MISSION IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM: Avondale's Greater Vision

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Despite the amazing growth of Christianity throughout the two thousand years since Jesus Christ, mission in the new millennium is not only an essential part of the Christian Church; it is the most important challenge the Church faces. Challenges come from both the world in which the Church is placed and from the Church within the world. In spite of global and institutional changes, Jesus' instructions are still valid today. "Go into all the world and make disciples of every nation, baptising them in the name of the Father, teaching all that I have commanded you" (Matt 28:19-20). "As the Father has sent me, so send I you" (John 20:21). However, the pressing question is "What face will mission take in this new millennium?"

In answer to this question, this paper will evaluate current Adventist mission practice, with a special focus on both Avondale and the South Pacific. This evaluation will initially describe the most notable strengths of Adventist mission, while still discussing candidly the ever present glitches and gaps. Next, the paper will describe the world in which the church operates, noting some of the major challenges which could threaten such growth. Then it will seek to explain the possibilities and opportunities whereby mission may continue to expand and explode under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It will then suggest strategies whereby the existing strengths of Adventist mission may be enhanced by the burgeoning opportunities provided in the world around, despite the glaring flaws that already exist and the looming threats which could overturn this gospel commission if left in human hands. Finally the role of Avondale in these new strategies will provide the basis for Avondale's greater vision. The authors are indebted to the panel discussion at the A H Piper Conference and acknowledge the participants' contributions as relevant to this work.

Strengths of Adventist Mission

Adventist mission demonstrates an incredible development of the initial concept of mission first understood by Adventists in the 1840s. From mission including only the believers who had lived through the Great Disappointment,[1] through the concept of the United States with its migrant population representing the world,[2] to a fully-fledged global mission in just over 100 years, is outstanding.[3]

Global Growth: Most of this growth has taken place during this last century, with the first thirty years seeing an Adventist presence established in over 50 countries. The century started with as many denominational employees in North America as there were overseas. Thirty years later there were three times as many overseas as in North America.[4] The last seventy years have seen an Adventist presence established in all but a few of the countries recognised by the United Nations. This expansion has seen a dramatic growth in church membership. The development of a world church was, is, and must continue to be a major strength of Adventist mission.[5] Such growth continues to amaze mission analysts[6] and must be attributed to the blessings of God.[7]

Church Institutions: Methods adopted by Adventists throughout the last century have been quite varied. However, there has always been a strong broad-based institutional approach to mission. This is demonstrated by the large educational, health/medical and publishing/media institutions which Adventists developed around the world. The continued growth of the Church demonstrates that these traditional and usually institutional methods still reap results.[8]

Development and Relief: In recent times, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) has shifted this institutional approach to a more personal level. For example, some ADRA projects are community-based, providing necessary commodities such as clean water, health and education. Others are based on family or individual needs, providing small capital loans to assist in establishing a family income or other self-reliance activity. However, all projects are strongly dependent on people and rely on local understanding.[9]

Influence on Government: Such development programs have made a significant contribution to society at large. Many donor governments fund projects through ADRA, a recognised non-government agency. In many developing nations, the Adventist Church has received government grants-in-aid to assist some of these programs.

Consequently, Adventists in the two-thirds world have often enjoyed greater proximity to and influence in government. Such influence has often been of great benefit to the mission of the Church in those countries. In the colonial era also, this influence and contribution of the Church in the "mission field" encouraged government recognition and other benefits to the Church in the homeland.[10]

Cross-cultural Missionaries: Another of the Church's strengths is the involvement of national cross-cultural missionaries throughout the Pacific. Although not unique to Adventism,[11] this practice dates back to the initial voyage of the missionary ship *Pitcairn* in 1890-91, where Pitcairn Islanders joined the crew and assisted the American missionaries in their visits to other Pacific Islands. This emphasis has been an ongoing practice of Adventist mission throughout the Pacific, with almost all island groups both giving and receiving missionaries.[12] Currently, the most obvious example of this practice is the multicultural nature of the staff at Pacific Adventist University (PAU). They have come from Kiribati, Samoa, Cook Islands, Tonga, Fiji, the Solomon Islands, Australia and New Zealand.

Multi-cultural Awareness: A sense of the bigger picture of the world Church with a global mission has been communicated in the multi-cultural colleges of the Pacific. Such environments provide greater understanding, appreciation and tolerance of people of different cultures, as well as a personal face on this region's nations, kindreds, tongues and peoples to whom the everlasting Gospel is to be proclaimed.

National Leadership Development: The Adventist Church has invested much, especially in the last two decades, to educate and equip nationals for leadership. In the South Pacific, such development is noticeable not only in the establishment of the multi-cultural Pacific Adventist University (PAU), but also in sponsoring many existing Pacific Island employees with leadership potential to study there.

Self Reliance: Of great promise, is the continued development of

the "traditional" mission fields. Reflecting the action of the 1992 General Conference Annual Council, many administrative organisations throughout the traditional "mission" fields are responding to the challenge of self reliance. In the South Pacific Division several missions are on the verge of becoming conferences. They have demonstrated not only financial viability, but also the maturity of leadership and the ongoing ability to equip their workforce. Such a change in status provides constitutional and financial autonomy for these missions that become conferences. This has two significant benefits for Adventist mission: freeing the diminishing resources of the "homeland" base and redirecting them to new mission areas; and encouraging the previously dependent missions to focus interdependently on their responsibilities for global mission.

