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A Study of the Growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Metropolitan Area of Sao Paulo, Brazil

Joel Sarli

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ABSTRACT

A STUDY OF THE GROWTH OF THE SEVENTH-DAY
ADVENTIST CHURCH IN THE METROPOLITAN
AREA OF SAO PAULO, BRAZIL

by

Joel Sarli

Chairman: Werner Vyhmeister

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ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Project-Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: A STUDY OF THE GROWTH OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH IN THE METROPOLITAN AREA OF SAO PAULO, BRAZIL

Name of researcher: Joel Sarli

Name and title of faculty adviser: Werner Vyhmeister, Ph.D.

Date completed: December 1980

Problem

Over seventy-two years have passed since the first Adventist church was organized in the metropolitan area of Sao Paulo, Brazil. During those years the church leadership has noted that the rate of Adventist Church growth there has been one of the highest in the world. In spite of this unique phenomenon of growth, no serious research has been undertaken to determine what the factors are that have helped the people to make their decision to accept the Adventist message. An evaluation of the Seventh-day Adventist outreach during the last five years (1975-1979) is necessary to determine which methods should be emulated to give a higher growth rate to the Church in future.

Method

The method used for this study lead into three different areas: (1) a brief historical, sociological, and theological reflection on the meaning of the SDA Church of Sao Paulo in relationship to the city itself and to the Adventist Church in general; (2) a collection of data by means of a questionnaire administered to the members converted during the past five years; and (3) the organization of the data into tables giving frequencies and percentages. In order to give some recommendations in relationship to the effectiveness of certain out-reach methods in the area, the data were analyzed and conclusions were drawn.

Results

The final results of the research were related to the main objective of the study. Most of the new converts received their first information about the Adventist Church through friends and family members. The greatest personal influence on the new members' decisions to join the Adventists was lay activities. The preaching of the law and obedience to the Ten Commandments caught the attention of the majority of new converts and some of them have a legalistic view of some Adventist doctrines, according to the answers given on the questionnaire. Lastly, the social forces of the SDA Church helped the new converts to find a new community to replace the rural or small-village communities they left when they migrated to the city.

Conclusions

Some of the conclusions of the study are: (1) the SDA Church in Sao Paulo must use all the resources of the lay activities to reach the people; (2) the Adventists have to preach a more Christ-centered message in Sao Paulo; (3) the Church should use social elements to win the different social groups that make up the Paulistan community.

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

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

by
Joel Sarli
December 1980

*GC Assoc Min Serv
1998-2004
(APPROX)*

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APPROVAL BY THE COMMITTEE:



Werner Vyhmeister, Chairman

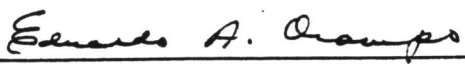


Dean, SDA Theological Seminary



Arnold Kurtz

7 Dec. 1982
Date approved



Eduardo Ocampo

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the health enjoyed throughout the entire course of study. To God be all the praise.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Always the growth or decline of any religious denomination is related to internal and external factors. They may be unknown but they exist and play a decisive role in the developing process of the entity. If determined and emulated they can be very helpful to those in charge of the final task of the church. This research is a study of the growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the metropolitan area of Sao Paulo, Brazil, and it intends to determine which factors influence people to accept or reject Adventism, and on that basis to suggest an evangelistic strategy for further increasing church growth in that urban area (see appendix C, figure 8).

The Need for the Study

Growth, Wilburn Thomas says, is a test of faithfulness of any church.¹ The Seventh-day Adventist Church understands that the effectiveness of the mission of God's people cannot be determined simply by its institutional strength, organizational structure, financial resources, and universal presence in the world.²

¹Thomas J. Ligget, The Role of the Missionary in Latin America Today (New York: Committee on Cooperation in Latin America, NCCC, 1963), p. 11.

²Gottfried Oosterwal, "The Seventh-day Adventist Church in the World Today," Servants for Christ: The Adventist Church Facing

Any living, healthy organism must grow as part of its own natural development, according to the words of the apostle Paul in Eph 4:16. But the growth must be harmonious and symmetrical in all aspects. However, for the particular purpose of this study, research will be limited to numerical growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Greater Sao Paulo, Brazil.

