sending them mailers and talking to them on the radio will not impress them.

5.7 The need for personal salvation.

The modern state has failed to heal the evils that reside in the heart. Secular man hurts deep within. Secular man experiences pain that he cannot remove. Where is he to turn to find healing? Can the Church become a house of healing, a place of salvation, for the hurting hearts of our secular communities? And if our churches do become a place of healing, how will our neighbors know unless they see the healing that has taken place in us?

We can only meet the needs of secular man face to face, one person at a time. These avenues, which have been brought to the forefront by the process of secularization, are powerful ways of bringing the gospel to our communities. Yet we do not travel these avenues in many of our traditional church centered proclamational events. A new

paradigm must arise in response to the opportunities presented in our secularized society. Here are four characteristics of this paradigm.

A New Paradigm for Ministry

1. Mission and evangelism are the calling of the members.

It is only through the lives of the members that we can engage in personal ministry in our communities. Professional church workers are too few and the fact that they are paid professionals causes a skeptical response.

2. The local church is the bulwark and center of all evangelism;

Since the essence of doing mission is personal work, the central focus has to return to the local church. Schools, hospitals, media centers, and administrative offices can only support and assist the work of the members. Personal needs cannot be met from out of town.

3. Mission and evangelism are world-oriented, and focus on people's basic needs;

Since the church is no longer the focus of community life it can no longer be expected that effective evangelism will occur by simply inviting people to come there and listen. The community is not willing to come to us in this way. We must go to the community.

4. The role of the pastor is primarily assist, stimulate, guide and prepare the members for their particular work in the world, according to their specific spiritual gifts;

It is comfortable to depend on a specialist to do our evangelism. It is easier to listen to a professional speak than to stand there ourselves. What our community will accept as proof that our affirmations have value demands nothing less than that our members move to the front and that our professionals move to the background.

This paradigm is based upon the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.

Jesus saw in every soul one to whom must be given the call to his kingdom. He reached the hearts of the people by going among them as one who desired their good. He sought them in the public streets, in private houses, on the boats, in the synagogue, by the shores of the lake, and at the marriage feast. He met them at their daily vocations, and manifested an interest in their secular affairs. He showed his sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, "Follow me." (CS 119)

Jesus Model of Ministry

The life of Jesus models integrated evangelism and incarnational ministry.

“integrated evangelism”: *Our whole life becomes an expression of our religious beliefs. Spirituality is not compartmentalized but under girds everything that we say or do.*

“incarnational ministry”: *God sent his son to become one with us. To live among us, eat with us, walk the same dusty roads. Jesus felt our pains, our joys, our excitements, and our sorrows. Incarnational ministry calls us to do the same for the secular world around us. To share their interests, to take part in their activities, to gain their trust, and as a result to lead them to Jesus.*

The leaders of the Michigan conference have been promoting this paradigm at worker’s meetings for the last five or six years. Your conference leaders believe that our communities will not be reached with the gospel if we rely on pastors, evangelists, Adventist media, or even satellite seminars. They will only be reached if each of us as members becomes the prime carriers of the gospel. They would like each church to become a place where people are equipped to bring the gospel to our communities. That is our challenge. Today I will be inviting you to respond to that challenge. Are you willing to buy into that vision?

While this paradigm may differ from the model we have used for the last 100 years it follows closely the model used by the early church. The factors of mission that bridged the gap in the time of Paul can be effective in our secular age as well.

Connecting With Our Communities

What do we find most attractive about the Adventist faith and lifestyle. Your clear reply was that Adventist doctrine is true and Bible centered. At the same time you recognized that “truth” is not of itself a highly attractive element to our community. We face a significant challenge in connecting secular man to the truth of the Bible.

The Most Attractive Aspects of Adventist Faith and Life?

