

the Occasional Bulletin

Evangelical Missiological Society

Website: www.Missiology.org/EMS

The “Weakest Feature” in Our Work

“The lack of high quality indigenous Christian literature is one of the weakest features of the modern Protestant missionary endeavor,” says Jack Graves of the Overseas Council on Theological Education. “David Barrett has reported at least 700 global plans to evangelize the world. We do not know of a single plan to begin providing basic theological text and reference books in the 43 educational languages around the globe (serving 85 percent of the world’s population)...A cooperative effort could address this critical educational need.”

Miriam Adeney

But translations will not be enough. Wherever there are Christian believers, there are kingdom stories that vibrate to be written. There are mature people with God-given wisdom. And there is a famine for hearing the words of God in context.

One country may boast graduate seminaries and pastors who read Greek. Another may pulsate with a young church and unschooled leaders. In both cases, the Holy Spirit can empower people to apply the whole counsel of God to their time and place. Imported, translated books cannot do that well. Trained local writers can. They will help us avoid “...the homogenizing pressures of globalization, where the gospel is treated like a hamburger—exactly the same size, shape, and

smell everywhere in the world,” in the words of Filipina Melba Maggay.

We need local books. We also need balanced content. When publishers ask merely, “What will sell?” we end

up with duplicate materials on current hot topics, while other equally important topics are overlooked.

Good writing must be proactive, not reactive. It must ask not only “What are the answers?” but also “What are the questions?” It cannot merely re-

spond to what people demand, but must probe whether those are the truly significant issues.

This is done best in community. To select a topic ought not to be merely the whim of an individual, or the marketing decision of a publisher, but the prayerful choice of a body of people who live in that context and care for it.

Lanka Bible College in Sri Lanka is not a wealthy school. Yet for 25 years they have stimulated the publication of original books both in Tamil and in Sinhalese languages. The faculty regularly discusses what the Church and the world need. After they have chosen a topic, they select a writer, who may or may not be on the faculty. They challenge the chosen writer to accept the task. They provide continuing encouragement. For short writing stints, pastors and alumni can

Wherever there are Christian believers, there are kingdom stories that vibrate to be written.

use the library and stay free of charge in the dorms. Graduating seniors with promise receive a personal exhortation to write from the president. This faculty has determined that their people will have a better understanding of the

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The *Occasional Bulletin* is published three times a year by The Evangelical Missiological Society (EMS). For more information about EMS, an application for membership in EMS, or a copy of the *Occasional Bulletin*, write: EMS, P.O. Box 794, Wheaton, IL 60189.

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Syncretism and Loyalty to Christ Research Questions

Gailyn VanRheenen

One of the most pressing topics of our generation is syncretism. People in a multicultural world tend to mix and mingle various appealing practices and beliefs. These tendencies frequently compromise the Christian message. Because of this trend, the EMS has chosen syncretism as its research topic for 2004. Regional meetings in the Spring and the national meeting in the Fall will all focus on this topic. The theme will be "Loyalty to Christ in a Syncretistic World." The EMS volume, published by William Carey Library in 2005 and edited by Dr. Gailyn Van Rheenen, will include seminal papers from the regional and national meetings. Following are the proposed research questions.

1 Definitions of Syncretism: What is syncretism? How is the word defined in missions and in theological literature? How do these differing meanings impact our research?

There is a tug of war concerning the meaning of syncretism. To evangelicals it is typically a pejorative term. Many in the academy, however, would define it positively as the search for wisdom and understanding drawn from multiple sources. How should we as evangelical missiologists respond to the current academic orientation towards syncretism?

2 Theological Reflection on Syncretism: What does scripture say on syncretism? What models of theological reflection should guide our understanding of syncretism?

These presentations could include (1) the process of theological formation, (2) Satan's role in syncretism, and (3) specific textual lessons such as the Colossian teaching on "The Fullness of Deity" and the contrast between Yahweh and the gods in the Old Testament, or other areas of interest to individual authors.

3 Syncretism and Social Paradigms: How do various social paradigms form models of perceiving reality that lead to syncretism? How do special social science paradigms form grids of understanding through which we view reality? What are processes for critically analyzing these models in light of scripture, reason, and religious traditions?

