

July-August 2014

BA
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2014: Worship

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Correction: On page 21 of the May-June BA, Manasseh Mark Bombeo should have been credited with writing “The Church” — not Bobby Bombeo, his uncle. We regret this error.

Scripture quotations

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Cover photo: Sierra Leone, West Africa, CoG7 leaders/ members. Photo credit to Bryan Cleeton for this and several other photos in this issue.



A publication of the

Church of God (Seventh Day)

This magazine is published to advocate the Bible, represent the Church, and glorify the God of grace and truth.

Volume 148 • Number 4

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The BIBLE ADVOCATE (ISSN 0746-0104) is published bimonthly by Bible Advocate Press, 330 W. 152nd Ave., Broomfield, CO 80023. Periodicals postage is paid at Broomfield, CO, and at additional offices. Subscription is free to any who ask. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Bible Advocate Press, Box 33677, Denver, CO 80233-0677.

Bible Advocate Press

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Subscriptions and Orders

Bible Advocate Press
P.O. Box 33677
Denver, CO 80233-0677
phone: 303/452-7973
fax: 303/452-0657
e-mail: bibleadvocate@cog7.org
orders: bap.orders@cog7.org

Notice: Send all address changes and other correspondence to the address above.

Publications Agreement No. 40042428

The Bible Advocate Online appears at www.BAonline.org.

Scripture's Second Highest

For my wife and me, our passion for missions got a needed push from an unexpected source. Our daughter and her husband-pastor told us of a Perspectives course they found in Oregon.

Perspectives on what? On the World Christian Movement, it turned out. Our “kids” were energized by it, so we located the same course in Denver and enrolled – with another daughter and her husband. Three hours a week for fifteen weeks, we learned God’s intent to raise up disciples in, and bring blessing to, all the nations. It was led and taught by real missionaries – fifteen people who’ve been there and done church-planting among the earth’s least-reached people groups.

Results for me? A new vision for what God is up to in the world, a new joy over what He’s already done to bless the nations, and a new desire to be busy in the missions work yet to be done before Jesus returns.

Every Christian has a role to play in the Great Commission to go and preach, but those roles for many of us are unclear. Is “pray and pay” the best model for most non-evangelists like you and me?

The Perspectives class opened up new vistas, helping me see a missionary God in Scripture long before Jesus’ great commission in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. His plan to bless all nations begins in Genesis (12:3b) and runs through every section of Scripture until its fulfillment in Revelation (7:9).

The class gave me the perspective that God has worked steadily in history to do what He told Abraham He would do: bless all families/peoples/nations of the earth through his seed: Christ.

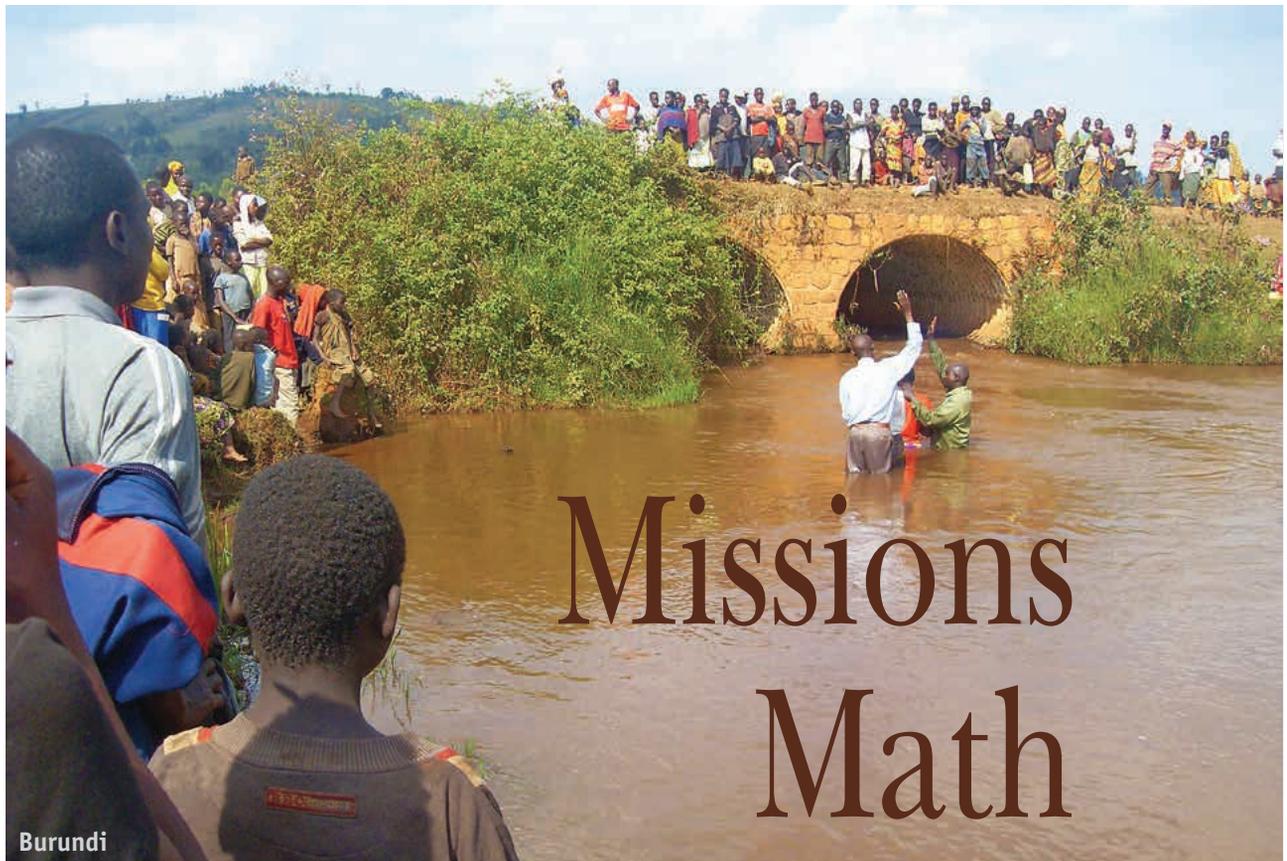
It gave me the perspective that a lot more is going on in the world now, both good and bad, than most of us know much about. And so it shall be until the gospel of the kingdom has been preached and indigenous, self-supporting, self-reproducing groups of believers have been planted to bless all peoples/families of the earth and Christ comes again.

It gave me many perspectives that improve and expand on the “pray and pay” bromide of an earlier generation.

My hope, my prayer, is that dozens or hundreds – no, thousands – of Church members and friends will find a Perspectives class in their area and take it! Meanwhile, read this BA to get you thinking more about the Bible’s second highest theme – second only to worship.

– Calvin Burrell





Learn about gospel outreach from a third-world evangelist who's doing it.
by **Abrahams Wanda Odongo**

When the church was born at Pentecost, the disciples — often timid and fearful — were suddenly empowered and emboldened by the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8). Peter, who would not accept public association with Messiah (Luke 22:55-61), immediately stood before a huge crowd, courageously witnessing to the same Christ he had denied thrice about fifty days before! When the disciples waited for the Holy Spirit, opened their hearts to be filled, and understood it was the Spirit of God that formed them, they were given clarity of mission and purpose.

Then the church's growth chart steepened from addition to multiplication. Adding twelve to twelve doesn't give the same result as multiplying twelve by twelve!

God has always used people to reach others. The angel appeared to Cornelius, but the angel never preached to him; Peter did (Acts 10). Ananias was sent to Saul so his eyes could be opened (9:17, 18). If the membership leaves the work of evangelism to only pastors and evangelists, then the church grows by addition. When everybody gets busy in the work of missions, it grows by multiplica-

tion, as it did in the book of Acts (6:7; 12:24).

To be effective in evangelism and outreach, the church must "do the math" in several areas.

Allow the Holy Spirit to do His work. The Spirit is not just another good feeling of godliness. It is power, and power breaks all natural obstacles and removes all barriers. The Holy Spirit will convict people of sin (Acts 2:37), righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8-10). We may have good, true, and well-researched doctrines, but only the Holy Spirit will help them make sense to non-believers. We

may have the best theological trainings and eloquence in oral presentation, but without the Holy Spirit's anointing, all these can't add up to anything.

Be aggressive in evangelism.

Today there are many tools for evangelism, like mass media, print media, and social media. Let the church lay strategic plans for evangelism, and let the church resolve which evangelism tool is best suited for each place. Among the reading community in first-world countries, print and electronic media can be effective. But among third-world countries where reading isn't common, outdoor crusades, mass media, radio, and television programs should be conducted. The investment is worth it.

Make Christ and Calvary our core message. Let us preach the good news of the kingdom and not the good news of our denomination. Public contests and arguments as to right teachings must be avoided during the evangelism stage. That doesn't mean we compromise sound doctrine. There is much we are yet to tell people about Christ; we can't afford to lose more time talking about ourselves! Effective evangelism calls for passion, pure love extended to the lost, grace, and understanding as we patiently wait for new believers to mature.

The gospel should be simplified so unbelievers can understand how God created man and how humanity sinned against God's initial plan and fell under His fair judgment. But God made an escape route for those who believe through His only begotten son Jesus Christ, who

was born, lived, died, arose, and ascended to the right hand of God. He is receiving a kingdom and will return to judge the world, reward those who believe in Him, and punish those who refuse Him.

Big theological terminologies can't work at this stage. We should not preach doom and condemnation on those who have not believed. We have to be patient and gracious.

Be a discipleship church. Let us teach those who have believed the sound doctrine. Using a common growth and discipleship manual or curricula, let us train and equip new believers for evangelistic ministry so that the church will grow by multiplication.

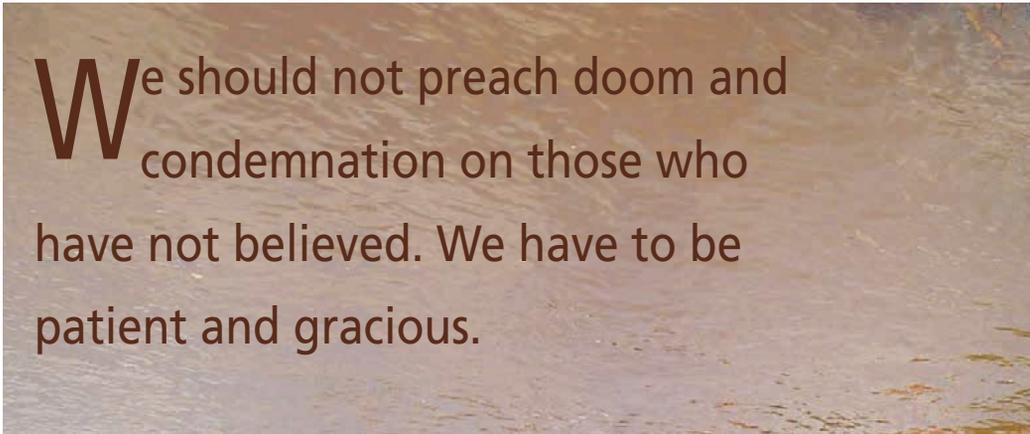
Grasp opportunities such as ministries in prisons, to children, to those on the street and in homes, in hospitals, and counseling to friends of the terminally ill. When a man's heart senses trouble, he sees the greatest need for a caring, loving, and compassionate Savior: Christ Jesus. Compassion evangelism is the most effective and biblical way to reach out to others for Christ.

Be a missionary-sending church (Isaiah 6:8; Romans 10:10-17). If we do this, God will confirm His Word through His church, and the church will multiply.