Resurgence of Interest in Mission: Another positive trend is the resurgence of interest in mission.[13] Many church members are interested in participating in short-term mission assignments, volunteer placements, global mission projects in new areas and tentmaking activities.[14] This resurgence has led to the establishment of an *Office of Volunteers* at the South Pacific Division, to coordinate requests for helpers and assign suitable placements for volunteers.

Missionary Care: In the last decade or so, a growing realisation of the stresses and strains of mission service has seen much time, money and effort being spent supporting the professional missionary. This support from the South Pacific Division Institute of World Mission, includes pre-service training, in-service retreats, and a post-service re-entry debriefing. Optional annual leave to the home base has also been available, with missionaries in Papua New Guinea being offered an additional mid-year trip to Cairns. When major crises have erupted, the church has responded quickly and compassionately in support of missionaries, both to those involved and those left watching on. Investment in the life and person of a missionary is vital to the ongoing effectiveness of mission.[15]

Mutual Benefit: Ultimately the greatest strength of mission is its ability to be a two-way street. Both the senders and the receivers of mission benefit from the experience. Those who go and give, also

learn.[16] One cannot experience mission without being changed. This impact has an effect on both the person and the sending organisation, providing personal insights into one's own culture through the outside culture.[17] However, for this to be most successful, missionaries need to focus on those to whom they have gone, as well as on what they have brought with them to give.[18] This mutual benefit provides the ongoing impetus for mission, giving contemporary insights into the greatest mission of all time - that of Jesus coming to this world to redeem us.

CHALLENGES WITHIN ADVENTIST MISSION

Despite all these strengths and the amazing growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, at the turn of the millennium one doesn't need to look too far to see a number of challenges which need to be addressed.

Decline in "Home Base" Support: Adventists, like the mainline churches, are facing a decline in both mission giving[19] and missionaries from the "traditional" homelands.[20] The inroads of secularisation, selfishness and smug satisfaction have reaped their toll on membership and commitment, transforming the once missionary-sending nations into nations requiring missionaries.[21] As both the numbers of missionaries and the real value of mission giving decline, the benefits of mission being a two-way street may be lost. This spiral will cause death on both sides of the street unless new life and vision can be resurrected.

Decline in Education/Promotion of Missions: Although the Mission News is still published and Mission Spotlight has evolved from a slide-based audio-visual to a video production, the promotion of mission in local Sabbath School programs has declined. This is also coupled with the disappearance of the traditional Missionary Society where the Book Club promoted exciting and adventurous stories of missionaries. Although some of these books are still published, no new umbrella has been unfurled to nurture these interests.

Careers to Contracts: New missionary recruits no longer view geographically-isolated cross-cultural mission as a lifelong career. Instead relatively short-term contracts are the vogue, with even double digit years of service now being the exception. This change highlights the importance of cultural and language education in the appointment

and pre-embarkation phase of mission.

Church Structures: Another challenge facing the missionary Church is the culturally different and outdated Church structures. At times, for the sake of uniformity in an international organisation, organisational structures have been implemented which have some dissonance with appropriate cultural processes. It is true to say that some of this is a legacy of the colonial era.[22] However, even with new and educated national leadership, there is a tendency to follow the earlier expatriate example and use a neo-colonial administrative style. This style is equally foreign to traditional culture, the emerging educated national and the new generation missionary. Erika Puni's doctoral dissertation "Toward a Contextualised Organisational Structure for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Samoa"[23] is one such attempt to address this issue.

Institutional Evangelism: Amongst this growth in the mission fields are signs of difficult times ahead. The mission frontier has become the new Church institution,[24] with little grassroots communication of the Gospel.[25] The trends experienced in the homeland are also impacting the mission field. Established mission field churches are showing signs of malaise as the natural inertia of the organisational life cycle is allowed to run unchecked.

Maintenance Missionaries: Even the few missionaries who now go are confined to intra-Church maintenance or training activities.[26] Yesteryear's "grass roots" mission experiences where people were transformed are seldom available to the expatriate. Instead expatriates become administrative support people, or specialist educators. In such situations, the emphasis can be on power, position and status, with the weightier matters of mission being ignored.[27]

Limited Pastoral Development: As governments have expanded their influence over national health care and education systems, they have required increasing educational requirements for personnel. However, the Church has failed to match this trend in the community and has allowed the education of pastors, both pre-employment and inservice, to fall behind. This is quite common on the frontiers of the Church.

However, the local church is the building block of the organisation, with the local church pastor the key person. When the development of the pastor lags behind the general community, the effectiveness of the church wanes and the ability to support expanding institutions also declines. Usually we have resolved this dilemma by dismissing pastors and continuing to support institutions, rather than focussing on maximising the effectiveness of the local church. This radical philosophical readjustment of the church system, personnel and strategies, especially evangelism, would enhance the shift from institutional methods of evangelism to people-centred and church-centred methods of mission and evangelism.[28]

Selective Target Group: Significantly, amongst such impressive growth, the Church has had negligible impact on the non-indigenous community. Little attention is paid to people groups other than the majority indigenous population. Although it is important to invest where there will be decisions, the Gospel Commission is to every nation, kindred, tongue and people. These other groups, including ethnic minorities and expatriate traders, do constitute unreached people groups. One significant exception where mission has impacted the expatriate community is the case of Laurie Meintjes.[29]

External Conformity vs Inner Conviction: Another challenge is the over-emphasis on external conformity at the expense of inner conviction and character. Mission, at times, may have created a semblance of a religious culture without its corresponding transforming power. Some people have become Adventists, but do not personally know Jesus Christ.[30]

This problem is not unique to Adventism or our time. John Fulton, more than a century ago, found Christianity in Fiji to be "largely a matter of form ... need(ing) the converting power of God."[31] Carol Jenkins, when discussing the results of comprehensive research into strategies for AIDS education in Papua New Guinea, noted that there appeared to be a compartmentalisation of religious belief and everyday practice even in areas which were predominantly Christian.[32] The Christian veneer is often very thin.

