

**TENTMAKING IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY:  
THEOLOGICAL AND MISSIOLOGICAL IMPLI-  
CATIONS FOR CONTEMPORARY  
ADVENTIST MISSIONS**

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Evangelization of the gospel in the twenty-first century is fraught with great challenges. Conditions around the world demand creative and innovative approaches to sharing the gospel message where conventional methods seem to be coming up short with results. In the West the forces of secularism, postmodernism, and post-postmodernism hold sway, while in the global south globalization and nationalism are posing their own threats. The picture is not altogether gloomy, however, for these very situations provide opportunities for creative strategies of spreading the gospel. For instance, in the 10/40 window, that geographical nexus where three major world religions, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism, are the dominant faith traditions of billions of earth's population, wonderful opportunities are emerging for witnessing.

Although these regions have traditionally been considered “resistant” to the gospel, and regarded as limited access zones—because governmental restrictions prohibit those seeking entry in order to proselytize—recent developments indicate that a strategy for reaching these people groups that is reportedly effective is through the medium of tentmaking. In the Seventh-day Adventist Church tentmaking missions appear to be treated with ambivalence. This paper shall examine the import that tentmaking has to Adventist mission, as well as the theological and missiological implications associated with its praxis.

Although the concept of tentmaking has been around for many centuries, its application as an approach for witnessing has in the last few decades received greater emphasis. With a growing list of publications in journals and books, including conferences and training workshops, the influence and knowledge of tentmaking has blossomed in significance. There is unanimity that this terminology was derived from the missionary practice of the Apostle Paul as he spread the gospel message in the course of his missionary journeys around the major cities of Rome. Moreover, it is believed that this practice, adopted and popularized by Paul as a mode of evangelization, actually has its roots in the Old Testament. Included in the list of pioneer tentmakers are patriarchs such as Abraham and Isaac.

Presently, many facets of tentmaking practice are in existence and have grown in significance. These can be discussed under three related categories: workplace witnessing, expatriate evangelism, and business as missions (BAM). Each of these categories depicts integration of Christian faith into the business or marketplace where believers are found. The consequence of this is a holistic expression of Christian faith, which permeates every aspect of life.

Workplace witnessing occurs when Christians seek to apply biblical principles as the foundation upon which their businesses will be established. In other words rather than recognize the great divide between sacred and common, as has been the established norm, these Christians believe that there should exist integration of faith and work. Discussing this trend over a decade ago, *Fortune Magazine* published an article written by Marc Gunther entitled, "Bringing Spirituality into the Workplace" (July 9, 2001). While the article featured other non-Christian faiths, it served to underscore the unabashed manner in which religion was discussed in avenues where such practices were previously considered anathema.

A note of caution needs to be given at this point: workplace witnessing should neither entail "spiritual harassment," where one's faith will be forcibly imposed on others, nor should paid work hours be misappropriated for the purpose of witnessing. On the contrary, Christian believers are expected to be diligent at work, excel in their duties, and shine as epitomes of commitment and service. These qualities, in addition to their compassion, humility, service, honesty, and dependability, should serve to place them advantageously where they would find opportunity to witness of their faith, even as their lives attract and affect those of their work counterparts.

One of the fastest growing job markets at the moment is in the area of international jobs. Several websites have been set up, and numerous books published to assist one in search of work opportunities in exotic regions around the world, which in many cases promise better remuneration to expatriate staff. Among such is *Monsterjobs.com*. These jobs are usually located in the countries of Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, where the governments are seeking to narrow the technology gap, while at the same time seeking to better the living conditions of their people. It needs to be said however, that this market is getting narrower and more specialized by the day. This comes as a result of the desire of these host countries to see their own nationals employed, and in due course cut down on the differential salaries paid to expatriates.