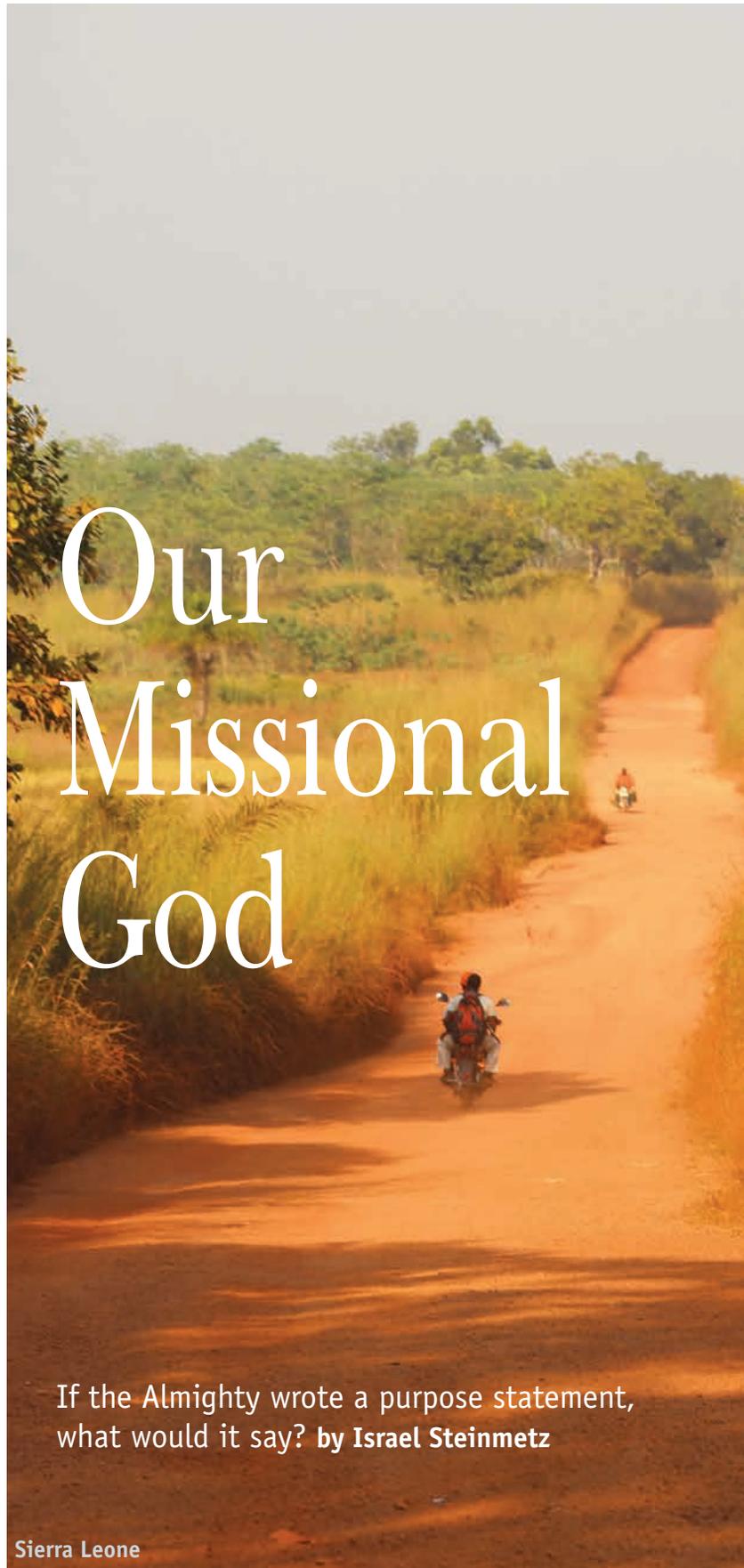
Core business

For the church to grow by multiplication, we must appreciate the fact that evangelism is the core business of the church now as ever. If we don't tune our vision to evangelism, then we are not only a dying church but also an irrelevant church, for "This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come" (Matthew 24:14). We have no other option for growth except to obey the command of our Lord to "go"! **BA**

Pastor Abrahams Wanda Odongo is National Conference president in Kenya and district overseer to eighteen local congregations. He and his wife, Asenath, have five daughters and other orphans staying with them.



We should not preach doom and condemnation on those who have not believed. We have to be patient and gracious.



If the Almighty wrote a purpose statement, what would it say? by Israel Steinmetz

Sierra Leone

If you've been paying attention, you know that *missional* is one of the recent buzzwords in Christianity. Not *mission statements* or *world missions* but *missional*. Underlying this strange word and its present fascination is the notion that God is on a mission and has co-missioned His followers to join Him in completing it.

Does such a thing exist? If so, what is God's mission, how is God accomplishing it, and what is our part in it?

In the beginning

To understand the mission of God, we have to go back to the beginning. In Genesis 1-2 God designed a very good creation, with humankind at its pinnacle. Created in God's image, humans were made to relate in loving ways to God, to one another, and to all creation. Such relationships please God greatly, but humans chose to break them. Genesis 3 presents the invasion of sin as Adam and Eve disobeyed God and became aware of not only all the good God created but also evil's entry.

The invasion of sin had devastating effects. Our human link with God was damaged beyond our ability to repair it. The image of God was marred, twisted like the distortion of a "funny mirror." God became almost impossible to recognize within people. Sin corrupted human relationships too, as Adam and Eve were filled with shame and began blaming others for their guilt. Within a generation one of their sons murdered the other.

Before long the whole world filled with every form of evil. The curse of sin even damaged

the nexus between humans and creation. The earth, once fertile and beautiful, began to resist the work of the farmer. Humans began abusing the very thing God asked them to steward. Paul tells us that all of creation is groaning in pain, like a woman in childbirth (Romans 8:22).

By the end of Genesis 3 we reach a crisis point in the biblical narrative. With His creation in shambles, what will God do? Will evil have the final word? Will humankind be forever condemned to sin, brokenness, and death?

Those who've read "the rest of the story" know the answers. We know God refused to abandon His creation to evil. We know He made the greatest personal effort to redeem and re-create it. And while we haven't experienced this preferred end yet, we've been given an advance screening. Spoiler alert: God won't quit until evil has been eradicated and His creation has totally overcome sin and death to experience abundant and eternal life with Him. In other words, God is on a mission.

Redemption and re-creation

God's mission is expressed in two loaded terms: *redemption* and *re-creation*. By *redemption* we mean recovering or buying back what was lost. Scripture often uses this concept, succinctly stated in Colossians 1:13, 14: "For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." Through the death of Jesus Christ, God has redeemed His creation from the curse of sin and death. He has forgiven our

sin and made us citizens of His eternal kingdom.

But that's not all. Jesus rose from the dead in an eternal, glorified body. This signaled the beginning of a new age, new humanity, new creation. God is re-creating, not by destroying everything that exists and starting over but by overcoming sin and death with righteousness and life. We read of this incredible process in places like Romans 8:18-25 and 2 Corinthians 5:14-21. Ultimately, we see the end result of this new creation in Revelation 21-22. It's not an old Eden that John envisions here but the re-creation of a new paradise, a city in which sin and death have been destroyed, where we live forever in peace and the unmediated presence of God.

Looking at this redemptive and re-creating work of God, we see that God is restoring all that was lost to sin. Human relationship with God has been restored by the *grace*-full sacrifice of God's love and the *faith*-full response of human love. The image of God in man, marred by sin, is being restored in those who are being transformed by Him into Christ's image. Inter-human relationships are being

restored as we learn to love others as truly as Christ loved us. And the human-creation link is being restored as we reclaim our identity as stewards of God's domain.

Accomplishing the mission

How is God accomplishing His mission?

Initially we see persons walking with Him — men like Enoch and Noah. We see God rescue Noah and his family and attempt a re-creation of sorts after the Flood. Sadly, within a single generation, the creation reverted to the devastation of its pre-Flood form.

Soon after, though, the story takes an incredible turn. God makes a covenant with a man named Abram, a covenant designed to accomplish His mission to the whole world. As Abram responds in faith, God promises that He will bless every family of the earth through Abram's offspring (Genesis 12:1-4). God's mission to redeem and re-create was initiated! He chose one nation to represent Him in the earth. By blessing Israel, God would bring glory and honor to Himself (Deuteronomy 26:18, 19), drawing the nations to Him-

In Jesus, God accomplished His mission of offering redemption and re-creation to the whole world.

self. The children of Israel were chosen to be a nation of priests (Exodus 19:6) — a light to the nations. Consider Psalm 67:

God be gracious to us and bless us,
And cause His face to shine upon us— Selah.

That Your way may be known on the earth,

Your salvation among all nations.

Let the peoples praise You, O God;

Let all the peoples praise You.

Let the nations be glad and sing for joy;

For You will judge the peoples with uprightness

And guide the nations on the earth. Selah.

Let the peoples praise You, O God;

Let all the peoples praise You.

The earth has yielded its produce;

God, our God, blesses us.

God blesses us,

That all the ends of the earth may fear Him.

Consider also Isaiah 49, a prophecy of Christ. In verse 6 God says:

“It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob

and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make You a light of the nations so that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”

God kept His promise to bless all nations through Abraham’s descendants in Jesus Christ. Jesus was a descendant of Abraham, the promised Seed (Galatians 3). In Him God accomplished His mission of offering redemption and re-creation to the whole world. This began with Jesus coming as Messiah to the chosen people of Israel. But it didn’t stop there. Before ascending to heaven, Jesus commissioned His Jewish disciples to take the gospel to all peoples (Matthew 28:19, 20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46, 47; Acts 1:6-8).

Ambassadors

What is our part in God’s mission?

We follow Christ today because His first followers and those who came after faithfully joined God in His mission by obeying the Great Commission. We are called to do the same as Christ continues to accomplish the mission of God through His Holy Spirit at work in the church. We are called to co-mission with God by sharing the gospel

with people in every nation and making disciples of those who respond in faith.

In 2 Corinthians 5:14-21 Paul describes us as “ambassadors for Christ.” Compelled by Christ’s love, we are called to offer His love to those who have not yet experienced it. Paul tells us that God has already reconciled Himself to the world in Christ. All that remains now is for the world to be reconciled to God. God has removed the barriers and the condemnation. The curse of sin and death has been overcome in Christ! All those redeemed in Christ are part of the new creation. God’s mission is in its final stage as we look forward to Christ’s return and the climax of redemption and re-creation, pictured beautifully in Revelation 21-22.

In the interim, we are on mission with God. We are to be busy preaching the good news of salvation and teaching those who accept it to obey Christ’s commands. In short, we are called to invest ourselves fully in evangelism and discipleship. Any other mission is not worthy of the Christian life or of the church’s resources.

God is on a mission. Let us commit ourselves to co-missioning with Him until it is completed! **BA**

We are called to co-mission with God by sharing the gospel with people in every nation and making disciples of those who respond in faith.

Israel Steinmetz serves as dean of Academic Affairs for LifeSpring School of Theology. Scripture quotations are taken from the *New American Standard Bible*.



Questions & Answers



Those who never heard of Jesus or His gospel will suffer eternal torment, won't they? What better reason for doing missions than to help folks escape hell!

Many or most Christians past have thought conscious suffering of the damned in eternal hell to not only be Bible truth but also the most compelling reason for sharing faith. These convictions were based on texts in the Gospels (like Matt. 13:41, 42; 25:41, 46; Mark 9:42-48) and Revelation (14:9-11; 19:20; 20:10) and on medieval writings like Dante's *Inferno*.

Nowadays more Bible scholars and disciples of the Lord doubt such thinking, or reject it outright. Still considered "orthodox" by many, the doctrine of everlasting hell for unbelievers faces increasing opposition in Bible classrooms and is met with growing silence from church pulpits.