4 Triggers for Syncretism: What are catalysts for syncretism? How does seeking "common ground" or an undue emphasis on general revelation lead to syncretism? How has cultural oppression created environments conducive for syncretism? Does the structure and content of Western-style educational organizations create and spread syncretism? How and why do types of syncretism grow out of folk religions?

5 Effective Ministry and Syncretism: How has inadequate discipling or worldview transformation contributed to syncretism?

6 Case Studies of Syncretism: What specific illustrations enhance our understanding of syncretism? What lessons from these case studies can be applied to other contexts?

Possibilities for presentations include cases on "health and wealth gospel," the new spiritualities (New Religious Movements), especially the growth of Zen Buddhism in the Western world; discussion of strengths and limitations of C-5 contextualization in the Muslim world, and types of syncretism between Christianity and Buddhism.

7 Guidelines for Mediating Syncretistic Tendencies: What practical guidelines should shape the training for and practice of missions in light of the tendency to syncretize religious beliefs and practices? ■

Contextualization or Syncretism?

Norm Allison

The greatest risk of syncretism today, as in Jesus' day, comes not from those who are attempting to discover ways of expressing Christianity in non-western cultures (though there is great risk there). It comes, rather, from those who try, like the Pharisees and Judaizers, to preserve the foreign expressions of God's message. "The risk of syncretism is, however, always present. This fact should not be ignored or taken lightly" (Kraft 2001:348).

Charles Kraft wrote these words in an article for the *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* in 1978; however, they are no less true today than they were then. Syncretism, according to John Orme, IFMA executive director, is like "an odorless, tasteless gas, likened to carbon monoxide, which is seeping into our atmosphere. Church, mission and school are being tragically endangered and too often we are blissfully unaware of its ominous and insidious presence"

We come humbly to God, asking that he will guide and instruct us as we seek to understand and communicate his Word.

(*IFMA News*, Summer 2004). Syncretism is something we would like to think is not happening, but if we don't consider it seriously, think about it consistently, and pray against it regularly, it will be happening!

On September 23, in St. Louis, EMS members will come together with IFMA and EFMA for Triennial 2004. As we gather for this significant event, we recognize more than ever the great diversity of beliefs which compete for inclusion in the minds of people around the world. With the accessibility of knowledge increasing exponentially as you read these words, we

must insure that the meanings which we communicate are as nearly as possible those of the supracultural principles of Scripture which God Himself has communicated to us in his Word.

The issues are complex and must be approached from various perspectives. This is why we are dealing with the subject of syncretism in a meeting of church, mission, and academy. The program for the EMS/IFMA/EFMA Triennial will include approximately

thirty workshops and general session speakers, Ramesh Richard and Joseph Stowell. The goal of this important time together is that we look to God to give us deeper insights in the contextualization of the Gospel cross-culturally. The model for contextualization without syncretism is that of our Lord

Jesus Christ himself. We come humbly to God, asking that he will guide and instruct us as we seek to understand and communicate his Word.

As President of EMS, I am looking to the Lord to guide us, and I pray that when we return to our homes from this conference we will be more informed and sensitive to how others are understanding our communication of the Gospel. We so often assume that what we have in our minds and hearts is understood by recipients in the same way we are thinking about it, but we know that there is much distortion in the process, especially cross-culturally.

Increased understanding and better principles have helped us, but we need to better know how we can minimize that distortion so that what God communicated in His Word is understood correctly by ourselves, and through us to others in the clear and powerful way which He spoke to us. This is what we seek to know, and I trust that each of you who reads this will be planning to be with us in St. Louis during the days of September 23-25, 2004. I know for

The model for contextualization without syncretism is that of our Lord Jesus Christ himself.

you who are teaching it is a difficult time to get away, however, we have worked to make in on a weekend so that as many as possible can be there.

As we approach this great time together, may we do it prayerfully, with the firm belief which joins us in the fellowship of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In the words of the apostle Paul,

"O we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." 2 Cor. 4:2 [NLT]. ■

**Details of the EMS/EFMA/
IFMA TRIENNIAL can be found
on our EMS website at:**

www.EMSweb.org

There you will find information about the workshops, the people leading them, the general session speakers, full registration forms which may be downloaded, and the Airport Marriott Hotel.