Over seventy-two years have passed since the first Adventist church was organized in the metropolitan area of Sao Paulo.¹ During those years the attention of the Church leadership has been called to the fact that the growth rate of Adventists in Sao Paulo has been one of the highest in the world. In spite of this unique phenomenon of growth, no serious research has been undertaken to determine the factors that have helped people to make their decision to accept the Advent message.

It is my conviction that in the past seventy years the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Sao Paulo has lost many opportunities to develop an adequate outreach strategy to take advantage of the responsive population living in the special social setting, as far as its mission task is concerned. This conviction is based on observations made when comparing the work of the Seventh-day Adventist Church with other denominations, mainly the Christian Congregation in Brazil. Both, the Adventist Church and the Christian Congregation, had their start in Sao Paulo by 1910. Today, the Christian Congregation

the 80's, ed. Robert E. Firth (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 1980), p. 3.

¹Emilio Hoelzle, "Missao Paulista," Revista Mensal (January 1908), p. 2.

in Brazil has about 120,000 members. In 1978, according to the last statistical report available, they baptized 8,133 people in the Sao Paulo area.¹ At the same time the Seventh-day Adventist Church baptized about 4,000 in 1978 and presently has 35,000 members.² More comparisons could be made, but these are enough to indicate a need for a serious research to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the different areas of activity of the Adventist Church of Sao Paulo.

There are at least three reasons for the importance of this study if Adventists are to take their responsibility for proclaiming the eternal gospel seriously.

1. The first reason considers the importance of the city itself. Sao Paulo is different from all other cities. To begin with, while most urban centers located in the tropics have fewer than three million inhabitants, Sao Paulo shelters more than thirteen million people and realizes a population growth of half a million each year.

Furthermore, few cities have the concentration of economic power that is as meaningful to the entire country as does Sao Paulo in relationship to Brazil. Almost one-third of all Brazilian industries and about one-half of the country's industrial workers are located in that one city. About 30 percent of the national income flows through its three thousand banks.

Thanks to its thirteen million residents,³ Sao Paulo is the

¹Relatório Estatístico da Congregação Cristã do Brasil (Sao Paulo: Congregação Cristã do Brasil, 1978).

²Relatório Estatístico da Associação Paulista Leste (Sao Paulo: East Sao Paulo Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1979), p. 7.

³O Guia de Sao Paulo (Sao Paulo: Quatro Rodas, 1980), p. 43.

largest city in South America and the fifth largest in the world. It is Brazil's leading industrial center with 50 percent of the country's overall production. It has five hundred hotels, 170 cinemas, and 6 TV channels. Twelve major daily newspapers and over 200 smaller newspapers and periodicals keep the people informed. Over two million volumes are housed in 146 libraries.

This metropolitan area is a major transportation center: three railroads, five main highways, and two airports connect all local travel within the country and with the world. These services are growing constantly to meet the needs of the 7 percent of the entire Brazilian population which lives in Sao Paulo--a city with a density of about six thousand inhabitants per square kilometer.¹ Every day a thousand new inhabitants are born, and plans for decentralization are underway for the population of twenty million expected by the year 2000.

In 1967 Greater Sao Paulo was officially made into a metropolitan region and placed within the boundaries of a new homogeneous micro-region under the number 262. This micro-region has thirty-eight counties grouped around the urban core. The five largest counties--Guarulhos, Osasco, Santo Andre, Sao Bernardo, and Sao Caetano--form with Sao Paulo a continuous urban concentration whose streets converge in the downtown section (see figure 1).

According to Howard A. Snyder, former dean of the Free Methodist Theological Seminary² in Sao Paulo, Brazil is a crucial country

¹Leonardo Arroyo, Sao Paulo (Rio de Janeiro: Livraria Kosmos Editora, 1979), p. 4.

²Roger S. Greenway, Guidelines for Urban Church Planting (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), p. 21.