The internalisation of religious belief and its consequential

integration into congruent behaviour is also lacking. The predominantly Adventist people of the Wainigela village on the Marshall Lagoon in Papua New Guinea are the subject of a major public health issue with record-breaking incidence of lifestyle diabetes. This reflects a diet of refined and processed foods because most families do not have their own vegetable garden.

Syncretism: These lifestyle issues are further compounded with problems of syncretism. Some people have not fully abandoned their animistic beliefs, especially in spirits.[33] The Wainigela people, mentioned in the previous paragraph, continue to build their houses over the lagoon because the traditional fear of the spirits of the land has continued. This provides an incredible challenge as to how we could better contextualise the everlasting gospel.

Cultural Ignorance: No doubt, some of this syncretistic legacy can be attributed to missionaries not knowing the language or the culture. Initially, in any new area, such learning could only ever be a process of trial and error. However, as greater cultural understanding has been achieved, greater cultural education needs to occur. Cultural bridges need to be built. Missionaries need to think of those to whom they have been sent.

Yet culture is dynamic. Missionaries cannot assume that all the culture experienced by missionaries serving in earlier times will translate into current practice.

Cultural issues can be further complicated when people are involved in short-term mission appointments. Time does not permit the necessary cultural and language education. Consequently, such assignments provide the probability of only a superficial connection with the receiving people. These trips can also help to create a climate of dependency instead of the need to work interdependently. The increasing number of short-term mission trips has highlighted these issues.

Limited Vernacular Resources: Another major challenge is the lack of vernacular resources. Such a lack creates the ongoing need to use English or Pidgin English (Tok Pisin) as the language of inter-cultural communication. Consequently the results of missionary influence contribute to the isolation of traditional culture. Even when

vernacular resources are provided, there appears to be a special status achieved if indigenous people can identify with the missionaries' language, even if they don't understand it.[34]

Breakdown of Culture: Adventists have done much to develop a broad understanding of Pacific Island culture and identity. However, Adventists have also been accused of downplaying both people's specific cultural identity and their national identity. At times, Christianity has confronted culture, resulting in the rejection of certain cultural practices and adding credibility to this criticism. There has also been a tendency to Westernise, rather than Christianise, the Pacific Islanders. A balance needs to be found between Christians' citizenship in heaven and their ability to understand and relate to the community in which they live.[35]

Lack of Emphasis on Discipleship: Ironically, this final critique of mission is a consequence of its success. Adventist mission has sometimes led whole villages and islands to accept Jesus Christ's invitation. Yet, success in such geographical isolation creates its own challenges. In the vast and thinly-populated expanse of the South Pacific Ocean, there are only about two million people in more than a dozen scattered countries, how can a vibrant Christian experience be maintained? The initial thrust of mission needs to include a focus on a maturing discipleship. One good example of this challenge is the case of Pitcairn Island. The initial success of John I Tay persuading the whole island to accept the gospel as understood by Seventh-day Adventists, has since been eroded to the place where only half the islanders are still practising Seventh-day Adventists.

Indeed, these internal challenges highlight Oosterwal's observation that "the growth of this decade can easily become the apostasy of the next."[36]

THREATS TO ADVENTIST MISSION

The world has always expressed some hostility towards Christianity. Consequently, it is no surprise that the world of the new millennium also presents some major challenges which could threaten the growth of Christian mission. The following list outlines some of these key threats.

Borders: One of the greatest threats to global mission is the border. Borders can take on a national, cultural and/or religious form. Every time there is an additional border, the threat increases exponentially. Whatever the form, such borders become barriers to the free flow of the gospel.

Relatively speaking, the Pacific faces fewer threats than the predominantly Muslim countries of the Middle East, Asia and Africa. However, missionaries in the new millennium need to find ways of addressing the threat of borders.

Visas: The obtaining of visas for missionaries, for both short and long terms, even when the missionaries and their associated project are making a significant social contribution to the country, has become increasingly difficult. The missionary's citizenship has significant overtones for some governments. Allowing a particular citizen to work within the country suggests a degree of trust with the country of citizenship. Should these political relationships be strained, this may have significant implications for the missionary. In newly independent countries, governments are also keen to preserve as much work as possible for their citizens. This also may hinder the previously easy immigration process for missionaries.

Nationalism: With the change from colonialism to independence, newly independent nations have been striving to create their own sense of identity. At times, the exuberance of this new identity has overflowed into nationalistic fervour. Such nationalism has emerged as a significant threat to Christian mission. Recent history has many graphic examples including Rwanda, Bougainville, Vanuatu and Fiji. Christians must avoid the negative or racist aspects of nationalism.[37] Again, this threat will destroy Christian mission unless missionaries can communicate where a Christian's real citizenship resides.