When Theology, Missiology and Futurology Clash

Frank Kaleb Jansen

Theologians say “Teach the nations!” Missiologists proclaim: “We must finish the job!” Futurists predict: “The end is near!” What has a beginning must have an end. The creation will one day wear out, the heavens shall pass away, the elements shall melt, the oceans shall be no more. There shall be a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. The tabernacle of God shall be with man and he will dwell with them and they shall be His people (Rev. 21:3).

The Bible presents both the beginning and the end of time. It also presents He who is the Alpha and Omega—the first and the last, the beginning and the end. This of course does not mean that Jesus has a beginning nor an end since He is from eternity to eternity.

Christians of every age have asked the same questions the disciples did: “Tell us when shall these things be?” When theologians, prophets, and missiologists evaluate the time-line of the Church, Matthew 24 is probably the most quoted and referred to passage in the Bible. Echoes from great preachers like A.B. Simpson have sounded through our century: “Let us bring back the king,” meaning that through the completion of world evangelization we can “hasten the day of the Lord.”

We are rapidly approaching the third millennium, and many are those who wish the task of world evangelization could be completed so that Jesus can return. “Closure” has become a buzzword among missiologists. In many parts of the world there are great expectations regarding the advent of the year of the Lord AD 2000.

Dedicated Christians have always looked forward to and loved “His appearance”, and rightfully so. Most of the revivals in the last 150 years have

each had eschatology as a major focus, if not as their main theme. Many organizations and whole denominations believe that this time is the end and that the advent of Christ’s return is imminent. In the past some have

neglected their education or have not addressed the ills of society due to a sense of urgency to evangelize. Some have even borrowed huge amounts of money and mortgaged their homes to invest in evangelization for the purpose of bringing back the King.

However, let me ask a question, even if it appears to be a bit heretical! How biblical or theologically true is this? Are we interpreting Jesus’ words in the Olivet Discourse correctly, or are we trying to make God’s plan fit our own thinking?

When I did the mission atlas *Target Earth* (1989), Matt. 24 was my outline for the book. Therefore the 24th chapter of Matthew is probably the chapter I personally have dealt with more than anything else in the whole of Scripture. The topics and statistics were meant

for Christians to watch and even to quantify and qualify “the signs of the times.” In the closing words of the book, I wrote “there is a lingering whisper in my ear, a music that fills my mind: Yes I am coming soon. Amen, come Lord Jesus, come!”

I still watch these signs, and can tell you about the increasing magnitude and frequency of earthquakes, floods, and disasters (16 major ones in the 1960’s, 29 in the 1970’s, 70 in the 1980’s, a number that tends toward more than doubling in the 1990’s. California alone will suffer more disaster than the whole world did in the 1960’s. (A disaster is defined by the UN as an event that has killed at least 10 people or affected at least 100).

More than one million were killed by cyclones in the last 25 years, and almost half a million by floods. The waves of the North Atlantic have increased an average of 25% since the 1950’s. Hunger and pestilence are rampant. HIV/AIDS is expected to reach 40 million infected people

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by AD 2000 and its estimated cost worldwide is 500 billion US dollars per year. In addition, 1.3 million have died from draught.

People against people

In spite of talks of peace and no danger” and the “end of the cold war,” there is increased rise in nationalism, racism, and more ethnic strife than ever before. Then ironclad hand of communism has been replaced by lawlessness and “mafia-ism”. International organized crime and drug traffic add to more suffering. Chernobyl is not a disaster of the past! The covered up reactor is heating up again, and we can only hope and pray that scientists find a permanent solution before the next blow out “dwarfs the first one”. Divorce, family strife, babies killed in

their mothers' wombs, euthanasia, etc. are signs of the global disintegration of societies.

The heavens are being rolled back like a scroll. Man has polluted the atmosphere, the ozone layer is being depleted. The people of Australia and New Zealand have had to cover up because the life giving sun has become an enemy causing skin cancer. I keep statistics on all these signs and on many others. (I like Peter, Paul, and the first Christians) feel that I can await the rapture any time, day or night. I have dedicated my life to see every people adopted and reached, and to provide information and encourage the world wide body of believers to proclaim the gospel where it is still not heard. I believe that the knowledge of the glory of the Lord shall one day cover the earth as the waters cover the seas.