<i>Church</i>	<i>Community</i>	
1.8	4.9	<i>Adventist doctrine is true and Bible centered.</i>
3.8	4.3	<i>The sense of fellowship and community. (fellowship)</i>
4.3	2.8	<i>The Adventist health emphasis. (abundant life)</i>
4.5	5.3	<i>Adventist teachings about the end of time.</i>
5.2	5.5	<i>The Sabbath School programs we offer. (values)</i>
5.8	5.3	<i>The junior camp programs we run. (values, abundant life)</i>
6.2	5.1	<i>The media outreach of the church.</i>
6.5	7.2	<i>Boarding academies for Christian education.</i>

In looking at these survey results several other things stand out. We recognize the strength of the Adventist health emphasis in reaching out to our secular communities. I wonder though if we underestimate what could be done with our Sabbath school program, our junior camps, and our sense of community and fellowship as a church.

Fellowship and community is one of the greatest needs of our society. How can we use the inherent strength of the church in this area to connect with our neighborhood?

Families in our communities are looking for values to pass on to their children. How can we bring our Sabbath school programs to their attention as an option for instilling values in their children?

In our facility at Camp Au Sable we have one of the best summer camp programs available anywhere. How can we make it available to more children in our neighborhoods?

Spending the Money

On the survey I asked you, how would you “spend the money” in planning outreach to secularized people. Let’s look now at the choices you made. On the survey I mixed truth centered proclamational events with community contact events. Here I’ve separated them. These are the truth-centered events.

Spending the Money : Truth Centered Events

<i>Evangelistic meetings</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>\$28,000.00</i>
<i>Passing out <u>Steps to Christ</u></i>	<i>13</i>	<i>6,500.00</i>
<i>Daniel Seminar</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>3,500.00</i>
<i>Revelation Seminar</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>3,500.00</i>
<i>Training to give Bible Studies (write in)</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>500.00</i>
<i>Video series to loan (write in)</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>300.00</i>
	<i>43</i>	<i>\$41,800.00</i>

Truth is central. If we lose it we lose our reason for existence. Here you chose 43 events here totaling \$41,800.00 dollars.

Still, less than 1/10 of 1% of our community responds to truth centered proclamational events. This Fall we had a return of one person for every 4,000 mailers we sent out. What about the other 99.975 % of our community? To build relationships with them we need community contact events. Let’s look at your choices in this areas.

Spending the Money : Community Contact Events

<i>Vegetarian Cooking School</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>\$11,000.00</i>
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Talking With Your Teens	19	15,000.00
"Be All That You Can Be"		
<i>featuring Ben Carson</i>	13	26,000.00
Student Services Fair	12	12,000.00
Stop Smoking Seminar	11	5,500.00
Parenting Class	9	4,500.00
Communicating With Your Spouse	7	4,000.00
<u>Training Members</u>		
<u>to Reach Their Community</u>	7	7,000.00
Grief Recovery	4	2,500.00
Environmental Seminar	3	3,000.00
Bird Watching Club	1	500.00
Bird Watching Web Page	1	500.00
Send Non-SDA kids to Camp (write in)	1	2,000.00
	110	\$93,500.00

Here you chose 110 events for a total of \$93,500.00. The ratio of community contact events to truth proclamation events is almost 3 to 1. The ratio of spending is a bit more than 2 to 1. I think you showed a lot of insight in your choices. The need to spend and program heavily in community contact events was there even before doing this seminar. Ellen White supports your approach. Look at some of her statements.

"Relieve the physical necessities of your fellowmen, and their gratitude will break down the barriers, and enable you to reach their hearts. Consider this matter earnestly." (9T 127)

In what ways has God gifted you to relieve the needs of the people in your community? Look at this statement.

"Those who have put on Christ will relate their experiences, tracing step by step the leading of the Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus Christ will open the door of their hearts, and will make upon their minds lasting impressions...Tell them how you found Jesus, and how blessings come to you as you sit at the feet of Jesus...Tell them what blessings of gladness and joy there are in the Christian life. Your warm, fervent words will convince them that you have found the pearl of great price. Let your cheerful encouraging words show that you have found the higher way... and as it is done many will awake as from a dream." (CS 125)

What community contact events is God calling you to be a part of where you will build relationships with others that will give you the opportunity to tell your personal story. Your personal story is a tremendously powerful witness.

The materials are not the bridge. The program is not the bridge. The doctrines are not the bridge. You are the bridge. I am the bridge. WE are the bridges. God has called us to not just build bridges but to be bridges to our communities.