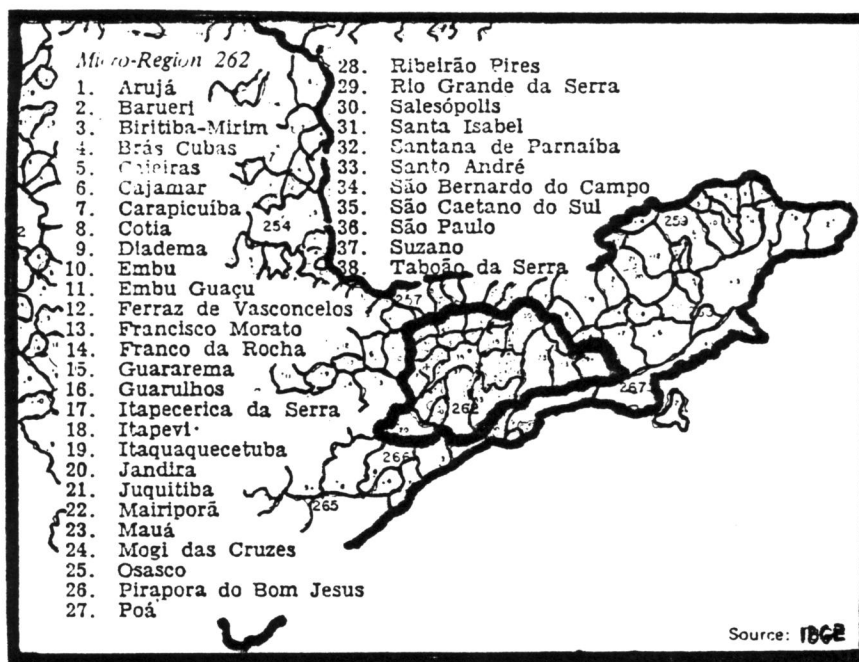


Figure 1. Micro-region 262 in the state of Sao Paulo in 1980.

for the future of the Church of Jesus Christ, and possibly for the future of the world. Taking into account the important role the metropolitan area of Sao Paulo plays in all Brazilian affairs, it is easy to understand how it constitutes a decisive factor not only in political or economical activities but can also be applied to the action of the church in propagating the gospel of Jesus, the Lord and Saviour.

2. A second reason for the importance of this study has to do with the present activity of many religious groups in the Sao Paulo area.

Sao Paulo is now an intense spiritual battleground contested by three main forces. First, there is Spiritualism which, in its varied forms, continues to grow rapidly. Second, there is materialism and the forces of secularization. And third, there is the Christian faith whose most

significant appeal today is through Pentecostalism, the more traditional Protestant mission and churches, and, to some extent, the renewal movement within the Catholic Church¹ which is now under the influence of liberation theology.

Emilio Willems, of Vanderbilt University, has made a thoughtful and revealing study of the rise of Protestantism in Brazil and Chile in his book Followers of the New Faith. His thesis is that Protestantism had its antecedents, if not its roots, in structural peculiarities of the traditional Brazilian and Chilean societies. During his course of study, Willems found that Protestantism was statistically stronger in industrialized and frontier areas. His research in Brazil was made both in the capital city of Sao Paulo and in the state as well.²

The Sao Paulo area is not only the unquestioned leader in industrial production in Brazil it also has the largest concentration of Protestants. According to Willems' report, 58.1 percent of the Protestants are found in the industrial zone which includes the capital city of Sao Paulo and the surrounding satellite cities.³ MARC Church Growth Data Bank reports that the increase of Protestant communicant membership from 1955-1966 in Sao Paulo represented a 145.8 percent gain in the twelve-year period.⁴ The projection of Protestant growth in the

¹William R. Read, New Patterns of Church Growth in Brazil (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), pp. 7-17.

²C. W. Gates, Industrialization: Brazil's Catalyst for Church Growth (South Pasadena, Calif.: William Carey Library, 1972), p. 3.

³Emilio Willems, Followers of the New Faith (Nashville, Tenn.: Vanderbilt University Press, 1967), p. 69.

⁴Gates, p. 59.

metropolitan area, based on the yearly average of 8.4 percent, gives micro-region 262 an estimated one million communicants in 1980.