Both better exegesis and consistent logic contribute to this departure from historic dogma. Blatant discord is easily recognized between the amazing grace and love of God and the god who decrees that most people who ever lived will be justly, agonizingly tortured without end for the sole "sin" of dying without the Christ they never knew nor had a chance to know.

Closer study of texts used to defend the teaching of eternal torment does not require us to adopt the murky meanings they have often been assigned. To grasp Mark 9:42-48, research the Greek word *Gehenna*. Often translated "hell," it refers to Jerusalem's ever-burning city dump, destroying and consuming all that entered there. Concerning Matthew 25:41, 46, the *result* of God's wrath lasts forever, says Jesus, not the *experience* of it.

Building theology of final punishment on Revelation's metaphorical statements is unsound

use of Scripture. John's Apocalypse tells us less about the suffering of humans in hell than about the metaphysical destiny of the Devil, beast, and false prophet.

What is God's plan for people who refuse every offer of His grace? The many texts on final judgment dovetail nicely to teach that His intent for those who remain unrepentant to the end is not eternal life in hellfire but destruction and cessation of life instead: They shall perish and become as if they had never been (Ezek. 18:4; Isa. 38:1; Obadiah 16; John 3:16; Rom. 6:23). Men may claim immortal souls, but Christ says God can destroy both soul and body in hell (Matt. 10:28)!

And what is His plan for those who never heard of Jesus or the gospel of God's grace? We can't speak with assurance on this question because the Bible doesn't, but we can trust, with Abraham, that the Judge of all the earth will do right (Gen. 18:25b). The whole tenor of Scripture shouts "no eternal torment."

Those who've not yet embraced God's grace and truth in Christ should do so because He is the authentic way of rescue from bondage to Satan, self, and sin — the true way to the freedoms of love, joy, peace, and justice under God's reign. We follow Jesus not because He threatens us with living hell if we don't, but because His incomparable person and work assure us of heaven's best for time and eternity. Other paths lead to dead ends.

The best reason to go into all nations with the gospel is not to save people from the flames forever but so they too can share in Christ's blessing for all families of the earth. Scripture tells us to do that — reason enough.

— Elder Calvin Burrell

Ecuador



A collage on mobilizing for missions

‘Here Am I!’

Jesus asks His disciples to pray an interesting prayer. Matthew sets the scene:

When He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest” (9:35-38).

Why do I find this interesting? Well, if Jesus is Lord of the harvest with compassion for the lost, scattered sheep (as this passage says), why does He ask His disciples to pray that He send laborers into the fields? Why doesn’t He just send them out?

Perhaps it’s because the Lord of the harvest sends out only willing laborers. Disciples must take up their cross daily and follow Jesus, or they can’t be disciples. Therefore we must pray for more willing laborers the Lord will send.

There’s no question that God and His representatives on earth send out willing laborers. Just read, for example, Luke 9:1-6 and 10:1, where Jesus sends the twelve disciples to the lost sheep of Israel and then sends the seventy with similar instructions. This practice of sending disciples on mission didn’t end with Jesus’ earthly ministry but is illustrated often in Acts, when the early church *sent* Peter and John to Samaria (Acts 8:14), *sent* Barnabas to Antioch (11:22), and *sent* Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey (13:3).

Judas and Silas were *sent* to Antioch to bring word of the Jerusalem Council’s ruling (15:22). Timothy was *sent* to Corinth to remind that church of right behavior in Christ (1 Corinthians 4:17). All these disciples, and more, were sent on the Lord’s work or commanded to do something for it.

In the church today I hear of men breaking their necks to pastor several churches because of a sad lack of sending. Their families are neglected. What’s wrong, I wonder, with adopting the same “sending” approach used by the early church? What’s wrong with elders saying to a fellow Christian, “We believe God is with you and you’d make a good leader. We want to appoint you elder in a newly-established church. Are you willing?”

The “Here am I! Send me”

mentality is one of commitment and sacrifice. No one in the New Testament complained about it being too heavy-handed, because only the willing were sent.

Early church leaders could count on men and women to cooperate in the work the Holy Spirit directed them to do. Can the church count on you if your leaders sense the Spirit leading them? If the church has a mission or a task to be done, can it count on you to respond, "Here am I! Send me"? Isaiah, of course, was the prophet famous for uttering those words (6:1-8).

A pastor of an underground Chinese church told of precautions taken to avoid persecution. Each time the church reached ten to fifteen members, they divided the group and met at different places to reduce attention. Phones were monitored, so members would meet a volunteer downtown to learn where the next meeting was.

One volunteer was caught by the government, beaten, and thrown in jail. He lost his job, house, and medical benefits. Another man volunteered to take his place. He too got caught and suffered the same losses. Do you suppose the underground church struggled to fill this volunteer position? No. The Chinese pastor testified that they had a waiting list!*

If you are a "Here am I! Send me" Christian, you won't need to put your name on a list. The pastor will know. If you're sitting idle without direction from the Lord, you'll pester the pastor until you're sent to work or given direction in using your spiritual gifts. Accordingly, you'll have no objection to being sent because your desire for the Lord's glory,

your love for the lost and for the church are strong and unwavering.

May each of us obey Christ's call to pray for more laborers. And when we're called to "go," let's say, "Send me!"

— David Kidd
Adelaide, South Australia

*Adapted from *McHenry's Stories for the Soul*, p. 49

Shine Commission

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gave individual believers our responsibility: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). When a group of us gathers in worship and fellowship, the commission to shine transfers to the whole body. Then the collective light beams brightly in the community.

The *shine commission* means being ready to share Christ at every opportunity, especially when we are with hurting, vulnerable people. By pointing them to our Savior and Lord, we'll not miss these shine moments. The simple

act of inviting people to services, fellowship meals, outings, and recreational or other special events is an effective way for the church to shine.

The light that shines from one or all of us is merely reflected; Jesus is the "true light." Only by connecting to Him — being filled with the Spirit, united in love for God and others, and undergirded with prayer — can we light up the world around us. With these fundamentals in place, the church will be ready to shine. People will want what we have. Unsaved people will see our faith and joy in the Lord — the true Light shining — and glorify our Father in heaven.

— Dale Lawson
Turner, OR

Generous Giving

Imagine yourself near Jesus in the temple, sitting across from the treasury. Together you watch people line up to drop their offerings into the moneybox. With your own eyes you see the rich depositing large amounts, and you notice a poor widow plac-



ing two small coins into the same box. Then you hear Jesus say, “This poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury” (Mark 12:43).

Now you wonder: How could the widow’s two mites (less than a cent) be more than all the large offerings given by the wealthy that day? Jesus valued hers differently than the others’. Was it because the rich gave for proud display or in legal obligation, while the widow gave humbly from a heart of faith and love? Jesus saw her generosity, her sacrifice, and declared it praiseworthy. “For Jesus, the value of a gift is not the amount given, but the cost to the giver” (J. R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark, Pillar New Testament Commentary*, p. 381).

One of the meanings of *generous* is “showing a readiness to give more of something, as money or time, than is strictly necessary or expected” (Google dictionary). How often is the marvelous generosity of Jesus seen in Scripture! When He encountered people’s needs, they received more than they’d hoped for. His ultimate generosity was in giving His life for us.

Are we prepared to give time, talent, and treasure for global

gospel ministry and to support the needy nearby? Will we sacrifice some of our pleasures and comforts and even our personal security to further Christ’s work of blessing all nations?

When we sense a shortage in our spirit of generosity, let the Holy Spirit remind us of the widow’s mites.

— Phil Kordahi
Tanunda, South Australia

Agricultural Missions

Can the gospel be heard over the sounds of an empty stomach? Shall we feed the soul and close our compassion against hungry humans? God forbid. Jesus preached the Word but did not send the multitude away until He had met their physical needs. (On the other hand, we must not feed the flesh and starve the soul.)

For anyone wanting to practice pure religion (visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction, James 1:27), missions is a great experience. Joining evangelism with productive agricul-

ture mixes faith with meaningful physical work. As an agricultural missionary in Africa and India, I have experienced the richness of combining these two ministries. Church members in both places have accepted open-pollinated garden seed donations to enhance their food security. Just as open-pollinated seeds reproduce after “its kind” (God’s design, Genesis 1:12), so speaking the pure gospel message produces spiritual fruit for Jesus Christ.

Three years ago, ten vegetable gardens were started in Sierra Leone, and rice was purchased to plant. A few gardens failed, but several succeeded. Rice production increased significantly, and the church grew!

—Tom Benzen
Pocahontas, AR

Note: Tom’s field reports from Africa and India are posted on baonline.org. 

In the Philippines

It is important for a person doing missions here to have these qualities:

Character. In this Christian country, most Filipinos have basic knowledge of doctrines, especially of the SDAs, Church of Christ, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and traditional Catholics. We need long patience and Christlike humility to make contacts and conversation, to be willing to laugh with them like close friends.

Practical skills. Music, singing, and playing keyboard helped me among those who speak a different dialect and whose culture is different. As I played, people



Sierra Leone

were attracted, children came, parents smiled, and we became friends easily.

My uncle, a CoG7 missions pioneer and pastor, was welcome anywhere because he helped families in their work — especially carpentry. When Pastor Noel and I went to Panay Island for twenty-five days, we studied basic Bible doctrines at night. During the day, we visited our friends and their neighbors, sometimes helping in chores. Making conversation, we always say “yes” and appreciate their daily life. Practicality in missions is applying common sense to everybody in the area. People are happy if you are quick to understand their words and actions. I listen to their radio or television news most days and ask them about the things and places observed.

Flexibility is important, too. I have experienced going to wealthy families, refined and sophisticated homes, sharing the gospel with the doctor in the hospital and talking to the town mayor about the Bible. Sometimes I sleep in a humble *nipa* hut with no blanket or in a bus terminal, sitting until dawn. I eat many kinds of recipes and vegetables I never tried before. Flexibility is important to a missionary so we can learn quickly.

In my district, I do free-time missionary work in the marketplace. I talk to vendors of fish and vegetables about the goodness of God, about how He prospers His people, about Sabbath, and about how to thank God in the midst of financial problems. My wife, Elizabeth, also shares the gospel with co-teachers and parents in her school, and we invite them to our prayer request sessions every Sunday at 4 p.m. I

teach the whole church the same and how to entertain visitors.

— Pastor John Villarante
Tangub City, The Philippines



Attention: Youth and SWORD

Missionary work is personal first. We cannot do it without our hearts first turning to God. He appeared to Abraham before sending him to the land of promise. Jesus of Nazareth appeared to Saul of Tarsus before sending him on Christian mission. Young missionaries, we cannot do missions work without the Christ of glory reigning in our spiritual lives: “So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness” (Colossians 2:6, 7, NIV throughout).

It’s a calling. The church may call you to missions, but you will respond only when you hear God calling. It is often unnecessary that the church calls. The need itself may become a calling to your converted heart and take you to the missionary field: “Now those who had been scattered by the persecution . . . traveled . . . telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. The Lord’s hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord” (Acts 11:19-21).

Grace will accomplish. “But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked



harder than all of them — yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me” (1 Corinthians 15:10).