However, some of us as evangelical Christians have a tendency to focus on the dark side of developments. As if to say: The worse it gets—the better, because this is what the Bible tells us will be the sign of His return. In our cultural near-sightedness we tend to forget that these dramas have always pulsated throughout history and affected parts of our globe that we did not even know about until years later. In order to be a timely spokesman for the Lord, I need to report the good news, as well as a the bad.

The Good News

—**Never before** has there been revival and Church growth like in our time.

—**Never before** has the Church been globally present in every nation

—**Never before** has the Church been as multiracial as today

—**Never before** has the Word of God been available for 93-95% of mankind.

—**Never before** have so many nations had their own freedom as today. The number of UN nations has grown from 50 to 184, primarily an increase in democracies where people have a better prospect for self-determination than ever before.

—**Never before** has the world been

safer from the threat of a nuclear holocaust.

—**Never before** has life expectancy risen so high, or infant mortality so low; increased educational attainment and improved nutrition are happening at unprecedented pace - three times faster in developing countries of today than it once happened in the developed world.

—**Never before** has so much humanity enjoyed better physical conditions than today. In 1960, 70% of humanity resided in dismal human condition: only 32% suffer such conditions in the 1990's.

—**Never before** has the global domestic product (GDP) increased from \$3 trillion to \$22 trillion—7 times while the world population has barely doubled. The per capita income has increased three times.

—**Never before** has most of the world had immediate access to more

communications, i.e. telephone, television, and fax.

—**Never before** has modern travel been able to bring us to almost any spot on earth in shorter time than it took Charles Lindberg to cross the Atlantic (33 hours).

—**Never before** has technological ingenuity, medical breakthroughs, and space exploration been as astronomical, doubling our knowledge every 3 years.

—**Never before** has global military spending been as low; dramatically low even after years of increased spending.

—**Never before** have three quarters of the world's population lived under relatively pluralistic and democratic societies.

The challenge of Matt 24:14

With this as a backdrop, I boldly

share some thoughts with you that even might challenge the Greek scholars among missiologists and futurists. To get full understanding of Matt. 24:14 we have to understand the Greek words used as well as see their context. An interlinear, romanized translation, looks like this: *kai keruchthesetai*—and shall be proclaimed, *tuto te evangelion*—this gospel, *tes basileias*—of the kingdom, *en hole te oikumene*—in whole the inhabited world, *eis martyriion*—as testimony, *pasin tois eksei*—and then shall come, *to telos*, the end.

The “proclaiming” action has a form—*kerusso*. *Kerux* is a herald, a spokesman with authority from the king. The messenger is not the important focus—his message is. His right and duty is to proclaim it loudly and publicly. *Kerusso* is not a teaching or a discussion of the truth. It is a proclamation and a statement of fact. “This has happened!”

I believe that the knowledge of the glory of the Lord shall one day cover the earth as the waters cover the seas.

“Of the gospel”—*evangelion*. This word for the contemporary Greek speaker was the technical term for good news victory from the battlefield i.e. VICTORY IS WON! It could also be good political news or personal news. Only a true *kyrios*—an emperor or lord could order a herald to proclaim such news. So we can say that Jesus' time was full of gospels. It was therefore a bold challenge to the existing order for Him to commission the proclamation -of this gospel.

Tes basileias—the kingdom. This gospel of the kingdom is more than proclamation of salvation, grace, and mercy for sinners. The Kingdom is the main theme of Jesus' teachings and runs like a scarlet thread through the entire New Testament, reaching its completion in the book of Revelation. *Basileia* is the domain of the *Basilev*—the legitimate king—as compared and contrasted

to the domain of a *Tyrannos*—a ruler who has grabbed the power by force or cunning. Jesus proclaims that the King is here, and He demonstrates for the demonic powers as well as to men, the King's authority, "but if I will by the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you? (Luke 11:20).