Western Christianity: Independent nations in a post-colonial world often see Christianity as a colonial stigma. This stigma originates because the initial Christian missionaries were identified with the colonial governments. Although much of this identification may have been unintentional, the fact that the missionaries and the government officials arrived on the same boat, wore the same clothes, ate the same

food and spoke the same language provided a circumstantial case for linking Christianity with the colonial governments.

National governments have naturally been quick to assert their loyalty to their indigenous people rather than blindly follow the wishes of a former colonial power. At times this developing identity has resulted in the wholesale rejection of anything European, replacing it instead with the "Pacific way." Although this may be a short phase in a constructive process of re-establishing identity, it does provide a significant threat because of the perceived European-ness of Christian mission. If Christian mission is to fulfil its responsibility under the Gospel Commission, this differentiation must be made clear.

Secularism: The spread of secularism, materialism and hedonism throughout the Western world, also threatens Christian mission in the emerging world. Although there are similarities between the core issues of materialism and the traditional cargo mentality, the pervasiveness of these more sophisticated philosophies will have a much greater impact on Christian mission in the near future.

Power Struggles: Independence issues are not just between former colonial powers and newly emergent nations. They often also include the battle for power and control within different factions of the same country, as evidenced in Fiji, Vanuatu, Bougainville and the Solomon Islands. Such power struggles have significant implications for all citizens. These power struggles also threaten the opportunities for the spread of Christianity.

Security: Although mission has always had an innate sense of sacrifice, security issues for missionaries and their families now loom large on the horizon of threats. These issues range from the inconvenience of loss of possessions and invasion of personal space, through fallout from some political issue, to intentional rape and murder.[38] Humanly speaking, these threats have the potential to destroy Christian mission in the new millennium. However, just as the Christian response to the threat of martyrdom defied critics, so also does the new missionaries' response to the security threat.

World population: The increase in world population, especially in the non-Christian world, provides an ever-expanding target for

Christian mission.[39] Adventists, although having a disproportionate representation in traditional "mission fields" where they are experiencing phenomenal growth, face an even greater challenge. As a Church, Adventists believe they have a unique message for every kindred, nation, tongue and people in this world. Consequently, this relatively small and recent missionary organisation has a global vision which continues to grow at a rate beyond the Church's own significant growth.

World Religions: Initially, Christian mission confronted some people who observed animistic rituals or others who had some form of Christian persuasion. Today, there is the new dimension of other world religions. Migration, Western education, commercial enterprises and other missionaries have all contributed to this latest threat. Places of worship for adherents to Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, and Ba'hai etc now exist in many Western countries.[40] Although the power of the gospel is far greater than anything these other world religions have to offer, many people, even in the Western world, have a desire to adopt religious rituals which are more tangible than Christian practices.

Religious Persecution: The threat of martyrdom is not just confined to missionaries living cross-culturally. It also applies to the would-be converts from other religions.[41] This threat is especially true in places where the government has a strong religious bias. But it is still true to a lesser extent in local village politics where conversion can remove a villager's rights.

Fundamentalism: Christian mission has at times seen the development of fundamentalism. This black and white approach to Christian values and practices looms as a large threat for Christian mission. How can the missionary continue to balance the need for law and grace, free choice and communal responsibility etc?

Fundamentalism reconstructs the complexities of life into the simplicity of "my superior way." Consequently, there is no understanding of issues apart from one's own frame of reference. Inevitably, this mindset will have a major impact on the ability of Christian mission to contextualise the never-changing Gospel into the ever-changing world.

Change: Yet another threat is the changing environment in which

the Church finds itself.[42] With symbols of God as a rock, and expressions of God's steadfast unwavering, the Church is often equated with a secure and safe place where people can retreat when overwhelmed by rapid change.

Despite the incredible rate of change in the developed world, the rate of change in developing countries is exponential. Papua New Guinea, for example, has many people who move from the isolated village into life in the the 21st century in just one generation. However, as the environment changes, so too must the Church change as it continues to present the "present truth" of God's unchanging word to this generation.

Missionary Kids: Social issues for missionary families regarding the development, identity and connection of their children with their roots, continue their threat to mission. How do parents protect their children from early exposure to deviant anti-Christian practices? How do parents enable their children to enjoy the benefits of cross-cultural living and yet connect seamlessly with their own culture?

New Opportunities for Adventist Mission

Despite such threats, the world in which the church operates provides many opportunities whereby mission may continue to expand and explode under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This section will notice some of the more significant opportunities presenting themselves in the world of the new millennium.

Globalisation: Despite the weaknesses of the existing Adventist mission scenario and the threats to Adventist mission looming from outside the Church, there are significant opportunities waiting to be utilised for mission in the new millennium. The first of these is the opportunity afforded by globalisation. Globalisation is the process of transforming the previously scattered and diverse world into an integrated global marketplace. This global opportunity parallels the first century environment when the Roman Empire provided a common language, culture and infrastructure for mission in the early Christian Church.

Today's globalisation has been assisted by the technological

developments in international transportation, communication and finance. It gives mission an opportunity of evangelising the global marketplace using the common language, finance, communication and culture. No longer is the world a collection of isolated cultures needing to be linked with creative communication bridges. Instead there is now a global marketplace already linked, providing mission with the facilities to communicate the Gospel. Strategically, only a worldwide church is best positioned to maximise globalisation for the communication of the Gospel.