Work opportunities abroad have provided a niche for committed Christian professionals to ply their professions abroad, and witness about their faith. Although no precise figures may be obtained regarding the number of tentmakers involved in this form of witnessing, due to attendant risks and the danger of compromising their general welfare, estimates have them in the thousands, especially in limited access countries around the world. While the mission of tentmakers is often shrouded with secrecy and anonymity, it should be understood that several Muslim nations are not necessarily oblivious of their presence and activities. Notwithstanding the fact that these governments may be resentful of proselytizing, they are mindful, however, that committed Christians are law abiding, diligent, and add value to their host societies. Consequently, it ends up a symbiotic relationship where both parties benefit, so long as the activities of the tentmakers are never considered obnoxious.

Another growing trend in tentmaking missions is often referred to as business as missions (BAM). Springing up all over countries dominated by Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism, these businesses established by Christian entrepreneurs have mission and vision strategies that are founded upon values and principles derived from the Word of God. Factors that have encouraged location of businesses abroad include cheap labor costs, tax breaks, and governmental encouragement. Although every business needs to be able to make a profit to break even, such businesses owned and operated by Christian proprietors have another more important objective. That is, exerting an influence in the community as the salt of the earth, and the light of the world, with the goal of leading employees and associates to a saving relationship with the Lord.

Because these businesses provide employment, yield tax returns to the government, promote local production, and often have export potentials, such schemes are usually welcome by governments around the world. All the same, these businesses operated along Christian values also pose great challenges to their operators who have to learn fast how to chart those murky waters with dangerous shoals, in which worldview conflicts have sunk many expensive projects.

#### *Tentmaking in Antiquity*

In ancient times, as now, an individual's trade constituted an integral part of their identity. The other facet of one's identity was also their faith. These two qualities went wherever the person sojourned, and were inseparable components of them. For this reason, some attribute the designation tentmaker to patriarchs such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Job. Wherever they went, their witness and work testified about them. Others that may be added to this category include Joseph and Daniel. However, it is from the Apostle Paul that the appellation finds its first usage (Acts 18:3). Paul did not work alone. A number of his associates also functioned as tentmakers, including Priscilla and Aquila, Luke the gospel writer, and even Philemon the slave master.

#### *Paul: Prototype Tentmaker*

Without a doubt no one has contributed more to the concept of tentmaking than the Apostle Paul. He was the extraordinary tentmaker. His life and ministry serve as a model for everyone engaging in this special ministry, and therefore is worthy of closer consideration. From several passages that reveal the work ethic and rationale behind his mission strategy, several lessons can be pieced together.

#### Have a Trade

The Scriptures reveal that Paul learned a trade (from the Greek word *techné*),<sup>1</sup> which served as his primary affinity to the couple Aquila and Priscilla, who

<sup>1</sup>Darrell L. Bock, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Acts* (Grand

became partners together with him in ministry (Acts 18:3). The tentmaker's trade, skill, or art provides an entering wedge to a world that otherwise would have been closed to the gospel, thus becoming a vehicle for communicating the Word of God.<sup>2</sup> The choice of this trade is believed to have been a conscious and calculated "missionary and survival strategy" on Paul's part.<sup>3</sup> Some scholars believe that Paul learned this trade from his father, who may have plied the same profession. However, there is disputation regarding whether Paul did actually work with leather, goat's hair, or cloth. What is important to note is that he must have been a skilled worker for the records from Scripture indicate that he practiced his profession unto his incarceration, profitably. In today's world there is plenty of room for the tentmaker who is highly skilled and very personable. Although there are certain jobs which are highly paying in the international job market such as medicine, computing, engineering, nursing, and electronics, some will contend that tentmakers with all kinds of skills are needed everywhere. Presently, there is great demand for teachers of English, French, and German as a second or foreign language (ESL/EFL). For instance, in certain Persian Gulf countries Filipino house-helpers are functioning as tentmakers, serving their proprietors diligently, while at the same time seeking opportunity to bear witness for the gospel.