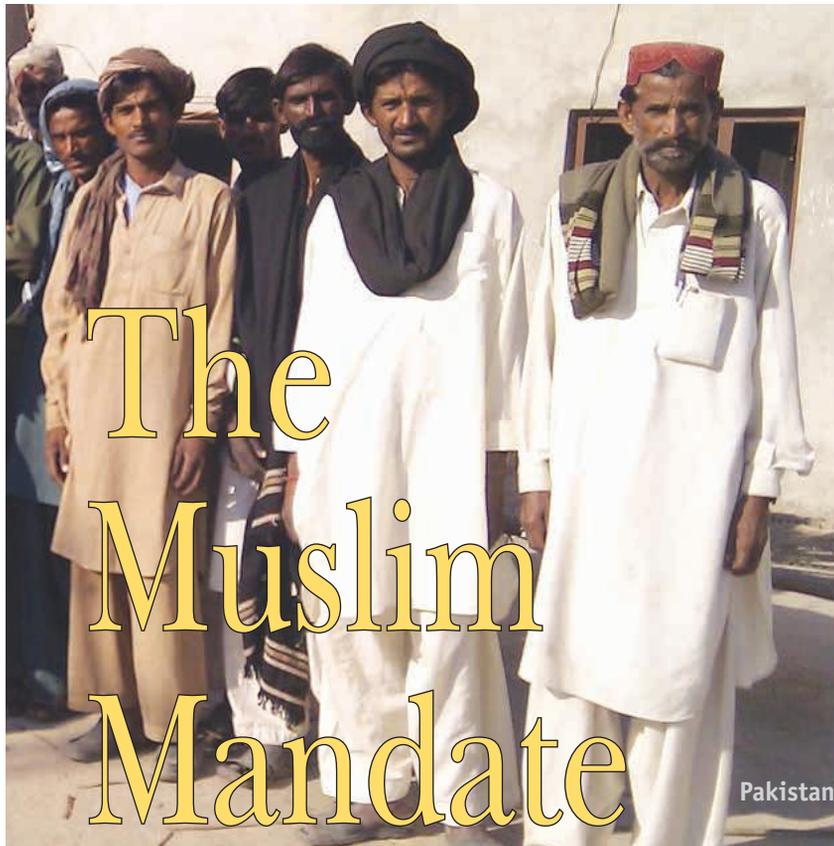
God will guide. There are many places where you will testify of the Christ that changes lives, so take courage! Jesus’ words were Paul’s for over thirty years: “I am with you . . .” (Acts 18:10); “As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome” (23:11).

Finish the race. “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day — and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing” (2 Timothy 4:7, 8). We will be in His kingdom, crowned by Jesus’ glorious hand. Amen! **BA**

— José Antonio Vega
Lanham, MD



In “The Uncomfortable Word,” Brian Baker tells of a recent violent death because a CoG7 Christian in Kenya stood for his values, and recounts his own experience in a threatening environment. Read Brian’s pages on the un-comfort of martyrdom (baonline.org). **org**



The Muslim Mandate

Though Islam may seem impervious to the gospel, the Spirit of Christ finds a way. **by Doug York**

Few areas of Christian missions have seemed to yield as little fruit as that of reaching out to Muslims. It is not uncommon to meet godly men and women who labor for decades in Muslim lands with only two or three “converts” to show for it. Perhaps this contributes to the negative, even defeatist, attitude many have today of trying to reach the world’s 1.6 billion Muslims for Jesus. Some have concluded there is no hope for mission to Muslims.

However, in recent years the number of Muslims who have come to faith in Jesus as Lord

and Savior has grown. Let’s look at some attitudes and approaches that appear to have influenced this growth.

Common ground

The first Muslim I met set the stage for my love affair with these “difficult” children of Abraham. An older acquaintance learned of my interest in Muslims and told me about his best friend. Leroy and Ahmed were both active in Kiwanis. During a club picnic one day, Ahmed said to Leroy, “There’s just one problem with you Protestants. You don’t go by the Book [Bible].”

Leroy responded, “Yes, I go by the Book,” but Ahmed insisted he did not. Leroy finally said, “Tell me, what is it about the Book I don’t do?”

Ahmed said, “Well, the Bible and the Qur’an [Muslim holy

book] both teach that pork meat defiles the body. But I’ve never known a Protestant who doesn’t love his ham sandwich.”

“Well, you have now,” Leroy replied. “I too believe pork is unclean.”

Ahmed continued, “There is also alcohol. I believe the Bible and Qur’an both forbid the use of alcohol, but some of you Protestants even use it in your services.” Leroy told him he believed that wine would “sting like an adder” and did not drink it.

Undaunted, Ahmed said, “The Bible and the Qur’an both clearly teach the Sabbath as a day of rest, but you Protestants keep Sunday.” Leroy was delighted to tell Ahmed that he, in fact, was a Sabbathkeeper.

Although I lived over two hours away from Leroy and Ahmed, the three of us would get together to study God’s truth in both the Qur’an and the Bible. Eventually Ahmed and his wife became followers of Jesus.

Bridge to the Bible

The Qur’an does distinguish between people who are true to the Book (given by God before the Qur’an) and those who are not. Devout Muslims are highly respectful of those Christians they sense are spiritual followers of Jesus.

God’s footprints are found in every culture. As the “true light that gives light to every man . . .” (John 1:9, NIV), He is ever revealing Himself rather than hiding Himself. As Lord of the mission, He has already *prepared* the way for greater understanding of His truth among all peoples.

We find many examples of this prep work in the Qur’an

and Muslim practices, enabling us to use the Qur'an as a bridge to the Bible. An understanding of Sabbath truth by Muslims is unusual, but I personally know of two Muslim groups that found and observed Sabbath from their own study of the Qur'an.

The Qur'an, while it *seemingly* denies the divinity of Jesus, recognizes that Isa al-Masih (Jesus the Messiah) is the *Kalimat Allah* (Word of God). While Muslims believe that Jesus was only a prophet, the Qur'an states that Jesus was "high honoured . . . in this world and the next, near stationed to God" (Surah chapter 3:45).*

Power of prayer

Mission to Muslims is first and always spiritual work, not theological. What are their heart needs? What are the pathways to Muslim souls?

Assurance of salvation is not found in conventional Islamic theology. Spiritual Muslims often long for an answer to this unspoken question: "Who will stand for me on Judgment Day?"

Prayer is the key to the spiritual seeker's heart. Devout Muslims pray structured prayers at set times throughout the day. To open one's heart to God as to a friend is not something commonly practiced. At the end of time I spend with a Muslim, I always offer to pray for him, for his family, and that God would "show us the Straight Way." Never has my offer to pray been refused. Often the individual has tears in his eyes.

Visions of Jesus

I once visited a mosque near my home and came to know

their leader, Hussein. I prayed that God would reveal Himself to Hussein in a dream or vision. (Later I found other Christians praying the same prayer.) A close Christian friend of Hussein's would tell him, "Someday, Hussein, you will follow Christ."

One day Hussein was out walking and saw a cloud forming, as in a movie. Jesus, in the middle of it, said to him, "Hussein, it is OK. You can come to Me. I love you." At that moment, Hussein accepted Jesus as his Lord, Savior, and Mediator.

Reports from around the world, especially in North America, indicate that the number of Muslims receiving dreams of Jesus is growing rapidly. An increasingly common way to start conversation with a Muslim is to ask, "Tell me, have you ever had a dream or vision of a man dressed all in white?"

New look

In his new book *A Wind in the House of Islam*, David Garrison writes that, without doubt, something unprecedented is happening: The Holy Spirit is blowing through the house of Islam. The question is, how will we work with that Spirit?

Remember the two men walking on the road to Emmaus after

Jesus' death (Luke 24)? They knew the Scriptures. They were familiar with Abraham, Moses, David, and all the prophecies. What they needed was Someone to come alongside and help them gain a new look at old familiar themes and understandings. Suddenly the pieces all came together, and they saw the Truth for what He was.

It is our privilege to come alongside spiritual Muslims. Start with the truth they already know, break bread with them, and with the Holy Spirit's guidance, help them see with a new look. There is no greater joy than to see Muslims begin to realize that Jesus (Isa al-Masih) is indeed their personal mediator on Judgment Day. As that truth sinks in, they also realize that He is indeed "my Lord and my God."

Today, at this very moment, the Spirit is at work drawing seekers to Jesus. May God raise up more workers for the harvest! **BA**

* Fouad Elias Accad, *Building Bridges* (NavPress), p. 112.

Doug York (pen name) lives in Washington state and has worked with Muslims in North America, China, India, and Pakistan since 1997.

The Holy Spirit is blowing through the house of Islam. The question is, how will we work with that Spirit?

International Ministerial Congress and G. C. Missions



Whaid Rose
Zone 1



Carlos Ceron
Zone 2



Jorge Gillig
Zone 3

For a missions overview and prayer needs in any nation of the world, visit operationworld.org.

All the ends of the world shall remember and turn to the LORD . . . (Psalm 22:27a).

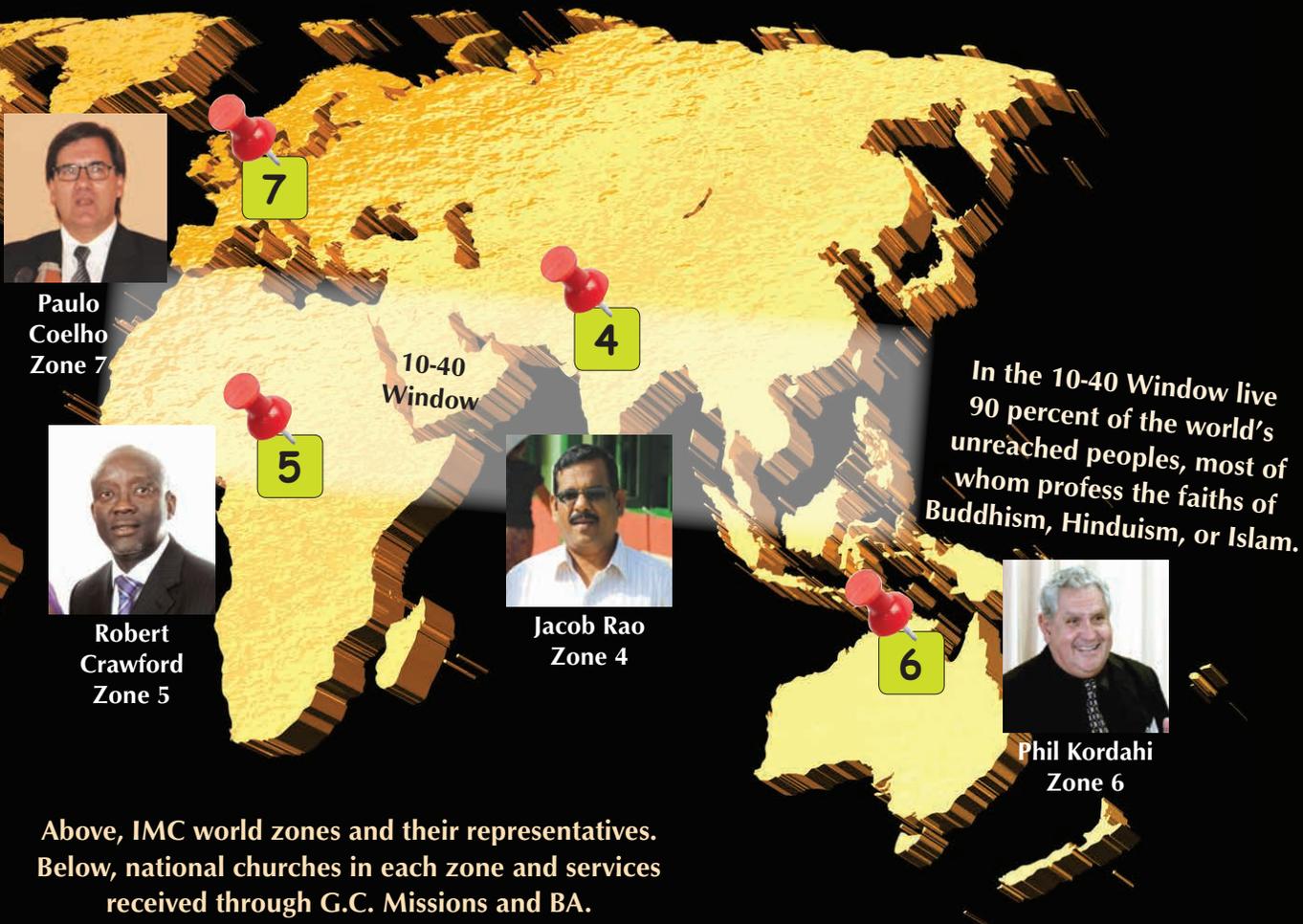
- ★ IMC Member
- ▼ Mission Churches
- BA Receives BA
- Disaster Relief Funds
- Orphans and Widows
- ★ SHINE (Medical and Dental)
- * Cristo Viene
- ✓ Pioneer Missionary Training
- ◆ Special Projects