Response Time

A month ago we began our study by looking at I Cor. 9 where Paul says, "I become all things to all men in order that I might save some." I posed a question to you at that time, what are you willing to change in order to become "as like unto a secular person," what are you willing to change in order to "save some?" Now I would like to give you a chance to respond.

The ushers are now passing out a two-page response sheet. At the bottom of the second page are these commitment opportunities.

I want to participate in reaching out to our secular communities. I would be willing to commit _____ hours each week/month/quarter.

I would be willing to help with the ministries I put in the budget above, yes - no.

Consider these prayerfully and respond as you are able.

On the first page of the response sheet I would appreciate your feedback on the presentations you have made. What do you agree with? What do you disagree with? What do you have questions about? What would you like to know more about? What did you learn? Where have your concepts changed? What did you find interesting?

To do the second page I would like you to gather in groups of three to four. You have already shown great insight into the need to spend more time sowing seed than in reaping. I would like you to take this opportunity to think together about new and creative ways to reach out to our community.

Are there ways we can modify existing programs so that the community can be included? Are there entirely new programs we can develop which will allow us new and greater contact with our community. Talk together about this and write down your ideas.

We will take 10 minutes for this work in groups and then we will come together again for a closing look at the role of the Holy Spirit in our work. You may begin at this time.

The Holy Spirit and Revival

Each aspect of secularization presents new and exciting opportunities for Christian mission! Perhaps the greatest thing about secularization is that we can no longer do business, religious business, as usual. We cannot depend on institutions, leaders, programs, or even doctrinal truth to be the means by which mission is accomplished. The life and witness of the body of Christ is the only means by which our mission can be accomplished.

Secularization forces us to return to the life and practice of New Testament Christianity. If we present the gospel in response to the needs of “secular man” we will find an audience. If we live out the biblical responses to these needs we will make disciples.

The nature of mission to the secular rests heavily upon the personal spiritual lives of each of us. If it were not for the promise of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, this responsibility would be overwhelming. Let’s look at some of the promises about the Holy Spirit.

“To us today, as verily as to the first disciples, the promise of the Spirit belongs. God will today endow men and women with power from above, as He endowed those who on the day of Pentecost heard the word of salvation. At this very hour his Spirit and his grace are for all who need them and will take him at his word.” (8T 20)

Do you recognize a need for the Holy Spirit as you consider crossing the street to engage in mission to our secular community?

“God desires to refresh his people by the gift of the Holy Spirit, baptizing them anew in his love.” (CS 250)

Do you desire to be refreshed by the Holy Spirit as you experience the trying times that may accompany your missionary work?

“The Lord is more willing to give the Holy Spirit to those who serve him than parents are to give gifts to their children.” (AA 50)

There is no question that God is ready to begin this work. Are we willing to join *him*. Let’s pray.

APPENDIX B

SURVEY INSTRUMENTS

Pre-seminar Survey Instrument

My Name is _____. I am _____ years old.
I've been a Seventh-day Adventist for _____ years. The country I was raised in was _____.

Directions : Here are three different situations with several responses. Working quickly and from your own personal experience/perspective, put a "1" by what you would do first, a "2" by what you would do second, etc.

Saving My Child

My family is riding bikes on a road near our house. A car strikes one of my children and drives off. My child is lying on the road unconscious. Blood is seeping from the side of the head. The situation looks very bad. I rip my cell phone from my belt and -

- ___ Call my pastor and ask for him to come quickly.
- ___ Call 911 and ask for an ambulance.
- ___ Call my lawyer.
- ___ Call the leader of my church's prayer chain and ask for prayer to begin.
- ___ Call the police and give them the license number of the hit and run car.

Finding Success At Work

From my time spent in the work world I have found that the most important elements in bringing me success, promotions, and advancement in my company/profession are -

- ___ Having excelled at the academic preparation required for my work/profession.
- ___ Working hard to fit in to the culture of my company/profession.
- ___ Meeting or exceeding the expectations of my bosses.
- ___ The quality of the actual work I perform at my job/profession.
- ___ The number of hours I spend developing my walk with God.