#### Earn A Living

It can be inferred from Scripture that Paul must have been efficient and successful as a tentmaker otherwise he would soon have run out of business. Some find it perturbing that an Apostle of Paul's stature would deem it necessary to work when he could have had all his physical needs met by the members, but it is clear that this was a matter of preference for the Apostle, and something he chose to brag about (1 Cor 9:15-16).

What is noteworthy is the fact that this same Paul was a strong and vocal advocate for this means of support of full-time ministry (1 Cor 9). However, although he had no serious qualms against receiving financial support from churches (as he did from the Philippian Church), it is believed that Paul's reason for demurring was because he wished to differentiate himself from the teachers and philosophers of his day. Such itinerant philosophers and religious charlatans in the Greco-Roman world were known to live upon the wages earned,<sup>4</sup> and in some cases exploited their clients. Paul's decision to support himself by working with his hands was not a unique situation in his time, however, for many rabbis were also known to have supported

Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 578.

<sup>2</sup>Simon J. Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1990), 650.

<sup>3</sup>Ben Witherington III, *The Paul Quest: The Renewed Search for The Jew of Tarsus* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 90.

<sup>4</sup>David G. Peterson, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary: The Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 573.

themselves by the trades they had learned.<sup>5</sup> Three criteria have been suggested for Paul choosing a career in tentmaking. These are quietness, portability, and universality.<sup>6</sup> As Jerome O'Connor explains, "The work had to be silent enough for him to preach while he labored. The tools had to weigh little or nothing. The skill had to be needed in towns and villages, on the roads, and on sea."<sup>7</sup> Note also that the nature of Paul's trade allowed him to move base at short notice and relocate.

#### Exemplar at Work

In his final admonition to the elders of the church before his departure to Rome, Paul provides an insight to his work habits that can serve as a benchmark for all tentmakers and Christians: he "worked night and day" (1 Thess 2:9; 2 Thess 3:7-9). This is not to suppose that he was a workaholic, although it cannot be disputed that he was doubtlessly a consummate preacher. From the statement it can be inferred that with Paul there was no dichotomy or discrete compartmentalization of his life—his work was his ministry, and his ministry was his work. This total integration of work and faith serves as a paradigm for all tentmakers and Christians in contemporary times.

Paul's trade seemed perfect for his bi-vocational career as a preacher-tentmaker. While he made his tents, Paul could also be imagined teaching his audience, or clients present, who waited to collect their custom designed tents. He obviously had no need to change into a fresh set of apparel, or change location so that he could witness to an assembled audience. In the same manner, Christians and tentmakers alike do not need to wait until work hours are over or when they leave the workplace before they can witness to their faith. Even while performing diligent, impeccable labor for their employers, believers can give powerful and unrelenting witness.

#### Purposeful Witness

An often-overlooked aspect of Paul's trade and witness were his clientele. Scholars believe that it was sometime about the reign of king David that the Israelites stopped dwelling in tents and began living in constructed houses. Also, ruin, relics, and archaeological finds make it clear that houses and mason work were quite common in the world in which Paul lived. So who were his clients, and what were the tents used for? It is well known that Paul's clients were generally travellers who made use of the tents as their dwellings when they journeyed.<sup>8</sup> The other category of persons who patronized tentmakers was the wealthy class, who used the tents for covering during celebrations. Other uses for the tents were as awnings in the shops, at the beaches, for

<sup>5</sup>Kistemaker, *NT Commentary*, 649.