Zone 1

- Bahamas ★ BA
- Guyana ★ BA
- Jamaica ★ ★ BA
- Trinidad & Tobago ★ BA
- US & Canada ★ ● ✓ BA

- Haiti ▼ ★ BA
 - St. Martin ▼ BA
-
- ## Zone 2
- Belize ★ ■ ★ BA
 - Costa Rica ★ * BA
 - El Salvador ★ ★ * BA
 - Guatemala ★ ★ * BA
 - Honduras ★ ● ★ BA
 - Mexico ★ ● ★ ✓ BA
 - Nicaragua ★ ■ ★ * BA
 - Panama ★ BA
 - Cuba ▼ * BA
-
- ## Zone 3
- Argentina ★ ● ✓ BA
 - Brazil ★ BA

- Chile ★ ● * BA
 - Colombia ★ BA
 - Ecuador ★ ★ BA
 - Paraguay ★ BA
 - Uruguay ★ * BA
 - Venezuela ★ BA
 - Bolivia ▼ BA
 - Peru ▼ * BA
-
- ## Zone 4
- India ★ ● ■ * BA
 - Pakistan ★ ● * BA
 - Myanmar ▼ ◆ BA
 - Sri Lanka ▼ ◆ BA



Above, IMC world zones and their representatives. Below, national churches in each zone and services received through G.C. Missions and BA.

Zone 5

- Cameroon ★ BA
- DR Congo ★ BA
- Ghana ★ BA
- Kenya ★ ● ■ * BA
- Malawi ★ ◆ BA
- Nigeria ★ ● ◆ BA
- Rwanda ★ BA
- Sierra Leone ★ ● ■ BA
- Tanzania ★ ● BA
- Zambia ★ ■ BA
- Burundi ▼ BA
- Ethiopia ▼ BA
- South Africa ▼ * BA
- South Sudan ▼ BA
- Uganda ▼ BA
- Zimbabwe ▼ BA

Zone 6

- Australia ★ BA
- Philippines ★ ● * BA
- Indonesia ▼ ● * BA

Zone 7

- Germany ★ BA
- Italy ★ * BA
- Poland ★ BA
- Portugal ★ BA
- United Kingdom ★ BA
- Spain ▼ BA

BA magazine goes into many more countries where CoG7 has no organized work: Austria, Belgium, Bermuda, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Denmark, Dominica, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, French Guiana, Greece, Grenada, W.I., Israel, Kuwait, Macedonia, Malaysia, Mozambique, Netherlands, New Zealand, North Korea, Benin, Seychelles, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovenia, South Korea, St. Lucia W.I., St. Vincent, W.I., Turks and Caicos Islands, W.I., and Ukraine.



India

The Right Leader

by Ramón Ruiz Garza

In denominational terms, we have seen significant church growth in the central and southern parts of the Americas. Our international Church organization has undoubtedly contributed to this development. We have zone representatives leading in several countries that are linked geographically and often share language, traditions, and histories. This has allowed some prosperity in the mission field. Today we can say that we have churches in virtually every Latin American nation, except a few in the Caribbean.

Countries located here are mostly considered third world. This means greater willingness of people to hear the Word of God, unlike first-world nations where attention is more focused on technological and scientific fields than on the religious or spiritual. However, we note that first-world peoples too are searching for God, due to the dissatisfaction that materialism leaves in human hearts.

Given this scenario, our church's leaders are challenged to respond to the command of

the Lord Jesus Christ to "Go and make disciples of all nations . . ." (Matthew 28:19b). We must consider the price to be paid in heeding the Lord's command.

What kind of leadership is relevant to our time and reality in mission fields? This is a delicate and difficult question, but we can recognize key aspects in the light of God's immutable Word.

First, recover the willingness to sacrifice. In a world that sees mostly pleasure as the goal of life, we need leaders willing to give their time, resources, bodies, and skills for missions work. Only then can we penetrate this world that we are called to serve in Christ's name: "Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore" (Hebrews 13:13). The expression "outside the camp" means leaving the comfort of our locations and going to where human suffering is amassed, as did the Master. That's a different model of life.

Second, preach only the Word of God. This seems obvious, but it is not. Today we find many teachers and evangelists who preach only what pleases

others, what people want to hear, with no denouncement of sin. They subordinate the true gospel and manufacture a new one to suit the listener. The gospel becomes the *modus vivendi* by those who pretend to be Christians. It is a type of religious mimicry — the ability of certain living things to resemble other organisms. All mission leaders and workers must be imbued with the Word of God, because only this Word can transform the hearts of people. "What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs," Jesus said (Matthew 10:27). No one who has neglected intimacy with Jesus can preach God's Word.

Third, be sensitive to human need. For this we should review our concept of humanity, because our anthropological vision determines our missionary work. If we view human beings as despicable sinners, then our work will be that of judgment — quick condemnation. But if we see humans as Christ did — suffering ones in need of help — then our missions harvest can be plentiful: "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (9:36).

Let us ask the Lord to send faithful, diligent laborers to the harvest field. **BA**

Ramón Ruiz Garza is president of the International Ministerial Congress. Scripture quotations are from the *New International Version*.



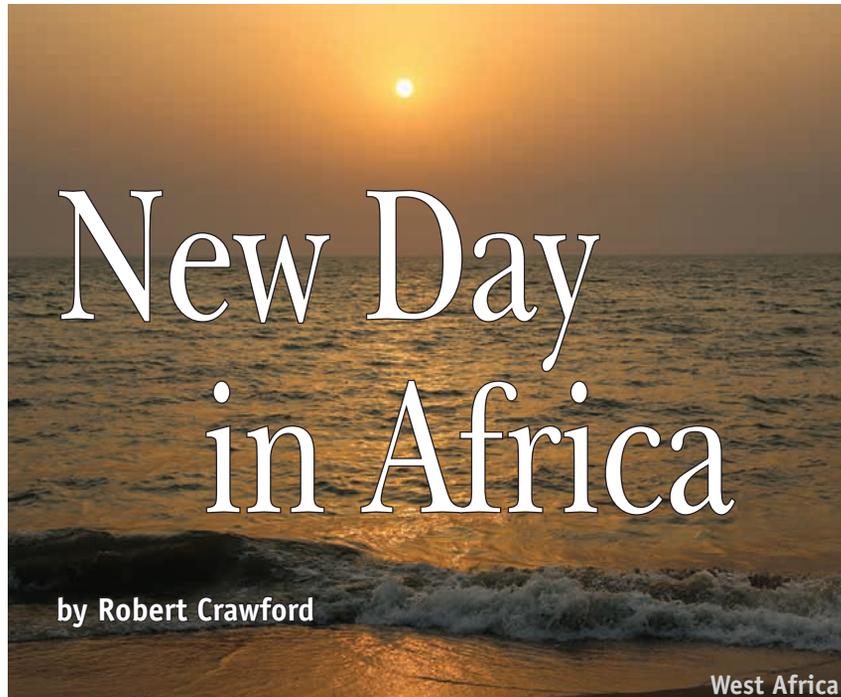
When I committed my life to Jesus at the age of twelve, I had no idea where the Lord would lead me. One of my young church friends reminded me recently of a song I used to sing in Jamaica, about a commitment to preach the gospel both at home and abroad.

Little did I know that this was my early call and commitment to serve on the mission fields of Africa, a task I treasure and feel compelled by the Holy Spirit to do. Through the grace of the Almighty, lives are being impacted and souls delivered from the kingdom of darkness.

Despite many conflicts, Africa presents a wonderful opportunity for ministry. The more the conflict rages, the more the Church grows, it seems. What we see today is a younger generation being prepared to take the continent to a new level. Our young people are zealous for Christ. Though many lack the luxuries of the Western world, they have a thirst for things pertaining to the kingdom.

The Church of God (Seventh Day) in Africa is on the brink of change, facing the demands of a new age. This change will bring new responsibilities. The great task facing each Church leader in Africa is to recognize the potentials with which the continent is endowed – material wealth and great human resources that must be harnessed and utilized for the glory of Jesus Christ. I believe with all my heart that the former things will pass away.

Today we are challenged to develop our knowledge through sound education and training. The world we live in is shrinking. We must make it one by being our brother's keeper, requiring



us to esteem each other better than ourselves. We must make sure that nothing is done through strife and vainglory, but in lowliness of mind (Philippians 2:3).

We are challenged to achieve excellence in all we do. The Church must seize the moment to be proud of whatever gift God has given and use those gifts to serve one another in edifying and building up the Church. We must set out to discover what God called us to do and do it with our might.

We are challenged to work passionately and unrelentingly to get rid of all divisions and petty squabbles and injustices. We must rid ourselves of anger and the need for self-glorification, and humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, who exalts us in due season.

The question that faces me often is "Are you not afraid to go some places in Africa?" The truth is I am never afraid because the same promises given by Jesus to His disciples go with me: "Lo,

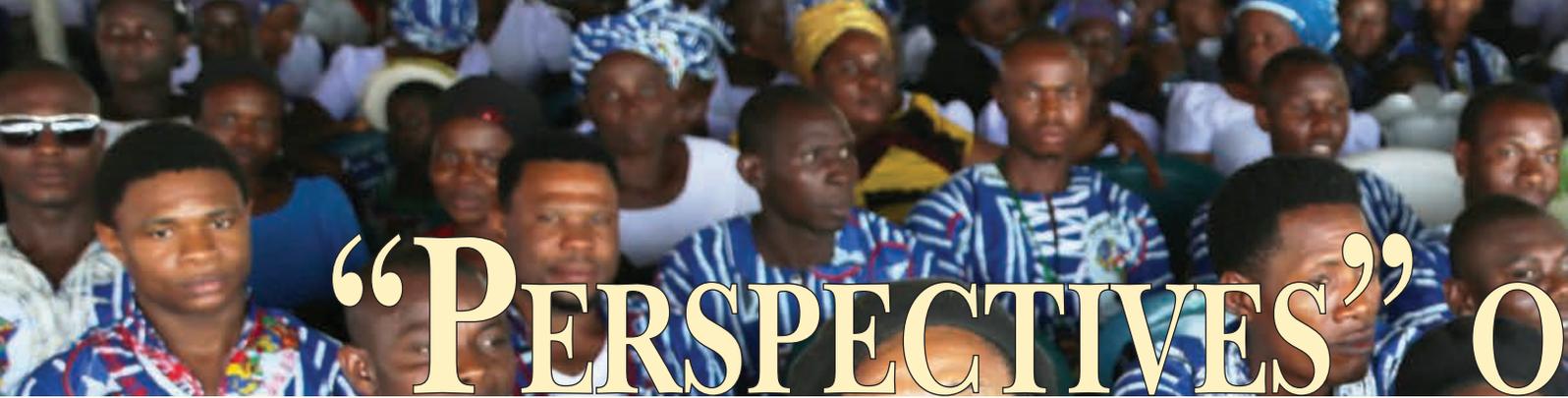
I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).