Technology: Another opportunity for mission comes in the form of the technological advances and popularisation of mass communication. Whether we discuss the opportunities of video, short-wave radio, global satellite uplinks and downlinks or the internet, these recent developments provide vehicles for communicating the Gospel. The early Adventist experiments with these technologies, through Adventist World Radio (AWR) and NET '96,'98,'99 Satellite Evangelism with its internet enhancement, have demonstrated their potential. As the world rapidly continues to adopt these technologies the opportunities for mission become almost limitless.

Expanding Human Resources: Another opportunity for mission lies in the expanding human resources. As the fruit of the early cross-cultural mission matures, the opportunity of utilising everyone from everywhere is now of great strategic value. It immediately gives the Church a diverse yet qualified and experienced workforce with visa neutrality. The threat of national or cultural borders is greatly reduced when the human resources are so diverse. The diversity of human resources provides an opportunity for greater cultural affinity between the missionary and the receiving community. It also enables the former mission field to maintain its mission vison and continue to benefit from the two-way street of cross-cultural mission.[43]

Development Needs: Despite the giant leaps of globalisation, there are still significant development, relief and redevelopment needs throughout the world. These needs include education, literacy, health, AIDS prevention, drug rehabilitation, agriculture, basic economic industries, and the rebuilding of lives and worlds broken by natural or

man-made disasters. As the Church, through ADRA, adopts the incarnational strategies of Jesus, they will reach people at the level of their most important needs. This may then provide windows through which the Church can live and preach the Gospel.

Search for Meaning: While the religiously hardened Western world searches for meaning in the Eastern world, the Eastern people are also turning westward in search of meaning. This opportunity provides Christian missionaries with a ready market for presenting authentic Christianity to a waiting audience. The search for national identity, with its resulting political struggles, also affords the Church an opportunity of presenting a meaningful life that really counts.

The opportunities afforded by the 10/40 window[44] with its large group of Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists and Confucianists[45] are both challenging and exciting. As responses from the global communication programs into these areas continue to flow in, the exciting opportunities become more focussed.

STRATEGIES

As the new millennium begins, mission is still essential.[46] The words of Jesus in both the Sermon on the Mount and all forms of the Great Commission still apply. Mission is God's business. That is why Jesus came on his Father's mission to this world to seek and save the lost. The response of his faithful disciple is to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. This section will suggest strategies whereby the existing strengths of Adventist mission may be coupled with the burgeoning opportunities provided in the world around to continue Jesus' Great Commission, despite the glaring glitches that already exist and the looming threats which could overturn this mission if left entirely in human hands.

Spirituality and Prayer: The most important strategy is to continue to remember whose mission it really is. As David Syme has already discussed,[47] the motivation for mission is really a response to God's great mission to save us. The example of Jesus in his incarnational approach to his ministry needs to continue to inspire our discipleship.

A natural outgrowth of this realisation, is the need for ongoing

communication with the ultimate Director of Mission. No matter what challenges or threats any missionary may face, God already knows the situation and the answer. Personal spirituality is the only way a missionary can continue to remain focussed on the most important challenges for each day. This must be a key strategy in all mission undertakings.

Redefining Terms: Such a turning point in history also provides an opportunity to reflect upon "mission" and redefine the term and the role of the "missionary"[48] together with the scope of their influence.

Missionary: Redefining the term missionary would also include those other than the full-time professional who are solely involved in spiritual-type activities and roles in geographically remote places. Such inclusions would describe all church members whom Christ has sent out in humble and God-like service "On Mission" in his place.[49]

Missionary roles: Redefining the role would also focus on Jesus' role of empowering his disciples instead of controlling them, of working beside them rather than above them. This redefinition would display itself through consultancies, support and short-term specialist secondments.[50] It would reflect collegial interdependent collaboration[51] which resources and empowers other members.[52]

Geography: Redefining geography would include people from everywhere to everywhere.[53] Although application of this principle is growing, this redefinition is crucial to expanding the human resources available for mission. This redefinition goes beyond the limited movement from Australia and New Zealand to the South Pacific Islands,[54] and beyond various South Pacific Islanders serving in other South Pacific countries. It includes Australians, New Zealanders and South Pacific Islanders serving on mission assignments in Australia, New Zealand and around the world - Europe, Asia, the Middle East, Africa and the Americas.[55] The traditional "sending" countries may need to become the "receiving" countries as the tide of secularism and materialism is challenged by the enthusiasm of the former "mission field." Visa barriers, as demonstrated by the acceptance of Pacific Islanders in United Nations Peacekeeping organisations, may be minimised when Pacific Islanders, rather than Australians and New

Zealanders, are sent to otherwise restricted countries.

Such redefinition also needs to include the realisation that every time people leave their place of worship, they enter their mission field. This is not just the task of someone living in a faraway place or those employed by a denominational entity, but the reality for all church members wherever they live.

Varieties of Missionaries: With the redefinition of the term missionary, the new millennium will see greater dependence on all missionary categories - including the short term specialist assignments, long term contracts, and cooperative tentmakers living mission in their everyday life.[56] All members need to be challenged to fulfil their role in mission, according to the gifts and opportunities that God gives.