<sup>6</sup>Jerome Murphy O'Connor, *St. Paul's Corinth: Texts and Archaeology* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2002), 192.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 192-193.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

overflow crowds at occasions, and also during the Isthmian games.<sup>9</sup> There was constant need of shelter for both temporary residents and merchants during peak seasons such as religious activities, athletic games, and political events, which provided plenty of opportunities for the service of tentmakers like Apostle Paul.<sup>10</sup>

An often overlooked and rarely discussed fact is that for the first three years after his conversion Paul spent time in Arabia. Jerome Murphy-O'Connor believes that it was there in Damascus, after his return from Arabia that he learned the art of tentmaking.<sup>11</sup> Although this fact has been disputed by those who believe that Paul learned the tentmaking trade from his father, it is also possible that among his clientele were caravan traders from Arabia. Such persons would have been valuable prospects for bearing the gospel message to their homelands, the way the Ethiopian eunuch baptized by Philip did. Perhaps this could be seen as Paul modeling the counsel he later gave to his younger ministerial assistant Timothy (2 Tim 2:2).

#### Urban Ministry

New Testament scholars have noted that Paul's ministry revolved around the major cities of the Roman Empire. From one city to another the Apostle bore his tentmaking trade, teaching, toiling and establishing house churches in all the major metropolises of Europe. His urban missionary strategy carried him to places such as Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi, and Psidian Antioch.<sup>12</sup> Like his Master and Savior, Paul went to where the masses gathered; quite clearly the missions of Jesus and Paul were in the marketplace. The cities offered Paul better possibilities for preaching the gospel, better opportunities for plying his trade, and better chances of meeting foreign travelers.<sup>13</sup>

Also, as was the case in those times, so it is even today, the metropolis and the seats of government are the centers of influence around the world. Whatever trends and fashions hold sway there will eventually trickle down to the towns and villages. What Capernaum was to the ministry of Christ, so was Antioch to Paul's ministry. In like manner, following the examples of Christ and Paul, the church must give priority attention to urban missions especially in the 10/40 window, but globally as well. Studies indicate that never has urban drift occurred in such magnitude in human history such as is today witnessed around the world.

In the study conducted by the Transport and Urban Development Department of the World Bank, it was reported that there are 3,943 cities in the world with populations in excess of 100,000. Also, the study projected

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 193.

<sup>10</sup>David B. Capes, Rodney Reeves, E. Randolph Richards, *Rediscovering Paul: An Introduction to His World, Letters, and Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 103.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 192.

<sup>12</sup>Witherington III, *The Paul Quest*, 115.

<sup>13</sup>Capes, Reeves, and Richards, *Rediscovering Paul*, 103.

that by 2030 the population of the cities in the developing world would have doubled from 2 billion to 4 billion, while in the Western world it was expected to increase by 11% within the same period.<sup>14</sup> All this goes to show why the church today needs to pay more attention to urban missions, just as did Apostle Paul.

#### Sufficiency and Benevolence

Many New Testament scholars are in agreement that Paul had a self-supporting ministry due to his industry. The other side of the picture is that his ministry was not just enough to support himself alone but was also sufficient to support some of his associates in mission.<sup>15</sup> Instead of seeking for patronage as a client from the group among whom he was witnessing, Paul rather sought after partnership in the gospel enterprise choosing to work with his own hands.<sup>16</sup> The Apostle also practiced what he preached by being benevolent showing that it indeed was more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35). He showed practical concern for the weak through his benevolence,<sup>17</sup> in an age when no one cared for the destitute, the weak, and the poor.<sup>18</sup>

Paul's self-supporting ministry should serve as a model today in the establishment of self-sufficient churches. Although it is known that the majority of his converts were at best artisans or lower in class (1 Cor 1:26),<sup>19</sup> Paul was an advocate of the work ethic for which Protestants have become known (2 Thess 3:10-13). It is also noteworthy that although he could have through his work attained a degree of financial security, the Apostle's constant movement from one mission location to another did not permit this. This is simply because, for Paul, work was merely a means to support his ministry and provide assistance to others, and was not about profit for profit's sake. Tentmakers therefore, as they engage in their businesses, need to have the kingdom focus which characterized the ministry of Paul, so that they do not get ensnared by wealth. Conversely, tentmakers and mission agencies should work in a manner to create self-supporting, self-reliant, and self-propagating congregations where they serve.