The challenge to the Church in Africa requires all of us to rise to new heights with a burning desire to be self-providing. Let us go into the emerging age with understanding, creativity, proper pride, and new commitment like Esther: "Who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14).

We are not just called to know Him, but also to make Him known. Are we, like the first disciples of Jesus, willing to leave our nets and follow Him? Together we can! **BA**

From his home in Gloucester, UK, **Robert Crawford** serves the International Ministerial Congress as Zone 5 (Africa) representative.





“PERSPECTIVES” O

Editor's note: Reprinted here to make you think, these quotes are from Perspectives on the World Christian Movement (Fourth Edition) – Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne, editors. This 700-page reader comes with the course recommended in “First Word” (p. 3).

Christianity – unlike any other religion – has truly spread throughout the earth (Jason Mandryk, p. 361). Evangelical Christianity is currently the fastest growing religious movement in the world today (Mandryk, p. 362).

For the first time in history, followers of Jesus dwell in every country on earth. In some cases, they must gather in secret for fear of persecution, but they are there. Too often, however, the world's Christian population does not intersect with the world's unevangelized population. Massive concentrations of peoples have yet to experience the gospel, and we must go to them. . . . Looking just at raw numbers, we find a cluster of five countries – India, China, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal – where the largest concentrations of unevangelized people reside, representing hundreds of millions of people (Mandryk, pp. 365, 366).

Recent reports claim that only one out of 100 believers has any

meaningful involvement in the Great Commission (Mandryk, p. 367).

Millions of Christians from the Philippines and Indonesia work in wealthier nations as domestic servants, nurses, seafarers, engineers and nannies. . . . They have relationships with children and wives who might otherwise be sheltered and shielded from the gospel (Mandryk, p. 365).

European Christians have declined from around 70% of the world Christian population in 1900 to around 20% today (Mandryk, p. 362).

The biggest and fastest-growing churches in Europe are almost all planted by African believers (Mandryk, p. 365). The gospel has found fertile soil in Africa. And Africans are now doing their part to take its life-giving message around the world with characteristic zest and passion (Timothy Olonade, p. 371).

. . . the Latin American evangelical movement . . . grew slowly at first, and then dramatically in the later half of the 20th century. . . . By 2006, the estimated number of [Latin American] missionaries had once again more than doubled to 10,000 cross-cultural missionaries sent out from 400 sending organizations. Latin leaders feel that they are still far from reaching the full

potential of the Latin churches to bless all the nations (Carlos Scott, p. 375).

Some time in 1980, Christians from the southern hemisphere outnumbered Northern Christians for the first time since the 10th century. There is no indication that the vigorous growth in the Global South will slow down during the 21st century, as the Church continues to see tremendous growth in Latin America, Africa, Asia and Oceania (Todd Johnson and Sandra S. K. Lee, pp. 387, 388).

We are far closer to achieving the basic goals set out for us by the Lord Jesus . . . than many have given credit. We still have an enormous task, but it is a task that can be accomplished. . . . Jesus told us plainly that the world will become a most unpleasant place and evil will multiply . . . but at the same time His people will multiply and spread across the face of the earth (Matt 24). Everything is heading towards a climax – both evil and good. . . . The darkness will increase at that midnight hour, but that will also be the high tide of the Church. . . . I believe that one of the hindrances to vision for mission in past centuries has been a profound pessimism about the world and the future. People respond better to encouragement. . . . I believe that every preacher and



N WORLD MISSIONS

Nigeria

every teacher should be armed with facts of the worldwide Kingdom's challenges and growth and communicate these to their people. This will stimulate vision, intercession and action (Patrick Johnstone, pp. 383, 384, from *The Church is Bigger Than You Think*, Christian Focus Publications, Scotland, UK, 1998).

Over the past century . . . the center of gravity in the Christian world has shifted inexorably southward, to Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Already today, the largest Christian communities on the planet are to be found in Africa and Latin America. . . . Many of the fastest-growing countries in the world are either predominantly Christian or else have very sizable Christian minorities. . . . Christianity should enjoy a worldwide boom in the new century, but the vast majority of believers will be neither white nor European, nor Euro-American (Philip Jenkins, p. 390, from *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*, Oxford University Press, 2002).

The types of Christianity that have thrived most successfully in the global South have been very different from what many Europeans and North Americans consider mainstream. These models have been far more enthusiastic, much more centrally concerned

with the immediate workings of the supernatural, through prophecy, visions, ecstatic utterances and healing. . . . If we are to live in a world where only one Christian in five is a non-Hispanic White, then the views of that small minority are ever less likely to claim mainstream status . . . (Jenkins, p. 391).

Rather than look at the bewildering varieties of forms of religious faith — at the different “earthen vessels” in which the faith is contained — let's look at the extent that the will of God has taken hold. That is the Kingdom of God (Ralph D. Winter, p. 394). God's promise to bless all the “families of the earth,” first given to Abraham 4,000 years ago, is becoming a reality at a pace “you would not believe.” Although some may dispute some of the details, the overall trend is indisputable. Biblical faith is growing and spreading to the ends of the earth as never before in history (Ralph D. Winter and Bruce A. Koch, p. 531).

We can confidently speak of closure to this unreached peoples mission. There were an estimated 17,000 unreached peoples in 1976. Today there are only an estimated 8,000 unreached (unimax) peoples, and a dynamic global movement is now in full swing that is committed to seeing Christ worshipped

and obeyed within every one of them (Winter and Koch, p. 539).

In the not too distant future, there will not be a single “kingdom of the world” where His name is not glorified (Winter and Koch, p. 542).

Church planting has been greatly enhanced by many support and media ministries . . .

Scripture Translation

Literature

Audio-Video Ministries

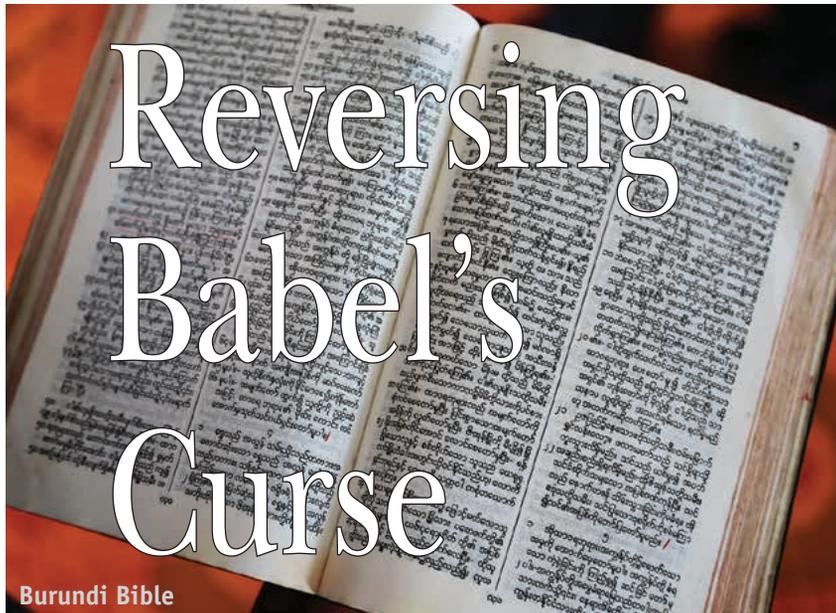
The Jesus Film Project

Radio

Satellite Communications

The new technology (Patrick Johnstone, pp. 550-558, from *The Church is Bigger Than You Think*)

What God will do is always more than what He has given us to do. He has given us a clear and simple thing to finish: to see that Christ is worshiped and followed among every people. This is the essential missionary task. This task we must do with utmost focus and passion until it is finished. But there is still more to be done. The missiological breakthrough is just the beginning of all that God intends to do within every people. God will continue to fulfill His promise to undo the works of Satan and bring forth the blessing of Abraham to all peoples (Winter and Koch, pp. 541, 542).



by Paulo Jorge Coelho

As representative for International Ministerial Congress in Europe, I deal with a reality that reflects the curse God placed upon humanity at the city and tower of Babel: “Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech” (Genesis 11:7, KJV).

Despite being second smallest of the inhabited continents and having only 11 percent of the world’s population, Europe has great diversity. Spoken here are more than sixty languages and dialects, communities of people from most other countries with wide variation of religious, cultural, and linguistic traits.

It is worth looking at Genesis 11 to see why God confused the languages of humanity. In this text we understand that the objective of men was to build by their own means (“let us . . . let us,” v. 4), a technologically advanced and self-sufficient civilization (vv. 3, 6). They wanted to create something humanly

exalted, to achieve and master heaven, with no need of God.

The desire of people to increase power and counter the curse of Babel has been multiplied in history, as in the rise of many empires and today’s tendency to globalization. The coalescing political, economic, and religious world system we see is evidence of that carnal desire to achieve human supremacy and “heaven,” as happened in ancient Babel. Is this not the great Babylon of our day? The Vatican in Rome (capital of spiritual Babylon?) and Washington D.C. (capital of humanity’s largest superpower?) may be today’s symbols of this continuing pursuit of man.

Despite having cursed humans with language diversity to prevent their blind ambition, God began to work early on to reverse this curse. In the very next chapter (12:1-3), God called Abraham with the objective of blessing all nations through his seed. This became reality through Jesus Christ, who opened the door of salvation to humanity.

On the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-11), multiple languages were understood by a diverse crowd as if they were one nation again. God annulled there, by His own power, His own Babel curse. The Almighty wants us to boldly enter heaven’s throne of grace, but only through His way (Jesus Christ) and by His power (Holy Spirit). This is how we build a “tower” to heaven – not through the selfish way of human pride but with humble subjection that accepts divine sovereignty over all things (John 14:6; Ephesians 2:20-22).

To guide all nations into the true path to God, He has permitted His Word to be the most translated book in the world – in over 2,500 languages. Although more than 2,000 tongues in today’s world have no written Bibles, teams of translators are now at work to cooperate with God and reverse Babel’s curse. Let us pray for and support them!

Men and women from every nation may gain heaven by the one and only path that leads to God: our Savior, Jesus Christ. God intends to re-create a single people from all languages (Matthew 24:24; Revelation 7:9-10; 14:6, 7). He himself is reversing the curse of Babel by His power and His way. He invites us to join Him in the task and in entering the true heaven! **BA**

Paulo Jorge Coelho is a medical doctor serving the Church in Lisbon, Portugal.



Hop aboard for a quick trip on the golden road that links all Scripture. Jesus Christ is ever with us here, but we needn't wait until the New Testament to learn the way. From early Genesis until deep Revelation, the route signs are clear, repeated in ways that stress God's love for all the earth's tribes, tongues, and nations.

No verse before the Gospels captures this better than the Lord's promise to His friend, Abraham: "In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Genesis 12:3b). In other words, "God so loved the world. . . ."

In verses 1-3 of Genesis 12, God tells Abraham to leave his own land and go to another where he'll be blessed with a great name and nation. Five times God uses the *bless* word to describe His aim for Abraham, the greatest of which is *to bless all families of the earth* in him.