There are indications that where people are ready to accept the message preached by other denominations they are ready to accept the Adventist message as well.

It is my personal belief that the strategy followed by other denominations can give useful clues to the Adventist evangelistic planning for the future.

3. The growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church itself constitutes the third important reason for undertaking this study. Presently Adventists in the metropolitan area of Sao Paulo have 85 churches and 122 companies with a total of 35,000 church members.¹ If these figures are compared with those found in other metropolitan areas around the world it is easy to see the uniqueness of the growth of Seventh-day Adventism in Sao Paulo.

For example, the SDA Church in Greater New York Conference had its beginning in 1851 with the organization of a church of 13 members. In 1979 there were in that metropolitan area 54 churches with a total of 7,121 members. This gives a yearly average growth of 55 members. The first Adventist church in the Southern California Conference area was organized in 1884 in San Pasqual. In 1979 there were 116 churches with a total of 34,823 baptized members, a yearly average growth of 374 members. Now when this information is compared with Adventist growth in the Sao Paulo area the following facts

¹Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1980), pp. 40, 88, 270.

are noted. The first church organized in East Sao Paulo Conference was in Sao Bernardo do Campos with fourteen baptized members. In 1979 in the area there were 44,271 members, a yearly average growth of 614 members¹ (see table 1).

TABLE 1
COMPARATIVE GROWTH STUDY OF THE SDA CHURCH IN
THREE METROPOLITAN AREAS

Conferences Including Metropolitan Areas of:	Year Organized	Initial Membership	Present No. of Churches	Present Membership	Population of Metropolitan Area	Yearly Growth	Numbers of Members per Inhabitants
New York	1851	13	54	7,121	12,354,864	55	1740
Los Angeles	1884	14	116	34,823	8,080,800	374	250
Sao Paulo	1908	14	152	44,271	13,075,433	614	300

This comparison indicates that there is something unique in Sao Paulo or in the work of the SDA Church here that should be investigated. The Church should know which methods should be emulated and which should be avoided when developing an evangelistic strategy for the future.

How does the SDA Church leadership plan for church growth for 1985, 1990, and beyond in an area of such restless migration, urbanization, and modernization? What are the forces that shape urban

¹Don F. Neufeld, ed., Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1976), s.v. "Brazil," "Greater New York Conference," "Southern California Conference."

culture? What are the prevailing moods, needs, and values? How can the gospel best get a hearing? How much is evangelism's strategy determined by the questions people are asking? What is the configuration of the good news in a society that is increasingly urbanized, secularized, and paganized? How can the Church help citizens come to grips with their personal alienation from God and their fractured relationship with others? What can be done for the vast number who feel no overwhelming need for God or for change? How does the SDA Church communicate the exclusiveness of Christ's claim as "The Way, the Truth and the Life" and His soon return in an increasingly pluralistic culture?

These and other questions are basic to the formulation of an urban evangelization strategy if the SDA Church is to be effective in fulfilling its mission. It is true that the Adventist Church cannot deal with all these questions at the same time, but as a responsible Church, its leaders should be aware of the real issues when developing the evangelistic program for the years to come.

Sao Paulo is a critical area that requires immediately this kind of church-growth research, and such a study cannot be made without the involvement of the whole church.

The situation found in Sao Paulo and in similar metropolitan areas calls for a search for new insights into the working of God in history and a fresh approach to the mission of the Church as it stands amid the currents of today. The Church must be a witness pointing to the mighty works of God as He holds the destiny of the whole world in

His hand and works out His purposes in history.¹ It was the awareness of this mission of the entire Adventist Church and a cognizance of the need for a greater evangelistic structuring in fast-growing metropolitan areas, such as Sao Paulo, that led to this project.