<sup>14</sup>Shlomo Angel, Stephen C. Sheppard, and Daniel L. Civco, "The Dynamics of Global Urban Expansion" (Washington, DC: Transport and Urban Development Department, World Bank, 2005), 1.

<sup>15</sup>Roy B. Zuck, *Teaching as Paul Taught* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 22; Thomas E. Phillips, *Paul, His Letters and Acts* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2009), 115.

<sup>16</sup>Witherington III, 128-129.

<sup>17</sup>Peterson, *The Pillar NT Commentary*, 573.

<sup>18</sup>Kistemaker, *NT Commentary*, 738.

<sup>19</sup>Witherington III, *Paul's Quest*, 128.

### Team Ministries

One popular leadership and business concept that has granted success to various corporations is the idea of team ministry. The advantage of organizations working as teams has been shown to produce better results than when the leadership structure is otherwise. This was a practice fully displayed in the ministry of the Apostle Paul. Throughout his missionary journeys Paul associated with partners in ministry such as Barnabas, Silas, Priscilla and Aquila, among many others. Although known for his forthrightness, Paul seemed quite comfortable working with partners. He fell out at one time with Barnabas over the insistence that John Mark accompany them in their next missionary journey (Acts 15:35-38), rebuked Peter openly for what he felt was hypocrisy (Gal 2:10-15), nevertheless, his friendship with the tentmaker couple Aquila and Priscilla is notable (Acts 18) as with Timothy, Silas, and others.

Team ministry among tentmakers plays a crucial role in the success of the mission. The minimum size of any team should comprise two persons. This was the model established by Christ (Matt 10; Luke 10), and evident also in Paul's ministry. However, when necessary, the size of the group may be larger, so long as it does not produce unnecessary friction or divisions. While this may not appear as a major issue, it is reported that a significant amount of time is often spent redressing squabbles among tentmakers than is spent in the actual mission of evangelizing.<sup>20</sup> Also, because tentmaking seems to attract a personality type quite akin to lone rangers and the strong-willed, this is an issue that is worthy of consideration. The advantages that exist in having partners in ministry abound. Besides the scriptural counsel that adjoins that two is better than one (Eccl 3:9-10), and a cord of three strands is not easily broken (Eccl 4:12), tentmakers also need someone to whom they will be accountable. A partner lends both spiritual support and accountability.

Examining the tentmaking model Paul presents in his missions does indeed present lessons for contemporary mission practice. As the Adventist Church engages in this mission strategy that is proving imperative for this age, it will be beneficial to consider a number of theological and missiological portents this has for the church.

### *Theological Implications*

One of the effects of the Enlightenment on human history was the distinction between the public and the private spheres, between the "sacred" and the "secular."<sup>21</sup> This worldview concept carried over into the realm of work implied that there were certain kinds of work that were sacred, such as the functions of the clergy, while other types of work were labeled secular. Such an understanding did not exist before this modern age of Enlightenment.

<sup>20</sup>Global Opportunities Tentmaker Training, Fort Myers, Florida, November, 2012.

<sup>21</sup>Paul G. Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews: An Anthropological Understanding of How People Change* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 153.



Before this time, people considered their work a vocation (from an old French or Latin word, *vocare*, which meant “to call”), and their labor, a service to God. Support for this view is evident in the Old Testament and is clearly portrayed when God informs Moses that the sacred work of building His sanctuary had been given to two craftsmen, Bezalel and Oholiab (Ex 31:1-11). Rather than the dichotomized life common today, tentmaking leads us to reconsider the more holistic worldview of the biblical times and regard our labor as unto the Lord (Col 3:23).

Continuity of this worldview concept is also evident in the New Testament. Paul urges even slaves to let their service to their masters be as unto the Lord (1 Tim 6:2). For the Christian, therefore, work must be seen as service to the Lord, in which the glory shall be given unto him (Titus 2:9-10; 1 Pet 2:18-22).