Entering Other People's Worlds: Like the ministry of Jesus, mission in the new millennium needs to focus on people - both those receiving and those giving. For ministry to occur on the deep level, the culture and language of the people to whom the missionary is going need to be understood.[57] The incarnational example of Jesus demonstrates the importance of entering another person's world.[58] This will require a new level of training and experience, especially for those going cross-culturally to geographically-isolated regions for short-term assignments. Some would suggest that the shorter the assignment the more important the training needs to be. This training could take the form of a pre-service orientation, followed by an initial field apprenticeship to a supervisor who is culturally astute.

Missionary Care & Support: With the added complexities of mission, the needs of missionaries who are going and giving, especially those living cross-culturally in geographically-isolated regions, also need to be considered. Care for missionaries needs to model the care that the missionaries are expected to give to those to whom they have gone to serve. Such support must be ongoing. Stress will accumulate. However, support cannot be accumulated. It is needed at the time of crisis.[59]

Refocusing on Mission: With the strategy of redefining mission, there also comes the need to refocus a somewhat self-centred Church on a world of needy and sinful people being lost without a Saviour. Somehow the Church needs to rediscover this experience itself.

Whatever the process of rediscovery, a renewed vision of mission is a strategic key to mission in the new millennium. This discovery could take the form of short-term mission trips which build on a sense of adventure and challenge but often include several serendipitous realisations, some of which often shift the focus away from the seemingly big issues in one's own Church to the greater needs of other people. Individuals are often more open to learning when placed out of their familiar comfort zones.

Another process for the rediscovery of mission may be the development of personal connections between missionaries and specific congregations. Such personal connections can assist other church members to become involved in the missionary's world, enabling them to experience the missionary's insights and commitment. Congregations could also be connected to people who have had first-hand experience in the territories being assisted through mission offerings. These individuals could be contacted for interviews, stories and pictures. Such personal association would increase the awareness and impact of mission in the local congregations.

Promotion of mission also needs to keep abreast of changes in the media. This could include emails, websites, internet video and graphic resources, and mobile telephone interviews. Such options could communicate current information quickly yet professionally for the technologically changing Church and society.

The production of mission literature must continue to communicate both the challenges and successes of mission. These books ought to feature missionaries from everywhere serving everywhere. It appears that as the face of mission has changed, so has the interest in sharing the exciting stories which happen to people disconnected from the "homeland." Such literature could continue to provide inspiration and motivation for people with faith, to step out and respond to God's call to service.

Contextual Globalisation: Missionaries will need to find the delicate balance between globalisation and contextualisation. Although the world, through technological advances, is functionally smaller, missionaries must avail themselves of the advantages of globalisation

while also integrating sensitively such a global smorgasboard into the local context. The "when" and "how" of this process will continue to change, especially in the short term. However, the essence of Christianity and Adventism will continue to be translated into contexts in which people will not only see and hear but also respond appropriately to the good news of God's kingdom..

New Technology: The application of technology for mission will need to continue to develop, so that opportunities can be created which will break down the traditional barriers of some national borders. Currently, short wave radio, satellite TV and the internet demonstrate the ability of new technology to penetrate previously isolated people groups, especially in the 10/40 window.[60] The successes of these media suggest that it is imperative to maintain the technological advantage for communicating the Gospel.

Discipleship Focus: Mission in the new millennium will need to complement the excitement of evangelism with the ongoing responsibility of Christian discipleship and personal spirituality. The core of Christianity and Adventism needs to be integrated into the local context. We need to remember who we are in Jesus Christ.[61] The Gospel needs to be lived in our lives as a window for others to see God.[62]

Target Groups: Intentional strategies need to continue to be developed and implemented to reach specifically targeted people groups. Resources have been strategically used to reach Muslims and Buddhists. Global mission has also targeted some unreached people groups. However, little has been done to reach other significant groups.

One such group is the overseas university student. These students already have a high receptivity factor as they are visitors to a strange environment. If such students respond to the gospel, they may provide a ready-made contextualised link with their own people groups on their return home. This process would be an effective and efficient use of resources, allowing many church members an area of mission.

Another significant target group could be the expatriate living cross-culturally. Just as the homogeneous principle has provided the rationale for ethnic churches in the developed world, this same principle would create the need to have expatriates target other expatriates. This

would provide not only an ongoing need for missionaries from the traditional "homeland," but also reach a previously unreached people group.

Development and Relief: As the one-third world continues to change, there will be the need for ongoing development in the two-thirds world. The nature of development will change, but the demand will continue. At the turn of the millennium, there are still many people who face major health risks because they lack good water and proper sanitation.[63] Other basic health needs are also great in the poorer rural areas of these same countries. Yet even the more affluent places also provide opportunities for people to improve their health and lifestyle. Basic education, literacy and numeracy, are also real needs in the two-thirds world. Although significant advances have already been made in recent times, the ability of people to learn new information through their own reading is still limited in many places. Economic issues also provide an opportunity for development agencies. For many subsistence people, the only hope of a secure economic future relies on the sale of their children. Consequently, these people are very receptive to whatever assistance they may get. Such assistance may take the form of improved agricultural methods, cottage-based industries or exposure to simple technology.[64]

Relief issues, on the other hand, appear to have grown exponentially. Numerous calamities continue to affect many different parts of the world. Whether these calamities are natural disasters or man-made predicaments, the opportunity to provide short-term relief and possibly later long-term development, is increasing rapidly. We must continue to strategically position ourselves to be credible in such circumstances with both the authorities and the people. In assisting people in crisis we also provide opportunities for members to be involved in the mission of Jesus Christ who "mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed his sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then he bade them, "Follow me."[65] This may require continued association and possible collaboration with other non-government organisations.[66]

AVONDALE'S GREATER VISION

Avondale has a long tradition of training Christian workers for mission service. Despite the many changes that have taken place in Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific during the last century, Avondale still has an ongoing involvement in mission.