Objectives

The purpose of this research, then, is to discover and evaluate the factors that influenced SDA church growth in Sao Paulo during the last five years (1975-1979) so that the Church might more effectively administer its resources in developing a program for growth. The specific objectives of this project are:

1. To prepare a brief historical and sociological description of Sao Paulo and to reflect theologically on the action of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the field of urban church growth
2. To develop a survey instrument that may identify factors or methods that have influenced people to accept the Seventh-day Adventist message
3. To give the SDA Church in Sao Paulo an opportunity to evaluate its present outreach strategy
4. To identify elements necessary for the development of an adequate, harmonious, urban evangelistic program
5. To make recommendations as to how the SDA Church could allocate available human and material resources to its local churches in order to achieve best results.

¹Ligget, p. 88.

Limitations of the Study

In current church growth literature authorities recognize four different kinds of growth: (1) Numerical growth that is the perpetual ingathering of new disciples of Jesus Christ into the fellowship of local congregations or the gathering of new believers into new churches; (2) organic growth that has to do with the development of the church or a community. It concerns the internal structure of relationships within the body itself. As an example of that growth it is presented the choice of the seven in Acts 6:1-7, and the sending out of Barnabas and Saul to Antioch in Acts 13:1-13; (3) maturational growth that refers to the movement toward perfection and maturity, that is to say, the spiritual development of church members; (4) incarnational growth that is defined as the expansion of the church which is seen by its effects on its environment.¹

In this study, the concept of church growth is limited to numerical growth with particular attention given to membership increase through conversion in Sao Paulo metropolitan area in the last five years (1975-1979). The research was conducted only among new converts who received the Adventist message, who are now attending churches, and who were not reared in Adventist homes prior to age 15.

Reference is made to organic, maturational, and incarnational growth only as they relate to the promotion or hindrance of total membership growth.

¹Charles L. Chaney and Ron S. Lewis, Design for Church Growth (Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman Press, 1977), pp. 17-18.

Description of the Project

I was born in Sao Paulo and spent most of my ministry working in different areas of the Adventist Church in that city. Presently I teach public evangelism in the Adventist School of Theology in Sao Paulo.

Having been associated with and worked among Paulistanos, I am personally aware of the practices and way of life of most of the Sao Paulo churches. Most of the pastors of the churches in which the research was done studied in Brazil College and are my personal acquaintances. These factors have greatly facilitated gathering the necessary data and have also provided a better understanding of the feelings both of minister and laity regarding positive and negative factors which may have stimulated or hindered church growth.

Treasurers and clerks in the churches, in conjunction with their pastors, provided complete written statistical reports indicating the economic level of the churches, the number of baptized members, and the number of those who were added to the church in the past five years (1975-1979).

Stratification, done according to the consensus of the leadership of the East Sao Paulo Conference, was as follows:

1. The first factor was the size of the churches: (a) small churches--50 to 150 members; (b) middle-sized churches--151 to 350 members; and (c) large churches--351 or more members.

2. The second factor was the amount of tithe in the last ten-month period of 1979; (a) class A--churches with a tithe average higher than US \$500.00; (b) class B--churches with a tithe average from

US \$499.00 to US \$200.00; and (c) class C--churches with a tithe average below US \$199.00 per member.

These two stratification categories are shown in table 2.

TABLE 2
ECONOMIC AND SIZE STRATIFICATION
OF SAO PAULO CHURCHES

Class	Large Churches	Middle-sized Churches	Small Churches
A	Santo Andre Belem Pinheiros I.A.F. Brooklin Central		
B	Capao Redondo	Osasco Vila Maria Alvorada Santo Amaro Guarulhos Penha Vila Carrao Campo de Fora Mogi das Cruzes Bosque da Saude	
C		Jardim das Palmeiras	J. Maringa Embu V. Alpina Sapobemba Diadema J. Margarida Vila Re Guainazes V. Munhoz V. Industrial Grajau Campo Limpo Agua Raza V. Guarani Itapecirica

Table 2 Continued

Class	Large Churches	Middle-sized Churches	Small Churches
			J. Rosas Valo Velho Sto Eduardo J. Kennedy V. Ferreira J. Sao Luiz C. Sto Antonio J. Sao Bernardo Cruzeiro J. Lilah
TOTAL			
Class	Churches	Members	Questionnaires Answered
Class A	6	2,550	208
Class B	11	3,050	213
Class C	26	4,250	269
Total	43	9,850	693