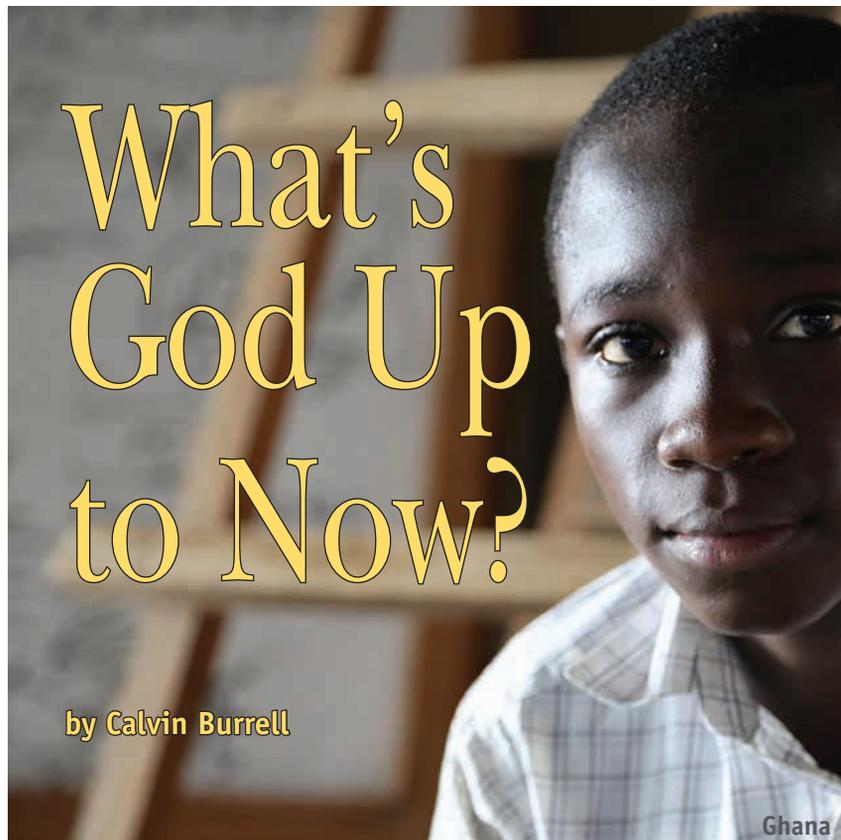
And five times God stresses the certainty of these promises by repeating His own intent to make them good: "I will . . . I will!"

In other words, God so loved that He gave. God preached this gospel to Abraham!

Promise echoes

Now let's follow the trail of this marvelous promise "in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." Listen for its echoes along the Bible's Route 66.

Early echoes. The Lord repeats His promise to Abraham later in Genesis, adding that the blessing for all families and nations of the earth will be done "in your seed" (22:18). He repeats it again to Isaac, Abraham's seed-son by promise (26:4, 5). Then in Exo-



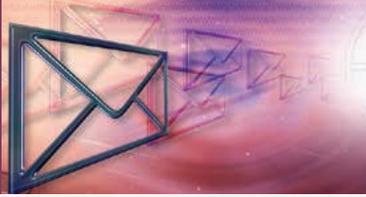
odus, God tells Israel that the nation will be a kingdom of priests – priests whose task it was to represent God to other nations of the world (19:6). Not just the tribe of Levi, but all of Israel had this priestly responsibility under the old covenant.

Temple echoes. The sixty-seventh psalm is a prayer-song to the Lord of all the earth, asking that all peoples might come to praise and reverence Him. Here is further proof that the "Jewish" temple was intended as a house of prayer for all nations, not just for Jews.

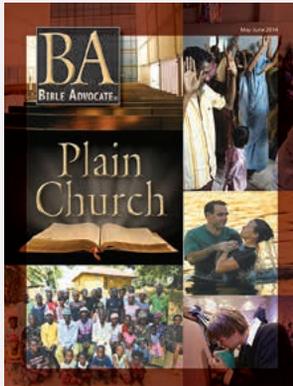
Prophets echoes. Isaiah and others understood God's intent for Israel to be a light to Gentiles (i.e., *goyim*, or the nations, Isaiah 2:2b; 42:1-12; 49:6b; 55:5; 56:7b; 60:3; Daniel 7:13, 14; Hosea 1:10b; 2:23b; Malachi 1:11). Their many reminders of this fact fell mostly on deaf ears.

Gospel echoes. Jesus, sent primarily to the lost sheep of Israel, reached often beyond Jews to the Gentiles around them: to Samaritans; to a Roman centurion and a Canaanite woman, both of whom He commended for great faith; and to outsiders from Gentile cities like Tyre, Sidon, and Decapolis (Matthew 8:5-13; 11:20-24; 15:21-28; 24:14; Luke 10:25-37; 17:11-19).

Christ's great commission to go, preach the gospel to every creature and teach all nations was no afterthought. Rather it was His gathering up of all earlier mission mandates, transferring them to the Twelve and to all who believe. His classic expression of blessing all nations through the grace of His gospel and the truth of His teachings includes the promise that all power on heaven and earth was His and would sustain us in the task until



Mail Bag



'Plain Church'

Very wonderful testimony ["Why I Quit 'Going to Church,'" p. 8]! This is what it means being called into God's family. Yeah, the church is like a family with a common identity of brother/sisterhood.

K. S.
BA Online

Jesus is not GOD ["Q & A," p. 7]; He is the Son of God. The church is not Jesus-centered. It's not Jesus' eternal kingdom; it's Yahweh's kingdom — the Father. This distorts the church everywhere. Why has Calvin Burrell decided to change everything? I don't agree with him.

P. T.
Facebook

Editor's reply: What's on page 7 isn't new. CoG7 has been saying the same for twenty years or more. It is in the book This We Believe: Teachings of the Church of God (Seventh Day) and in many BAs. Most of the Church has come to appreciate the truth of Christ's deity and His central role in our faith, hope, and love. We'll e-mail anyone who requests it five reasons why Jesus is God and ten texts that call Him "God."

The issue is intriguing! Its content suggests that the "church" is the Church of God (Seventh

Day), though not exclusively. This denomination, charming as it is, has never escaped its agrarian roots. This brings it no condemnation other than its lack of broad appeal, especially to Anglo-Americans in urban cultures. "All These Churches" [p. 22], which identifies the church as a "spiritual body built by Christ — an organism, not an organization," is enlarging and especially appropriate.

Several issues threatening the health of the "spiritual body" are at least as important as opinions about the use of electronics, high-volume music, repetitious choruses, doctrinal evolution, etc. We need to raise our voices about the increasing bullying of the "church" by militant atheists, and protest more vigorously the persecution of Christians in Middle Eastern countries where Christians have been reduced from 20 percent of the population to 5 percent. Is it appropriate to be silent about the growing imposition of Sharia law, or when those who hold biblical positions are denied contracts because non-believing activists threaten economic sanctions? I consider it appropriate to include these in conversations regarding the "church."

R. S.
West Linn, OR

BA arrived today. Timely. I believe in ecumenicalism. The trend in church organizations is toward non-denominational, local, independent. Not good. I believe [in] the city of peace, but I'm frustrated. We have "old" people, "guests," and "young." The old have been there 40 years and resist change. The guests (newcomers) and young are refreshing but afraid of organization, as reflected in this BA.

P. Y.
Hutchinson, KS

its completion (Matthew 28:18-20)!

Acts echoes. From its start in Jerusalem until its end in Rome, this book reports the apostles' first laps around the first century Roman world. In succeeding centuries, faithful followers of the Lord have advanced the Cause much further.

Epistles echoes. Paul cites from Genesis 12:3 to show that the Abrahamic promise is called the gospel, describing it as "God would justify the Gentiles by faith" (Galatians 3:8). He showed how the "all nations" blessing of Abraham comes upon Gentiles: "in Christ Jesus," Abraham's true seed (vv. 14, 16b).

Revelation echoes. We are assured that all nations, tribes, peoples and tongues will be among the great multitude who worship around God's throne at the end of the trail (7:9).

Present challenge

The Christian movement in history shows that God really does love the world. He has kept and is keeping the Genesis 12:3 promise to bless all nations in Abraham. We are nearer that goal today than ever before. Still, much going and disciple-making remains to assure that the gospel of Christ's kingdom reaches every family, tribe, nation, and tongue.

Some generation someday will run the final lap of missions to the last unreached nation and people group; then the end will come as promised (Matthew 24:14). How can we join God's revealed will and action to bless all families of the earth? **BA**

The Tranquil Soul

From my boiling cauldron
Steaming with the stew of crowded schedules . . .
Trying to be “clock” wise, juggling
Career, home, community commitments . . .
Jet-paced, jogged by unexpected developments,

I bring to You leftover crumbs of time,
Tired bones and eyelids dying to close . . .
somehow muttering and mumbling
A trite prayer . . . as I begin to snore.

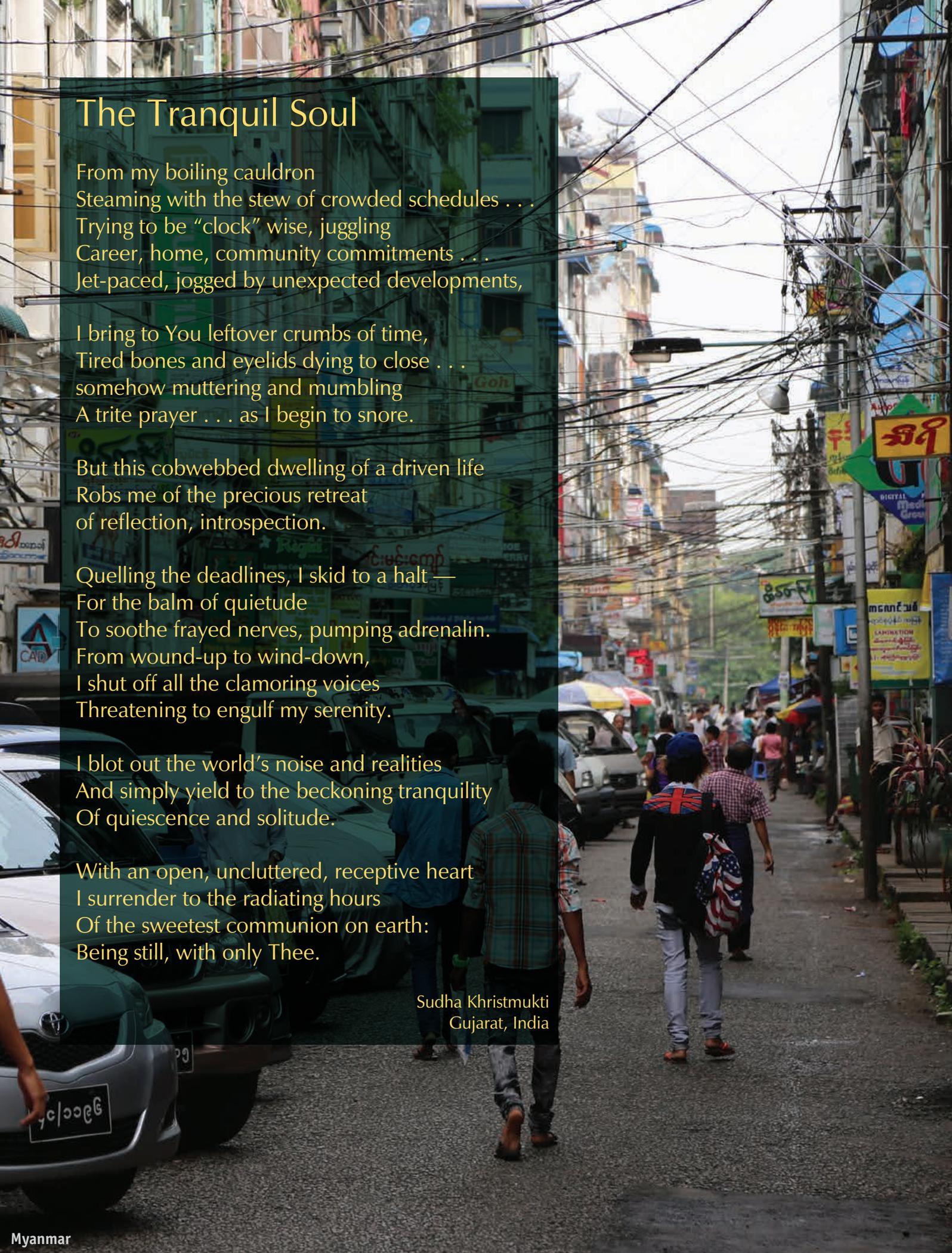
But this cobwebbed dwelling of a driven life
Robs me of the precious retreat
of reflection, introspection.