Recent Contributions

In the last decade, a number of significant developments have brought a renewed focus on mission.

- Avondale introduced the subject *Cross-Cultural Ministry* as a compulsory subject in the BA (Theology) program.
- Avondale has further developed its emphasis on church-centred evangelism, discipleship and personal spirituality in the BA (Theology) program.
- Avondale, initially through the student organisation *Cosmos* and now in conjunction with the *International Development Studies* program, has sponsored an annual mission trip for students to experience and serve in a developing country.
- In conjunction with these trips, Avondale has presented an annual Chapel program, *Window on the World*, featuring Avondale students in volunteer service.
- Avondale, in conjunction with the newly-established *Office of Volunteers*, has been active in recruiting students to fill short-term volunteer mission positions.
- During Avondale's Centenary year, the *A H Piper Memorial Lecture Series* was also instituted. This scholarly conference, convened biennially, is designed to focus attention on Avondale's ongoing connection and commitment to mission.
- Finally, in 1999, Avondale introduced a new *International Development Studies* major into the Bachelor of Arts program.

Current Issues

However, after the changes made at the 1990 South Pacific Division Session,[67] fewer expatriates have been called to the Island field. This has reduced the impact Avondale traditionally had throughout the

Pacific as fewer of Avondale's minister/teacher/ nursing/business graduates are given an opportunity to serve as missionaries. Avondale has been slow to respond to these changes. Only now is Avondale starting to demonstrate the beginnings of a new strategy to continue its vital link with cross-cultural mission.

Avondale also faces the issue of its status and perception as a university. There are two aspects to this issue. On the one hand, while university status remains uncertain, Avondale faces a probable decline in attractiveness to certain students. However, on the other hand, the price required to achieve university status may also threaten or undermine Avondale's traditional connection with mission. Irrespective of the political issues surrounding its university status, Avondale will need to consciously address any threats to its mission that this change in status may create.

Niche Opportunities

The changing world affords Avondale a number of significant opportunities. As an educational institution in a Pacific rim country close to the largely non-Christian Asia, Avondale is placed where it can offer quality education at both undergraduate and graduate levels to people who long for educational opportunities in an English-speaking environment. With the growing globalisation of the world, education in English has never before been in such great demand. Tertiary institutions, especially those like Avondale with faculty representing both a multicultural background and cross-cultural experience, and a student body with a higher than average group of "Third Culture Kids"[68] are ideally suited to maximise this growth opportunity.

Future Strategies

With such a long tradition as a training institution for Christian workers, Avondale is ideally suited to play a key role in mission for the new millennium. Strategies need to be formulated on the personal level, the curriculum level and the corporate target market level. Such strategies could include:

- providing opportunities whereby both students and faculty will be confronted with the challenges and excitement of mission and be willing to commit their time, talents and treasure to this divine mission, locally and in geographically diverse places;
- developing curricula to include specialties in *Missiology*, *Cross-Cultural Ministry*, *World Religions*, *Discipleship* and *Personal Spirituality* which would be available to a wide range of students preparing them to reach those who are near and those who are geographically remote;
- targeting the Asian/Pacific rim educational market. This could be in the form of *English as a Second Language* programs in an English-speaking environment, *International Student* programs, *Distance Education* programs, *Extension Campuses*, and *Exchange Lecturer* arrangements.

However, all these strategies would be dependent on Avondale continuing to cultivate its integration of faith and learning tradition, to target the students evangelistically and be attractive to non-Adventists.

CONCLUSION

Society and the church have changed much in the last hundred years since A H Piper left Avondale and went to serve in the South Pacific as Avondale's first graduate missionary. But some things haven't changed. The Church still exists by mission as fire exists by burning. Jesus still bids us "Go!" Avondale is still a place where Christian workers are educated for mission. Many still continue to follow in A H Piper's footsteps. The Church still supports missionaries through prayer and offerings. God still promises his power and the presence of his Spirit to open the doors and ensure that his mission will be successful. The final question is whether you and I will play our part in God's mission for the new millennium.

NOTES:

[1]For further discussion of the early Adventist position regarding mission see "The 'Shut-Door' Theory" in Richard Schwarz, *Light Bearers to the Remnant* (Mountain View CA: Pacific Press, 1979), 55.

[2]For further discussion of the Adventist concept of the United States with its migrant population representing the world, see "Home-Foreign Endeavour" in Schwarz, 141-2.

[3]Adventists today are growing worldwide at 5-6% per year ... The growth of Adventists exceeds the rate of world population growth ... Adventists are the largest Protestant group in Belize, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, French Guiana, Guam, Haiti, Jamaica, Matinique, Peru, the Philippines and Venezula. See Jon Dybdahl "Adventist Mission Today - Taking the Pulse" in Jon Dybdahl ed. *Adventist Mission in the 21st Century* (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald Publishing Association, 1999), 18.

[4]Reinder Bruinsma, "Adventist Mission in a New Millennium" *Ministry* February 2000, 12.

[5]Cecily Hay, Panel member, A H Piper Conference, May 15 1999.