3. The third factor used in the stratification of the Sao Paulo metropolitan area was based on the concept presented by Douglas A. Walrath in the book Understanding Church Growth and Decline 1950-1978.¹ He points out that within the metropolitan region there are three sub-groups--city area, suburbs, and fringe areas. Therefore a selection of respondents was made to include people from churches located in (a) city areas, (b) the suburban regions, and (c) urban fringe areas

¹Douglas W. Walrath, "Social Change and Local Churches: 1951-75," Understanding Church Growth and Decline 1950-1978, ed. by Dean R. Hoge and David A. Roozen (New York: Pilgrim, 1979), p. 252.

with an adequate number of churches proportionate to the total number of members in each category.

TABLE 3
STRATIFICATION ACCORDING TO ADVENTIST SOCIAL-CONTEXT
TYPOLOGY OF THE SAO PAULO AREA

Type of Area	Percentage of Members	Number of Churches and Companies
City Area	10	8
Suburban area	30	26
Urban fringe	60	166
Total	100	200

According to the consensus of the East Sao Paulo Conference administration the proportion of the total number in each category is:

(a) in the urban fringe area are located most of the small churches with about 60 percent of the membership; (b) in the suburban region are almost all the middle-sized churches with about 30 percent of the membership; and (c) in the city area are the large churches with about 10 percent of the members. There is an interrelation between the city area and the suburban region as well as with the urban fringe but not significant enough to deserve a special category.

On a Sabbath morning, during the regular worship hour, a special meeting was held in a separate room for those converted in the past five years. Questionnaires were administered by students of the Adventist School of Theology who were especially trained by the researcher for this purpose.

In the final stages of this investigation, survey data obtained from the questionnaires were sorted and tabulated by the computer facilities of Andrews University. These findings were then evaluated, analyzed, and interpreted. Conclusions were drawn and from them recommendations made.

Definition of Terms

Adventist. A shortened form for Seventh-day Adventist

Adventist Message. The fundamental Seventh-day Adventist beliefs as they appear in the Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook.¹

Church. The multi-level, formally organized governing bodies of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which include churches, local conferences and missions, union conference, and general conference.

church. A local congregation of laypersons who vote the new convert into membership.

Church leadership. Those who are administrators of the resources of the Church.

East Sao Paulo Conference. An organization of 132 churches located in the capital and littoral of Sao Paulo State.²

Member. One who is fully accepted as part of a local congregation, according to the requirements of the Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual.³

¹Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook (1980), pp. 5-6.

²Ibid., p. 270.

³Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual (Washington D.C.: General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists, 1976), pp. 50-74.

Nordestino. A Brazilian who was born in the states of the North-east of Brazil.

Pastor. The administrative and spiritual leader of a local congregation, who is ordained for such work.¹

Paulista. One who was born in Sao Paulo state.

Paulistano. One who was born in Sao Paulo city.

SDA. An abbreviation for Seventh-day Adventist.

Sao Paulo. The micro-region number 262 established in 1967 by a Brazilian Law, which is formed of 38 counties grouped around the core of Sao Paulo city itself.²

Spiritism. The term Spiritism, rather than Spiritualism, will be used to denote the new religious quality related to the special spiritualistic groups operating in Sao Paulo city.

Umbanda. A syncretic spiritualistic Afro-Brazilian religion developed in Brazil.

Overview of the Study

The study is divided into the following chapters:

Chapter I deals with the need of the study, states the objectives, gives a brief description of it, and defines terms used.

Chapter II provides a basis for understanding the theology upon which the SDA Church has developed its program of urban missionary expansion.

¹Manual for Ministers (Washington, D.C.: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1977), pp. 15-32.

²Read and Ineson, Brazil: 1980 (Monrovia, Calif.: A Division of World Vision International, 1973), pp. 153, 159.

Chapter III presents the historical and sociological background of the metropolitan area of Sao Paulo where the SDA Church has established about 200 congregations.

Chapter IV describes the main religious groups that are found in Sao Paulo as of 1980, and features the SDA Church in particular.