Quelling the deadlines, I skid to a halt —
For the balm of quietude
To soothe frayed nerves, pumping adrenalin.
From wound-up to wind-down,
I shut off all the clamoring voices
Threatening to engulf my serenity.

I blot out the world’s noise and realities
And simply yield to the beckoning tranquility
Of quiescence and solitude.

With an open, uncluttered, receptive heart
I surrender to the radiating hours
Of the sweetest communion on earth:
Being still, with only Thee.

Sudha Khristmukti
Gujarat, India





CoG7 In Action



- Enrollment for SVA's fall semester is August 19; dorms open the 18th. Learn more at springvale.us; call the campus (989-725-2391); or write Spring Vale Academy, 4150 S. M-52, Owosso, MI 48867.
- At the May 25 commencement exercises, Spring Vale awarded high school diplomas to six seniors, its 65th graduating class. G. C. Awards were presented to Amanda Miller (Spiritual Leadership) and to Carrie Nienhuis (Academic Excellence and Student of the Year).



This past school year, seven of our 39 students were baptized. One of my great joys was to witness these clear signs of God's Spirit among us. And there is plenty more evidence: moving services, revivals, rallies, and changing lives. Student transformation can happen subtly, so it's hard to know just when the change occurs. But God is always at work — calling, drawing, moving in great and small ways. The blessings are too plentiful to number.

I praise God for allowing me a front row seat to watch faith grow in the lives of SVAer's. A school year is long, with seasons and winds of change blowing in highs and lows that add a weathered quality to student experience. Then the sun returns, the grass greens, the flowers blossom. The light of God's love and showers of His blessing soften hearts as students' lives reveal the work God was doing all along. Staff are reminded just why God brought us here to serve.

I praise God for those who benefit from the unique human opportunities and God-encounters we've shared in our little campus community "greenhouse." I wish more students could gain from the school that God has raised up and sustained for 65 years. Many more teenagers could fill the school halls and dorm rooms, but they need a support network to make it happen.

For a good number of students, Mom and Dad don't have much more to give. A tough economy has left families struggling to make ends meet. For others, it's not about mom and dad, but mom *or* dad — not just about making ends meet, but about survival. Students from broken homes would like to attend, and their parents would love to offer them this interaction with staff that care and are dedicated to their personal and spiritual growth.

That opportunity will come to them only as God moves on the hearts of individuals. I ask you to help make a way for students God would choose to bless. Partner with Spring Vale to sow the seeds of love and grace that will surely produce. Give what God would have you give, and it will be given to you — good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over. The harvest will "come back home on every wave."

— Scott K. Fischer
Director of Admissions



Pastor John and Susan Schott retired on May 31 after 26 years of faithful service to the Petersburg, MI church.

CoG7 Calendar

Des Moines, IA Church Dedication July 25-26. Contact: Alex Segura alexander_s89@yahoo.com.

Dakota Youth Retreat August 7-10, at Crystal Springs Camp near Jamestown, ND. Contact: Jesse and Wanda Hopewell jandw@centurylink.net.

Marion, IA Super Sabbath August 15-17, with Dr. Pieter Barkhuizen. Contact: abe.endecott@gmail.com.

National Hispanic Retreat Chicago, IL, August 29 – September 1; contacts: Eva Delgado (708-955-5475) or Gloria Arzet (773-593-1425); e-mail: retironacionalhispano2014@gmail.com; Facebook: Retiro Nacional Hispano.

Ministerial Council for US and Canada, September 15-20, Shocco Springs Conference Center (shocco.org), Talladega, AL. Register online at cog7.org/namc-register. Forms may also be e-mailed or mailed upon request.



Central Young Adult Retreat September 19-21 at Hyatt Place, Schaumburg, IL. Registration begins July 1. Visit cog7central.com or contact abeendecott@gmail.com.

Northeastern District Women's Retreat October 3-5 on Mackinaw Island, MI. Contacts: Esther Winchell (esther416@charter.net;

989-574-7325) and Linda Rodriguez (frogbabe523@msn.com).

Youth and Young Adult Fall Retreat October 31 - November 2, at Camp IODISECA, Solon, IA. Contact: abe.endecott@gmail.com.



Conference and district personnel met in late April for report and planning session in Denver, CO. Included are new national SWORD (young adult) leaders Danny and Jacqueline Melgoza of San Antonio, TX (sword.cog7.org/sw/). Thanks to Christy Lang of Cedar Rapids, IA, who led SWORD for ten years.



International Congress

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Italy

The work of God here is hard. In this land of the pope, it's not easy to spread the gospel. But we trust in our Lord; thus, everything will happen (Mark 10:27)! We have twelve small congregations and groups in Italian land, and we preach the gospel by magazine, radio, and public evangelism. And we wait for God to work (Zechariah 4:6, 10).

— Pastor Roberto Torre



Australia

In a multi-cultural society, the Church distributes free Bibles in many languages at home and overseas. They also plan to use media (YouTube videos) to share the gospel.



Poland

This church evangelizes using media like the Internet, e-mail correspondence, Facebook, and websites. All members take active parts in proclaiming God's Word. Brother Emil Stekla does pastoral work in the whole country. Brother Boleslaw Parma plans a new book and reprints articles to attract interested people.

— Grzegorz Kroczek



Portugal

Suffering from a national financial crisis and secularization common to Europe, this group stays faithful to Jesus Christ and in contact with other believers around the world.



Spain

In September 2013 the Church of God 7th Day Believers Association began with dozens of members and friends in several cities, with main activities in the city of Zaragoza. A Facebook page is active (*ACIDEespaña*).

Kenya

In South Nyanza these twenty-one souls were baptized before Lord's Supper. Over 400 members took communion at Obuya, seventeen more celebrated at Kituka in Migori mission field, and twenty-four souls were baptized through evangelistic efforts in Nyangusu. We are happy to report the return of Kegogi church in Nyamira and Keore church, the first General Conference CoG7 congregation in Kenya, founded by the late Pastor G. B. Nyatangi.

— Abrahams Odongo



Venezuela

The photo shows a recent camp.

— Pastor Jose Caballero



Chile

Special IMC Sabbath on May 17.



Myanmar

We are starting the Asian Christian Theological Seminary (ACTS) in a small school building (doubles as the Yangon CoG7 church gathering place) that was completed in 2013 with financial support from G. C. Missions. To help unite the Church around biblical teachings and share the good news, we hope to translate *This We Believe: Teachings of the Church of God (Seventh Day)* into Burmese soon and use it in the Bible school for future ministers, enrolling seven to ten new students each year. The vision is that nearby land be purchased to build student accommodations, staff quarters, library, offices, and a building for CoG7 Myanmar Conference Home Missions Center.

— Tluang Kung



Ecuador

Church of God (Seventh Day) of Santo Domingo.



Mexico

XVICONGRESO NACIONAL JUVENIL

Renovados
de
Jesús



Mexico

Recent CoG7 youth convention shown here. The Mexican Conference is a missions-sending church, especially to other regions of Central and South America.

PMT 1 to Mexico City

Targeted especially for young adults 18-35, the next Pioneer Missionary Training team will learn and serve in Mexico City, December 21-31, 2014. Monico and Martha Muffley are team leaders. For more information, look for Monico on Facebook or e-mail him at pastor_monico@juno.com. Application deadline is November 1.



United Kingdom. President Devon Williams and secretary Kevin Anderson (center) of CoG7's British Conference spent a week recently with G. C. leaders in Denver, including Whaid Rose and Calvin Burrell.



India. On May 17, 2014, CoG7 congregations around the world celebrated the second annual IMC Sabbath. Read Elder Jacob Rao's summary of this special service in Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh, India, on baonline.org.



God Thoughts and Missions

“What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.”

So said A. W. Tozer, who further explained that throughout history no people has ever risen above its religion, and no religion has ever been greater than its idea of God. Any language’s “weightiest word” is its word for God, and in our minds, our “mightiest thought” is what we think about God. Therefore, the “gravest question” before the church is always the question of God himself.

Moses raised this question early in biblical history: “Who is like You, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like You, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?” (Exodus 15:11), echoed ever since by psalmists, prophets, and preachers, giving rise to the study of the attributes (traits, nature, essence) of God as revealed in Scripture.

For a quick sample, the Bible teaches that God is self-existent — the “uncaused Cause,” having life in Himself, from which all life emanates. God is sovereign (nothing escapes His rule; as R. C. Sproul is fond of saying, “There is no maverick molecule [in the universe]”). God is infinite (timeless, beyond measure or limit). And God is both transcendent (separate from, above His creation) and immanent (here, reveals Himself). The *omni* attributes tell us God is all-knowing (omniscient), all-powerful (omnipotent), and everywhere present (omnipresent). He is immutable (unchanging), perfect in holiness, justice, wisdom, truth, righteousness, love, and purity.

Contemplating God’s attributes, the psalmist declared, “Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain it” (Psalm 139:6). It’s like trying to wrap your arms around the Atlantic, like trying to unscrew the inscrutable! But

trying to do so helps shape our “God paradigm.” Steven Lawson has said that “our theology determines our doxology,” meaning that what we believe about God determines how we worship. A high view of God inspires God-centered, God-exalting, high and lofty worship.

Such worship is vital to our effectiveness in missions. In his book *Let the Nations Be Glad: The Sovereignty of God in Missions*, John Piper writes:

Worship, therefore, is the fuel and goal of missions. It’s the goal of missions because in missions we simply aim to bring the nations into the white hot enjoyment of God’s glory. The goal of missions is the gladness of the peoples in the greatness of God. “The Lord reigns; let the earth rejoice; let the many coastlands be glad!” (Ps. 97:1). “Let the peoples praise thee, O God; let all the peoples praise thee! Let the nations be glad and sing for joy!” (Ps. 67:3-4).

The term *10/40 Window* is a convenient marker of that part of the globe inhabited by the world’s largest populations of Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists. Hardly a day goes by without heart-rending news of some form of religious persecution (often the brutal killing of Christians), reflecting the distorted view of God espoused by these religions. CoG7’s missions efforts now extend into parts of that “window,” providing a unique opportunity to gladden the hearts “of the people in the greatness of God” — the God who has revealed Himself in Jesus, who lived, died, rose from the dead, and is mighty to save!

— *Whaid Guscott Rose*





CRISTO VIENE

In 2013, sponsors of G .C. Missions and Cristo Viene supported 86 missionaries in 17 countries, including Cuba, Indonesia, Pakistan, Peru, and South Africa.

Our goal is to send 500 Cristo Viene workers to reach new regions and people groups, and to prepare believers for effective service to the nations.

Please mark your local offering "Cristo Viene" or visit cog7.org/giving and pray that more workers be called into the harvest!



Find out more at gcmissions.cog7.org

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