The gospel that Paul proclaimed to the Gentiles to make them obedient in word and deed "through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God" is the same power that Jesus had when He said "ALL power is given unto me in heaven and IN EARTH." That and nothing less, is the gospel from the King of Kings, the rightful ruler on earth and in the heavens about the Kingdom, and we believers are commissioned to proclaim it.

Eis martyrion—as a testimony. The word is from the legal language, although in church history it gave name to the costliest of testimonies, the martyr—to stand firm on the truth until death. The *martyria* is a first hand

to have a map that filled the whole wall in my office where every village in the Soviet Union was plotted. Matt 24:14 is not Jesus' visionary plan, nor is He suggesting the idea and need of evangelizing—He is stating the fact as the true prophet—IT SHALL BE proclaimed. "It ought to be done, it can be done, and it will be done" as D. L. Moody said.

Pasin tois ethnosin—all the peoples before the throne of heaven. The concept of peoples becomes the slogan for the people group movement. The rallying cry for the AD 2000 Movement is a Church for Every People, and The Gospel for Every Person. They truly have God's perspective, because He seeks every soul and His Son died for every person. Salvation is provided for anyone and everyone that will receive Jesus as Lord and Savior. Our Lord is not happy with a few Christians, 2% or 20% in every people group. He Himself became the true *martyrion* for all mankind so that none would perish. The children of Abraham in heaven

seems to have a different meaning in these contexts. The disciples wanted to know about "the end of the world".

The phrase "day of the Lord" is another description used in both the Old and New Testaments. Peter writes dramatically about that in his letters, referring to the prophet Joel and to Jesus' prophecy in Matthew 24:27-29 and 25:30-32 or *Dies Irae*—the day of wrath. Apparently that day was hidden from him and was so incomprehensible that the translator of the old King James authorized version even omitted the original Greek words of the manuscript *ude ho hylōs*—neither the Son. Jesus consequently refuses to satisfy the disciples' curiosity. "It is not for you to know" as He said in Acts 1:7. I thank God for the wisdom, not to reveal to the disciples, what we now know, that the end they were asking about was more than 1900 years away! But He reminded them, and so to us "Watch, stay awake, be ready at any time." This has been and will always be His message to the Church, because "I come in the hour you think not."

Allow me to suggest that the *telos* Jesus is talking about in verse 13 is not the end of the world (as the end of time), but rather has a different meaning. He could not have meant only those few who happened to live, and endure, when the end of the world comes, would be saved.

So what is the most likely meaning of "end" in Matthew 24:14? Originally *telos* meant a turning point or the high point from the root *tel*—turn around. Progressively it developed the meaning of goal completion or the end. In classic Greek it is used to describe reaching the full development as that of becoming an adult, and no longer being a child or a youth. It also has the meaning of closure, as for instance in death. Primarily in Greek philosophy the word stands for completion, to be complete, or to reach a goal.

The New Testament has a whole group of words related to *telos* (used 41 times) like *teleiotes* (2 times), *teleioises* (2 times), *teliotēs* (1 time), *telejoo* (24 times) *telesforse* (1 time), *teleo* (26 times), *teleios* (20 times). The

The Kingdom is the main theme of Jesus' teachings and runs like a scarlet thread through the entire New Testament, reaching its completion in the book of Revelation.

personal witness about what really has happened. It is not a scholarly observation or a piece of art about Jesus, how good and beautiful that may be. Only those born into the Kingdom "through water and the Spirit" (John 3:5) can truly testify about the Kingdom and what they have received. Only they are equipped to testify first hand about what has happened.

En hole te oikumene—in the whole (inhabited) world. The interesting word here is *oikumene* that comes from *oikos*=house or home. I believe Jesus is actually saying that this gospel of the Kingdom shall be proclaimed to EVERY HOME. The bureaucrats in the former USSR knew that they had 469,254 homes in their land. I used

shall be as numerous as the stars in heaven or the sand on the sea shore, a multitude greater than any one can count; redeemed from all peoples of the earth.

When this Gospel is proclaimed as a testimony, *hole te oikumene and pasin tois ethnosin*, then the end will come—*tote eksi te telos!* The key word here of course is *telos*—end. But what is the precise meaning of "the end" here in this passage?