Rebuilding My Marriage

My marriage has been rocky for 18 months. My spouse tells me that unless I agree to go for marriage counseling he/she is leaving. I agree to counseling but need to find a counselor. I -

- ___ Look for a directory of Christian counselors in my area.
- ___ Get referrals from the conference office on Adventist marriage counselors near us.

___ My friend at work had a similar problem a year ago. He talks highly about the help he and his wife got. I call him to get the name and number of his counselor.

___ Call the nearest Adventist pastor and ask if he will counsel with us.

___ Check around to get referrals on marriage counselors in our area who have the best reputations for rebuilding marriages.

Problems at Church

You are on the board of Elders. The pastor and head elder explain that one of the members, Ted, is working until 8:00 on Friday evenings. They have visited Ted and encouraged him to face his employer on this Sabbath conflict. Ted does not want to risk a confrontation with his employer and wants no more visits from the pastor or elders on this subject. You -

___ Ask whether this issue is public knowledge, if it isn't suggest the board leave it be.

___ Vote to go to Ted as a board of elders. If ignored, take church discipline steps.

___ Appeal to take no discipline steps but to love Ted back into full sabbathkeeping.

___ Move to table the issue and ask the pastor/head elder to keep working with Ted.

___ State that we must each answer to God and that it is not for us to tell Ted what to do.

We live in an industrialized age where religion has declined as a factor shaping human life and behavior. Science and technology now shape many of our common responses to accidents, crisis, as well as our common beliefs.

Religious values have been separated from much of life and society. The state and/or society often determine what values, lifestyles, and practices are valid and worthwhile. Many churches have succumbed to a cultural captivity. Many members of society have concluded that organized religion is not relevant to modern life. The cumulative effect of this is called secularization. **To what degree has secularization affected our society?** Circle your responses.

Effects of -	Untouched		Slight		Moderate		Strong		Very Strong	
Unites States	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Lansing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Public	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
SDA Education	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

When it comes to how you make decisions, experience relationships, build your career, deal with problems, allocate time, or even determine the role that the church will play in your weekly life **to what degree are you, and those closest to you, influenced by the effects of secularization?**

Effects of -	Untouched		Slight		Moderate		Strong		Very Strong	
My Neighbors	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
My Church	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
My Family	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Myself	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Answer the following questions as **True** or **False**

- ☐ Religion plays a larger role in people's thinking and behavior than in the past.
- ☐ The church sanctuary is not treated with the holiness it used to receive.
- ☐ Fewer people look to the Bible today as the source for their happiness.
- ☐ I know by name most of the clerks at the stores where I shop.
- ☐ I find a greater variety of lifestyles accepted in society than when I was a kid.
- ☐ I spend most of my time everyday with the people who live in my neighborhood.
- ☐ I have more respect for people who go into politics than my father did.
- ☐ People are more interested in spirituality than they are in religious affiliations.
- ☐ I would classify my work/profession/trade as a specialty or subspecialty.
- ☐ People are more concerned with whether their beliefs help them than if they are true.

When exposed to a new product **my primary concerns are** - (First cross out those items that will not play a major role in your decision-making. List, in order of importance, those items that are most relevant to your decision-making. List the most important as #1 and so on.)

- ☐ Does it work? Does it do what it claims to be able to do?
- ☐ How impressive is the packaging and advertising of the product?
- ☐ Can I trust the person selling me the product? Do I have any past record with them?
- ☐ Are its performance claims greater than the performance claims of its competitors?
- ☐ Will it make my life easier or better?
- ☐ Can I return it easily if it doesn't meet my expectations?
- ☐ Has it received the endorsement of experts in that field?
- ☐ Other : please specify _____.

An Adventist speaker is coming to town next month. He will be speaking at a large auditorium on Friday night and Sabbath afternoon and evening. **What topics would most likely draw you out** to the meetings. First cross out the topics that would rarely or never get you out the door. Next prioritize those that remain with #1 being the most likely to get you out to the meeting.