A second implication that the function and ministry of tentmakers presents to our theology is the role of laity in ministry. If, as the New Testament proclaims, all have a place in proclaiming the gospel of salvation, and all are called to discover and deploy their spiritual gifts in service of the Lord, then should tentmakers not be regarded as missionaries, with a special function in this contemporary age? Advocating this viewpoint, Milfred Minatrea states:

Since every believer is to bear witness, is sent to evidence the veracity of the gospel message, every believer is on mission. Injustice is done to the term missionary when it is reserved only for professional or vocational personnel who cross oceans or other geographical boundaries in their assignment. Missionaries are the ones who are sent, and for the New Testament church that includes every believer.<sup>22</sup>

However, a note of caution is sounded against advocates of the “every member a missionary” group. While it may be true that all are gifted to minister, it has been wisely said that, “We should not minimize the challenges involved in cross-cultural ministry, which not only depend on the empowered sending of God but also require specialized training and the supportive prayers of the church.”<sup>23</sup> Presently, the larger proportion of people engaged in tentmaking are laypersons, and the tentmaking movement seems wholly directed, and coordinated, by non-clergy. This situation calls to question the role of ministers in this vital aspect of missions that is developing into a movement of God in this age. The absence of clergy in this burgeoning development may further underscore the redundancy and disconnect of present-day ministerial praxis. However, without the participation of ministers, and the undergirding of sound theology, this movement could easily wind up adrift.

The third theological challenge that tentmaking presents to the church is seen in the shocking attrition rate of American pastors in ministry. In a

<sup>22</sup>Milfred Minatrea, *Shaped By God's Heart: The Passion and Practices of Missional Churches* (San Francisco: John Wiley and Sons, 2004), 80-81.

<sup>23</sup>Craig Ott, Stephen J. Strauss, and Timothy C. Tennent, *Encountering Theology of Mission: Biblical Foundations, Historical Developments, and Contemporary Issues* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 237.

study conducted by Duke University it was reported that 85% of seminary graduates leave within five years of entering the ministry, while 90% of all pastors do not remain in ministry until retirement.<sup>24</sup> The study blames ill preparation for dealing with real-life situations in ministry, an inadequacy attributed to the relevance of the ministerial formation.<sup>25</sup>

Although related statistics for the Adventist Church are not available, this revelation still demands due attention. Beyond North America, laity in other regions have been known to comment on the fact that ministers seem to be out of touch with the realities of the lives of members. Seminaries have been accused of taking a posture that “giving information concerning the Bible and Christian theology are the most important things in our faith.”<sup>26</sup>

Recently, at a proposal review in one of our seminaries, it was discovered that none of the dissertations presented by the theology students in the PhD program had any practical mission benefit. In defense of this situation one student retorted that this was not a concern that his paper sought to address. Increasingly, it is appearing that in our seminaries relevance is sacrificed on the altar of scholastics.

Fourthly, while on one hand ministerial dropout is an issue in pastoral ministry in certain contexts, on the other hand, in many regions around the world seminaries are producing more graduates than the church can provide employment. Consequently, a number of unemployed persons are those who have acquired ministerial training and for whom no employment opportunity may appear on their horizons. Perhaps if a bi-vocational career pathway were emphasized in the seminaries, few would be unemployed since they could find opportunity to deploy their spiritual giftedness even when they were not on the church’s payroll. Ministerial students who come to the seminary with competencies and backgrounds in other professions should be encouraged to see how to integrate the two careers in order to maximally be of service to their Lord rather than to see both career pathways as mutually exclusive.

A fifth challenge that tentmaking presents theologically is the age-old controversy over what exactly is the essence of the gospel. The question to be answered is how much does one need to know in order to be saved? Friendship evangelism and the art of sharing a personal testimony play a crucial role in tentmaker witnessing. Through this simple witness many have been led to give their lives to the Lord. Bible scholars have also noted the significant number of times Apostle Paul repeated the story of his conversion in his ministry. So what then is the basic, or core essence of the gospel, and how important is the knowledge of the major theological controversies in history in ministerial formation, as some are demanding? A note of caution is needed though, we need to remember that theology is an indispensable tool

<sup>24</sup>Kristin Stewart, “Keeping Your Pastor: An Emerging Challenge,” *Journal for the Liberal Arts and Science*, 13, no. 3 (Summer 2009): 112.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 120.