Chapter V analyzes the growth of the SDA Church during the past five years. Its objective is to determine how initial contact with Adventists was made and what influenced the new converts most to join the SDA Church.

Chapter VI contains the summary, the basis for conclusions, recommendations, and implications.

CHAPTER II

THE URBAN MISSION OF THE SDA CHURCH IN GREATER SAO PAULO

Urbanization

It is impossible to study the mission of the SDA Church in Sao Paulo metropolitan area without understanding urbanization and without recognizing other forces that are at work within the whole society of the city.

There are many definitions of urbanization. However, for the purposes of this research it is enough to say that urbanization is the concentration of an increasing proportion of a given population in a small geographical area. In fact, much of the population of the world is rapidly becoming urbanized, both in terms of the total population concentrated in urban places and in the growing number of urban areas.¹

Now if attention is focused on Brazil, the largest country of South America and its explosive population of 140 million, it is easy to recognize that the greatest urban center of Brazil is the metropolitan area of Sao Paulo.

A recent statistical report (1980) shows that the urbanization

¹Gottfried Oosterwal, "How Shall We Work the Cities from Within?" Ministry (June 1980), pp. 19, 20.

rate in Greater Sao Paulo is 97.66 percent and the demographic density is 5,460.80 inhabitants per square kilometer.¹ One official report on the city's Basic Urban Plan notes that in less than three decades the population of the municipality of Sao Paulo quadrupled, going from 1.3 million in 1940 to 5.8 million in 1969. In Greater Sao Paulo, during the same period the population grew from 1.6 million to 7.9 million. This phenomenal growth is explained, in a large measure, by the intense pace of economic development in the area, and--due to the rising increase of incomes--the heavy internal migration to this region.²

The rapid growth of the Sao Paulo metropolitan area presents many parallels in both population and church growth. According to Read and Ineson a high percentage of the Protestant communicants in Brazil is concentrated in the Sao Paulo industrial area,³ and the growth of the Evangelical Churches, mainly the Pentecostal churches, is higher there than in any other part of the country.

In the book Industrialization: Brazil's Catalyst for Church Growth, Charles Gates points out that the internal migration in Sao Paulo is a rural-urban migration.⁴ Herold Wesley Melvin, Jr., adds that religion plays a very important role in the integrative process of the migrants in the urban area of Sao Paulo.⁵ It seems that there are many factors

¹SEAD. Central de Dados e Referencias do Governo do Estado de Sao Paulo (Sao Paulo: Secretaria do Planejamento, 1980).

²Greenway, Urban Church Planting, pp. 21, 22.

³Read and Ineson, p. 49.

⁴Gates, p. 19.

⁵Herold Wesley Melvin, Jr., "Religion in Brazil: A Sociological Approach to Religion," Th.D. Dissertation (Boston University, School of Theology, 1970), p. 139.

that create a special situation in which the rural-urban migrant feels more free to make changes and to accept new religious views. If the above concept concerning Sao Paulo's population is true, it should be applicable not only to Pentecostal Churches but also to the Adventist Church. Thus the favorable attitude of the population created by urbanization demands that the Church should reevaluate its strategies.

Writing to Adventist ministers, Oosterwal points out that the Adventist mission today is not only a mission to the millions; it is a mission in and for the cities.¹ If the Church fails to communicate the gospel to the cities, it fails in its whole mandate, for the world the Church must evangelize today is an increasingly urban world. Therefore, with courage, creativity, and the right action, the SDA Church must prepare itself to face the challenge of Urban Mission.

Motivation for Church Mission

Truman B. Douglas suggests in The Job Shirk that there are great areas of the world where Christian churches have not really penetrated. These are in the strongholds of Hinduism, Islam, and the culture of modern cities.² In spite of the importance of the first two categories, this research is concerned with the last. More specifically, it is concerned with the problems which the Adventist Church faces in Sao Paulo. It is an appeal that out of "the constraining love of Christ" the Adventist organization should develop a deep awareness of the needs of the urban people and adequate strategies and motivation for

¹Oosterwal, pp. 19, 20.