- ☐ The Truth of the Adventist Message!
- ☐ Developing Your Spiritual Walk With God.
- ☐ Raising Your Children to Know God.
- ☐ Know What Will Happen at the End Of Time!
- ☐ How to Find Spiritual and Emotional "Rest" on the Sabbath.
- ☐ The Seal of God vs. The Mark of the Beast!
- ☐ Six Keys to Family Happiness.
- ☐ Other : please specify _____.

The same Adventist speaker is coming to town next month. This time what topics **would most likely draw members of your neighborhood** to the meetings. First cross out the topics that you think would rarely or never get them out the door. Next prioritize those that remain with #1 being the most likely to get them out to the meeting.

- ___ The Truth of the Adventist Message!
- ___ Developing Your Spiritual Walk With God.
- ___ Raising Your Children to Know God.
- ___ Know What Will Happen at the End Of Time!
- ___ How to Find Spiritual and Emotional "Rest" on the Sabbath.
- ___ The Seal of God vs. The Mark of the Beast!
- ___ Six Keys to Family Happiness.
- ___ Other: please specify _____.

Answer the following questions **True** or **False**.

- ___ More people come to help with Ingathering than when I first became an Adventist.
- ___ There is less respect for church leaders today than when I first became an Adventist.
- ___ There are more different lifestyle practices in the church than when I was baptized.
- ___ There is less support for public evangelism than when I first came into the church.
- ___ There are more sermons on distinctive Adventist doctrines than when I joined.
- ___ People are less eager to spend a week at camp meeting than in the past.
- ___ I spend less time during the week in church related gatherings than in the past.
- ___ There are more discussions about what constitutes "truth" than I used to see here.
- ___ Elders are more willing to hold people accountable to Adventist "Standards" today than I remember them doing in the past.
- ___ Our members are more committed to Adventist education than a few years ago.

What do you find to be **the most attractive aspects of Adventist faith and life**? List them in order with #1 being the most attractive.

- ___ That Adventist doctrine is true and Bible centered.
- ___ The Sabbath School programs we offer for children.
- ___ The junior camp programs we run during the summer.
- ___ The light the Adventist Church has about what will happen at the end of time.
- ___ The boarding academies where children can go to receive a Christian education.
- ___ Adventist health emphasis encompassing vegetarianism, exercise, smoking/drinking
- ___ The fellowship and community you experience in an Adventist church.
- ___ The media outreach of the church, satellite evangelism, TV, radio, publishing.
- ___ Other : please specify _____.

Which of these aspects of Adventist faith and life do you believe are **the most appealing to people in your community**. List them in order with #1 being the most appealing.

- ☐ That Adventist doctrine is true and Bible centered.
- ☐ The Sabbath School programs we offer for children.
- ☐ The junior camp programs we run during the summer.
- ☐ The light the Adventist Church has about what will happen at the end of time.
- ☐ The boarding academies where children can go to receive a Christian education.
- ☐ The Adventist health emphasis encompassing vegetarianism, exercise, anti-smoking/drinking
- ☐ The sense of fellowship/community that you experience in a typical SDA Church
- ☐ The media outreach of the church, satellite evangelism, TV, radio, publishing.
- ☐ Other : please specify _____.

From the following list check what you believe are **the five most important needs that secular people feel**. Mark them from #1 to #5 with #1 being the most important need.

- ☐ The need to know the revealed truth about God that is only found in the Bible.
- ☐ The need for fellowship.
- ☐ The need for a sense of salvation.
- ☐ The need to order one's life according to God's law.
- ☐ The need to sense personal meaning in one's own life.
- ☐ The need to be a participating member of a Bible believing church.
- ☐ The need to find values to live one's life by.
- ☐ The need to know what end-time events lie in the immediate future.
- ☐ The need to experience an abundant life.
- ☐ The need to keep the Sabbath.
- ☐ Other : please specify _____.

Spending the Money

The church has a budget of \$3,000.00 for evangelism. You are going to choose how to spend the money. Your goal is to **reach secularized people in your community**. Circle your choices and don't go over budget!