<sup>26</sup>Charles H. Kraft, *Worldview for Christian Witness* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2008), 329.

in ministerial formation, the challenge to seminaries and theologians is how to maintain a balance of being rooted in the Word and remaining connected with the everyday world. This also leads to the question of the importance of narrative theology in this age. Often regarded as a beneficial method of communicating the gospel in primal contexts, some scholars believe that a return to this pattern employed by Christ and the Apostles will prove very successful even among post-moderns in this generation. The most profound truths unless communicated in engaging gospel stories may remain simply theoretical and unaffactive.

Finally, the practice of tentmaking should lead to a reexamination of our theology of work, if one does indeed exist. The church has done an excellent job regarding a theology of the Sabbath; it is time to focus on a theology for the other six days. In doing this it will be necessary to recognize that because work was a mandate given before the fall, therefore an integration of faith in work should be considered exigent. Evangelicals with their Marketplace Ministries, and Catholics with their long history of publications from University of Notre Dame Press including the lay publication, *Initiatives*,<sup>27</sup> are ahead in this endeavor, which serves to empower membership for holistic missions. It is time for Adventists to awake.

#### *Missiological Implications*

Besides the theological implications that tentmaking presents to the Adventist Church, there are also missiological considerations. Implementation of tentmaking by the church as a viable missiological strategy will demand re-evaluation and recalibration of certain functions and practices in the church.

One of the primary things the church may need to consider is the development of a curriculum for the training of tentmakers. This specialized training should in some way or another be introduced to students at the seminary and possibly incorporated into the curriculum for the formation of ministers. Seminary graduates need to be introduced to practical aspects of missions, and given the opportunity to both experience and be taught how to train others in effective approaches to mission.

Secondly, the development of tentmaking missions demands better collaborative networks. These collaborative networks should exist between laity and clergy, between theologians and missiologists, between classroom and frontline missionaries, and between the various existing missionary agencies of the church. The present state of affairs is a rather diffuse and uncoordinated missionary program that does not reflect common focus and mutual accountability. Independent mission agencies serve wonderful purposes, help fulfill the mission program of the church, and have great appeal. However, the New Testament shows that while the Holy Spirit directed in diverse and innovative strategies, a central agency was recognized as responsible for mission accreditation and approbation—the local church of

<sup>27</sup>Armand Larive, *After Sunday: A Theology of Work* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2004), 164.

Antioch in Paul's day (Acts 13:1-3; 14:26-28).<sup>28</sup> Rather than allow each agency or organization to do its own thing, reflecting life in the days of the Judges (Judg 17:6; 21:25), effort should be made to provide direction, orientation, affirmation, and appreciation for the ministries and programs of all existing mission agencies in the church.

Another collaboration that needs to happen is between the business departments of our institutions and the seminaries. Presently, a profusion of literature exists on the subject of business as missions.<sup>29</sup> This integrated approach to work has resulted in the creation of several businesses around the world, especially in limited access countries that are not only profitable, but also mission-oriented. If Adventist business schools do not integrate this module, business as mission, into our curricula, then there will not exist any uniqueness or distinction in our programs that should provide a rationale for our existence.