²Truman B. Douglas, quoted by Henry J. Schmidt, in "The Urban Ethos," Mission Focus (September 1980), pp. 19, 20.

meeting them. If the Church believes it is the earthly representative of God's love for lost men, then it must recognize that the evangelization of the cities is its most serious challenge.

God is always looking for men who cannot exist without Him. Heppenstall says that man must never be thought as separate from God.¹ Man has not given qualities by which he can function independently of God. The moment man thinks he is independent of God, he destroys his identity. No longer can he see himself or understand himself as man. On the other hand, because God is love, love requires fullness of expression. God as love cannot live by Himself in an empty universe. Love requires a beloved. God expressed himself in creatures akin to Himself by holding communion with them.²

This, then, is precisely the mission of the Church--to provide room for relationship between God and man.³ The Church is the instrument of faith in the city. Faith, understood in its real meaning is always man's reaction to God's primary action,⁴ and the Church exists in urban areas to stimulate the reaction of man in face of the divine action of God in the person of Jesus Christ. Thus one can say that the motivation of the SDA Church is love--the love of God for man and the love of God in the heart of the Church members that leads them to look for those who are lost in the sinful situation of the cities.

¹Edward Heppenstall, Salvation Unlimited (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1974), p. 8.

²Ibid., p. 8.

³Rudolf Bultmann, "Pisteuō. . .," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, vol. 6 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-1976), p. 182.

⁴Ibid.

In reality it is on the basis of the example of Christ and the apostles that the SDA Church must establish its mission strategy today. A glimpse at the New Testament Church shows that the apostles were concerned about the cities of their time. Certainly they learned that concern from Jesus himself, for the Bible tells that "Jesus went about all the cities and the villages, teaching . . . and preaching . . . and healing."¹

The commitment of the Church should follow Paul's pattern as outlined in Apostles to the Cities by Roger Greenway: the conversion of sinners, the establishment of churches, and the witnessing of Christ's Lordship in society and in the world.²

In 1910 Ellen G. White⁵ wrote, "The work in the cities is the essential work for this time. When the cities are worked as God would have them, the result will be the setting in operation of a mighty movement such as we have not yet witnessed."³ God is seeking to help the people in the cities. He needs the helping hands of His Church in these huge urban centers. That he is a seeking, reconciling God is revealed in the act that immediately followed the rebellion of Adam and Eve. He sought them out, saying: "Where are you?"⁴ God's great heart of love immediately responded to man's predicament and reached out for him. On the grounds of nakedness rather than disobedience Adam begged the

¹Matt 9:35 (RSV).

²Roger Greenway, Apostles to the Cities (Grand Rapids, Baker Book House, 1978), pp. 79-96.

³E. G. White, Medical Ministry (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1910), p. 304.

⁴Gen 3:9 (RSV).

⁵E. G. White (1827-1915) is a co-founder of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, a prolific writer, and accepted by Adventists as endowed with the prophetic gift described in the Bible.

question and excused himself for hiding. All live in the dark shadow of Adam's sin. So all live in the shadow of the cross which reveals just how God's love led Him to redeem mankind. It is the merging of these two shadows that provides the Church with its mission in the cities of the world.

In very vivid words E. G. White spoke of the problem of the cities and called the attention of the Church to the challenge presented by them.

In the cities there are multitudes living in poverty and wretchedness, well-nigh destitute of food, shelter, and clothing; while in the same cities are those who have more than heart could wish, who live luxuriously, spending their money on richly furnished houses, on personal adornment, or worse still, upon the gratification of sensual appetites, upon liquor, tobacco and other things that destroy the power of the brain, unbalance the mind, and debase the soul.¹

And she further adds: "Much of the money that they thus invested had been obtained through exaction, through grinding down the poor."²

The Church cannot endorse the notion that the city's progress has a price which must be paid by its inhabitants. Such a notion has been repeated in connection with even the most varied problems: from pollution of the environment to inadequate urban facilities, from insufficient transportation and bad housing to the rising crime rate and sin.

Speaking on this subject, E. G. White has this comment:

¹Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, vol. 9 (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1938), p. 12.

²Ibid., pp. 12-13.