5 week long satellite series of evangelistic meetings with your pick of Dwight Nelson/Mark Finley/Doug Batchelor located at the church	\$2,000.00
Vegetarian Cooking School : 5 sessions at the church, lay leaders	\$500.00
Stop Smoking Seminar: 6 sessions at the church, lay leaders	\$500.00
Daniel Seminar : 10 sessions at a high school classroom, lay leader	\$500.00
Revelation Seminar : 20 sessions at a high school classroom, pastor	\$500.00
Parenting Class : 8 sessions at the church, pastor speaking	\$500.00
Grief Recovery : 4-sessions/2-days/the church/pastor speaking	\$500.00
Grief Recovery : 4 sessions/2 days/Holiday Inn/pastor speaking	\$1000.00
Grief Recovery : 4 sessions/2 days/Holiday Inn/guest speaker	\$1500.00
Talking With Your Teens : 4 sessions/2 days/church/pastor	\$500.00
Talking With Your Teens : 4 sessions/2 days/Holiday Inn/pastor	\$1000.00
Talking With Your Teens : 4 sessions/2 days/Holiday Inn/guest speaker	\$1500.00
Communicating With Your Spouse : 4 sessions/2 days/church/pastor	\$500.00
Communicating With Your Spouse : 4 sessions/2 days/Holiday Inn/pastor	\$1,000.00
Communicating With Your Spouse : 4 sessions/2 days/Holiday Inn/guest	\$1,500.00
Student Services Fair : 1 Sunday afternoon, 4 hours	\$1,000.00
<u>Training Members to Reach Their Community</u> : sending the Pastor and 4 members to Chicago for a two-day learning seminar.	\$1,000.00
"Be All That You Can Be" rally featuring Ben Carson as the speaker and located in the Kellogg Auditorium on campus	\$2,000.00
Starting a Bird Watching Club : monthly meeting at church	\$500.00
Bird Watching Club Web Page	\$500.00
Passing out <u>Steps to Christ</u> in our neighborhood	\$500.00
Environmental Seminar : 2 sessions/at church/guest speaker	\$1,000.00

Post-seminar Survey Instrument

Name _____

The following five statements are the core concepts presented in our study of secularization. Check all the responses that reflect your feelings about these statements.

Secularization is a process that affects the church and it's members far more than we realize.

☐ I agree	☐ I changed my thinking in this area
☐ I disagree	☐ I would like to know more about this
☐ I found this very interesting	☐ I had questions about this
☐ I learned some new concepts	☐ I didn't like the concepts presented

The gap between the church and our secular communities today is larger than the gap between the Christian world and the Pagan world in Paul's day.

☐ I agree	☐ I changed my thinking in this area
☐ I disagree	☐ I would like to know more about this
☐ I found this very interesting	☐ I had questions about this
☐ I learned some new concepts	☐ I didn't like the concepts presented

The role of the church in our secular communities has decreased in many traditional areas but new areas of opportunity have opened up.

☐ I agree	☐ I changed my thinking in this area
☐ I disagree	☐ I would like to know more about this
☐ I found this very interesting	☐ I had questions about this
☐ I learned some new concepts	☐ I didn't like the concepts presented

New forms and approaches are needed. A world-oriented focus must be developed.

☐ I agree	☐ I changed my thinking in this area
☐ I disagree	☐ I would like to know more about this
☐ I found this very interesting	☐ I had questions about this
☐ I learned some new concepts	☐ I didn't like the concepts presented

The lives of individual members; not church programs, evangelists, doctrines, or institutions, are the means to reach secular people with the gospel. We don't build bridges, we are the bridges.

☐ I agree	☐ I changed my thinking in this area
☐ I disagree	☐ I would like to know more about this
☐ I found this very interesting	☐ I had questions about this
☐ I learned some new concepts	☐ I didn't like the concepts presented

Other thoughts, comments _____

Spending the Money

The church has a budget of \$3,000.00 for evangelism. You are going to choose how to spend the money. Your goal is to reach secularized people in your community. What new ideas can you come up? How can we bring our lives into contact with the lives of people in our communities?

Circle your choices.