Thirdly, the church will need to take a fresh look at its funding structures if more effective mission is to be accomplished. Tentmaking provides a more cost effective approach to church planting not only in limited access regions but also in urban centers. Because of the growth and spread of Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches around the world, their influence and existence cannot be ignored. An incontrovertible fact is that those who established most of these congregations can be considered tentmakers.<sup>30</sup> While new congregants may not possess full doctrinal maturity, they can be discipled after a congregation has been established by a layperson. Also, the laity has established numerous church plants, within, and without the church, as even the various celebrations of the Festival of the Laity in the Adventist Church affirm. This trend calls for a revisit of the funding programs for missions in the church. Increasingly voices are being raised as to the amount spent by the church simply to maintain its structures and institutions evident in the calls for restructuring of the church's administrative institutions at all levels. It has been observed that "when the activities of a church focus inward, the church has exchanged its mission for maintenance."<sup>31</sup> The question the Adventist Church needs to ask itself is, "How much of what we do is missional and how much is maintenance?" Perhaps the time has come when we should ask ourselves what kind of church the Adventist Church is: a conventional church—with a maintenance orientation; a survival church—glorying in the past and afraid of change; a terminal church—showing signs of death;<sup>32</sup> or a truly we are a missional church—where "every member is encouraged to

<sup>28</sup>Ott et al., *Encountering Theology of Mission*, 208.

<sup>29</sup>See the list of additional resources below.

<sup>30</sup>A typical example is Sunday Adelaja, founder of the Embassy of the Kingdom of God, one of the largest churches in Eastern Europe. Also, a majority of the diaspora Pentecostal Churches established by migrants in Europe and America have been by bi-vocational ministers.

<sup>31</sup>Minatrea, *Shaped By God's Heart*, xvi.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, 174-175.

hear and pursue God's direction as an authentic disciple on mission in the revolutionary agenda of the kingdom of God."<sup>33</sup>

Fourthly, although there are those who believe in the dictum, "No money, no mission," there is increasing evidence that Western methods of doing missions, with large structures and great budgets, may have detrimental effects on the sustenance of local mission.<sup>34</sup> The success of tentmaking and church planting programs involving lay-people establishing house churches should lead the church to reconsider its funding patterns. Dependence on our finances may be robbing the Holy Spirit of His prerogative and power in fuelling and fulfilling the *missio Dei*.<sup>35</sup>

Another missiological challenge is how to harness the great benefits of business as missions (BAM)—an essential dimension of tentmaking—for the advantage of the church. Perhaps, the appropriate agency in the church that could be employed in fulfilling this goal would be Adventist Laymen's Services International (ASI). This organization has been successful in attracting mission-driven donors and supporters of the church for projects and programs which have been a great blessing. However, a great deal more could be accomplished with closer collaboration between mission professionals and academics, the leadership of this body, and the Adventist Missions department. Such a partnership can only serve to dismantle the divisive schemes of the devil and advance the course of God's mission in great strides. ASI possesses the potential to launch and activate an Adventist version of BAM, but it needs the stimulus, vision, and strategic framework which mission professionals can provide. ASI, composed of committed Adventist laity, may play a more crucial role in Adventist missions and may work more energetically to establish international chapters and networks.

Finally, a knotty issue that should be addressed is the issue of control. How much should the church be involved in the work of independent ministries? Should there be a coordination of the programs and activities so that it is more intentional and directional than previously? These questions really do not have easy answers due to the fact that the study of mission practice reveals that innovation, change, and growth rarely come from the center but from the fringes. On the flip side, the absence of coordination and collaboration could result in incoherence, duplication, and loss of focus.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 130.

<sup>34</sup>See Jonathan Bonk, *Mission and Money: Affluence As a Western Missionary Problem*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991).

<sup>35</sup>See LeRoy E. Froom, *The Coming of the Comforter* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1949), 131.

*Conclusion*

Tentmaking is undoubtedly a valuable mission tool that the Adventist Church can employ as it seeks to carry the gospel around the world in readiness for the Lord's return. However, it raises a host of issues, theological and missiological, that answers are needed for. As the church navigates the currents of twenty-first-century missions, a re-evaluation and revitalization of its programs, policies, theology, and missiology will be necessary if the church is to stay relevant, balanced, and purposeful.