[6]Russell L. Staples, "Historical Reflections on Adventist Mission" in Dybdahl, *Adventist Mission in the 21st Century,* 27.

[7]Calvyn Townend, Panel member, A H Piper Conference, May 15 1999.

[8]Paul Buschenhofen, Panel member, A H Piper Conference, May 15 1999.

[9]Eric White, Panel member, A H Piper Conference, May 15, 1999.

[10]Staples, 31.

[11]Pauliasi Bunoa, the first Fijian to be ordained as an Adventist Minister had previously been a Methodist missionary in Rabaul. This practice was not new to Adventism. See Andrew G Stewart, *Trophies from the Cannibal Isles* (Washington DC: Review & Herald Publishing Association), 1956, 56. See also John Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars* Geneva & Suva: WCC & Institute of Pacific Studies, 1982, 18, 26, 28, 30, 102, 118, 122, 136-7, 167, 206.

[12]See Allen Sonter's chapter "The Seventh-day Adventist Church's Contribution to South Pacific Development."

[13]Eric White.

[14]Bruinsma, 13.

[15]Townend. See also Graeme Humble's chapter "The Cost of Mission."

[16]Buschenhofen

[17]Jon Dybdahl, *Missions: A Two-Way Street* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1986), 96.

[18]Cecily Hay.

[19]Bruce Roberts, Panel member, A H Piper Conference, May 15, 1999. See also Dean Hoge et al. *Money Matters: Personal Giving in American Churches* (Louisville, KN: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 15.

[20]Bruce Roberts advised that the number of expatriate missionaries in the South Pacific Division has declined in 1999 to just 71 families. See also Dybdahl, "Adventist Mission Today" in Dybdahl, ed., *Adventist Mission in the 21st Century,* 20.

[21]For a popular spoof of these attitudes, listen to Scott Wesley Brown "Please Don't Send Me to Africa," *To the Ends of the Earth* (Dallas, TX: Word Records, 1988).

[22]Rosalie Rickards, Panel member, A H Piper Conference, May 15, 1999.

[23]Erika Puni, *Towards a Contextualised Organisational Structure for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Samoa.* Unpublished PhD dissertation. (Pasadena CA: Fuller Theological Seminary, 1993).

[24]Reports of church growth statistics in Papua New Guinea (1994) highlight issues of "backslider" status, passive nominal membership, and plateauing growth of urban churches just twelve years young. This lack of growth was compounded and somewhat camouflaged by many itinerant visitors from surrounding rural areas. For further details see Steve Currow, *The Ministry Challenge for the 21st Century.* Unpublished discussion paper for the Ministerial Training Advisory Committee - Union Missions. (Port Moresby, PNG: March 1996), 17.

[25]Staples, 30.

[26]See Usaia Baravilala's chapter "Future Roles for Australian and New Zealand Missionaries in the South Pacific" and Bruinsma, 12-3.

[27]Jeanette Kingston, Panel member, A H Piper Conference, May 15, 1999.

[28]Staples, 33.

[29]See Appendix B.

[30]Kingston.

[31]John Fulton, *The Review and Herald,* October 19 1897 as quoted in Andrew G Stewart, *Trophies from the Cannibal Isles* (Washington DC: Review & Herald, 1956), 87.

[32]Conversation, July 1994, with Peter Gwyne, ADRA Director, Papua New Guinea, who quoted Carol Jenkins' discussion with him at the publication of

the report, *National Study of Sexual and Reproductive Knowledge and Behaviour in Papua New Guinea* (Goroka, PNG: Papua New Guinea Institute of Medical Research, 1994).

[33]Kingston.

[34]The use of English hymns and the prominence of the King James Bible in rural PNG, amongst people with a very low functional literacy in either English or Pidgin, demonstrate this principle.

[35]Cecily Hay.

[36]Oosterwal, "Report of Visit to Papua New Guinea" (Lae, PNG: An unpublished consultant paper for the South Pacific Division, 1988).

[37]Cecily Hay.

[38]In recent years Seventh-day Adventist missionaries and their families have suffered pack rapes and murder in the territory of the South Pacific Division.

[39]Patrick Johnstone, *Operation World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1993).

[40]Rickards.

[41]Ibid.

[42]Buschenhofen.

[43]See the General Conference Policy C65 10 "From Everywhere to Everywhere" in *GC Working Policy 1998-1999* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference Association, 1998, 105.

[44]Eric White.

[45]Rickards.

[46]Kingston.

[47]See David Syme's chapter "Let the Fires Burn."

[48]Eric White.

[49]See Syme.

[50]Townend.

[51]Jaki Derrick, Panel member, A H Piper Memorial Conference, May 15 1999.

[52]Rickards.

[53]Townend.

[54]Eric White.

[55]Roberts.

[56]Eric White.

[57]Kingston.

[58]Derrick.

[59]Dennis Guernsey, *MF720 Marriage & Family Systems* (Pasadena CA: DMin Course, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1995).

[60]Eric White.

[61]Roberts.

[62]Derrick.

[63]Rickards.

[64]Eric White.

[65]Ellen White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1942), 143.

[66]Derrick.

[67]See Baravi.

[68]The 1999 student body had 18% of students who were Third Culture Kids, with 45% of these students being missionaries or missionary kids. Avondale also has 26% of its Faculty who are Third Culture Adults, having lived and worked overseas, many as missionaries.