Evangelistic meetings	cost	\$2,000.00
Vegetarian Cooking School	cost	\$500.00
Stop Smoking Seminar	cost	\$500.00
Daniel Seminar	cost	\$500.00
Revelation Seminar	cost	\$500.00
Parenting Class	cost	\$500.00
Grief Recovery	cost	\$500.00/\$1000.00/\$1500.00
Talking With Your Teens	cost	\$500.00/\$1000.00/\$1500.00
Communicating With Your Spouse	cost	\$500.00/\$1000.00/\$1500.00
Student Services Fair	cost	\$1,000.00
<u>Training Members to Reach Their Community:</u>		
sending the Pastor and 4 members to Chicago for a two day learning seminar.	cost	\$1,000.00
"Be All That You Can Be" rally (Ben Carson)	cost	\$2,000.00
Starting a Bird Watching Club (other type of club?)	cost	\$500.00
Bird Watching Club Web Page	cost	\$500.00
Passing out <u>Steps to Christ</u> in our neighborhood	cost	\$500.00
Environmental Seminar	cost	\$1,000.00
Other _____	cost	_____
Other _____	cost	_____
Other _____	cost	_____
Other _____	cost	_____
Other _____	cost	_____

I want to participate in reaching out to our secular communities. I would be willing to commit _____ hours each week/month/quarter.

I would be willing to help with the ministries I put in the budget above, yes - no.

Personal Responses

The following are personal responses that were written on the exit survey given at the conclusion of the seminar.

"I agree that we are the bridges. But how do we act as bridges if our lives are not in accordance with God. Are you saying that more than daily 'living our lives for Christ' is needed? Are you saying that we as Christians have to make changes in our lives to be 'bridges?'"

"The traditional way of reaching people may not work with the younger generation. The church should try some new and contemporary ways of approaching the community. The easy and foolproof method would be one-to-one work to reach others."

"Our basic message hasn't changed. Our ultimate goal and what we are here to do is to lead people to eternal life through Jesus Christ. Everything else is fringe. People are basically the same- selfish, sinful, wanting what the world has. There is something better for them. They need to make a decision if they want eternal life or not. There will be a remnant, the world will be lost. Let's not do a 'Charlemagne baptism.'"

"Let's sponsor concerts for our community featuring nationally known Christian musicians"

"We need to get involved in community service organizations"

"Unless we walk the walk nothing we do will matter."

"It seems that it takes catastrophic events to bring people to seek the Lord. It is very hard to influence satisfied people to change their way of life."

"I don't know how to put it together but food always attracts people. They are more willing to at least talk about their needs if we can gain their confidence. Christians are real people with real needs that have found answers. If we can find what their needs are(not imagined) we can be more effective in being, #1. A friend, #2 The source of possible answers."

"We need a training class for members to learn how to reach out to the secular community"

"We should do a community poll or survey to find out their interests."

"We as Christians should be satisfied with our walk with the Lord so that we can sincerely share our joy with others. We should make our spiritual life practical and learn to live as Christ showed us. If what we preach is different from what we do, even our

own family members and friends will not want to listen to God's message. Most people out there need sincere people to talk to."

"It's true that we don't have to go to far off countries to reach people. I have family in the area and people right across the street that I want to share Jesus with. I don't always feel comfortable teaching doctrine right off but more just loving people and being their friend so I hope that way they can know Jesus' love."

"Great series...of course some people think some of my views are different too but it's always good to hear "new" things"

"Actions speak louder than words. Faith without works is dead, James 2."

"Our unique situation - due to the large student community, must lead us to focus on students' (not just our SDA group) needs. Our church needs a representative on the university ministerial council. The Latter-day Saints have pairs of young people visiting and giving Bible studies in the university housing areas. Church members would benefit from Bible Teaching Training seminars and should be encouraged to do more evangelism among the community. The church needs to be more aware of the student community's needs. Does our church sponsor any foreign students (not necessarily monetarily) but for enculturation and orientation to new circumstances?"

"I think focus from the traditional church service still is with biblical truths but reaching out in our jobs and personal lives will bring more people into the church and increase an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. I think many young Adventists are falling from the church because of the traditionalism. If a shift of the focus of the church occurs people will want to be a part of it."

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