The disciples had just asked Jesus (V3) "and what shall be the sign of your coming, and the end of the world? Here the Greek word is not *telos* but *sunteleta*. In verse 13 Jesus talks about "he that shall endure unto the end (*telos*) shall be saved." "End"

meanings center around the concept: to reach a goal, to make complete, to fulfill, to close or to finish something. When Paul writes that Christ is the *telos* of the law (Rom. 10:4), he does not want to say that the law is terminated, rather that the law has come to an end because Christ is the fulfillment of the law

1 Timothy 1:5 says "Now the end (*telos*) of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart." The end of the age has a dual meaning—the age of fulfillment, reaching the intended purpose for this era, as well as the closing of this age.

It seems that Jesus is not talking about the end or the point in time when time is no more. Neither is He talking about the day of judgment, the "day of the Lord," nor is He talking about the rapture or His return in glory in this verse. Those things are addressed later on in the Olivet Discourse. Rather the end is something

coming, not a point in time. It refers to an era of fulfillment after the gospel of the kingdom has been proclaimed in power for all peoples in every habitat. The point will come when the nations have not only heard the good news, but they have been disciplined - taught to obey Jesus' every command.

The end therefore does not happen as a sudden moment of history when the last people group is reached. It rather begins when the light comes to those who are in darkness, when they are set free from Satan's power. In some sense, the day Jesus received me in His kingdom was the end *telos* of my life as a sinner, and the coming of the era of fulfillment of God's intended purpose for my life—the great turning point in my life. It is in some degree the same for each people group, tribe, nation, language, and people.

I know many of my readers may now react because to change the understanding of "the end" to make it

mean "the beginning" is fairly radical. But we need to remember that neither my understanding, or for that matter anyone's understanding of eschatology will change God's plans in the least. The point is this: we have a theology that makes us ready at any time and any day. This readiness joined with a missiology that makes us press on to proclaim Jesus where He is not known—gives us hope, purpose, and comfort, rather than fear and despair for the future.

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This article is reprinted with permission from the International Journal of Frontier Missions Vol. 12, Number 1, January-March 1995. ■

The "Weakest Feature" in Our Work

Continued from page 1

great themes of the faith each year because of the books that are being sent to press now.

"All our preaching, week in and week out, should gradually unfold the 'whole counsel of God,' and so contribute to the development of Christian minds in the congregation," says John Stott. Shouldn't our publishing, year in and year out, develop Christian minds in our people across the land?

In every country, a prayerful group can set five and ten year publishing goals. The more comprehensive the group, the better.

God's truth is also for the world. Thoughtful nonbelievers read books like *Senhor, Sara a Nossa Terra (Lord, Save Our Land)* by Brazilian Paulo Proscurshim. This book tackles tough issues that affect citizens in general. Here the Christian worldview is shown to be reasonable and relevant—indeed, it may be the salt that flavors the national stew.

In India, Christian freelancer Pamela Ninan writes about social is-

suues for secular periodicals, Christian programs for prisoners, prostitutes, alcoholics, and the poor are newsworthy. As a writer gives reasons for such a program, theological themes unroll naturally.

From art to microloans, from ecology to ethnicity, from sports to science, Christians can speak to the general reader. Consider Christmas and Easter articles. Malaysian Bob Teoh published a Christmas piece in the *Singapore New Straits Times* in December 2003. With direct quotes from Luke and Isaiah, the article is biblical, tactful, richly contextual, and spiced with humor.

Or consider local biographies and church histories. Without these, the next generation will be poorer. In Nepal, Solon Karthak has published *Three Pearls of the Creator*, the biographies of three early Nepali Christians. In Myanmar, Grace Hla has published *Prayer Arrows and Love Bullets*, the story of an indigenous mission movement that sent 300 young adults across borders for three years in the 1970s. In Malaysia, Hilmy Nor has published

Circumcised Heart, the account of his fourteen months in prison as a Malay follower of Jesus.

If we are going to help brothers and sisters grow to maturity in Christ, and if we are going to share the good news in the secular arena in ways that are winsome, articulate, and compelling, so that it is indeed good news, we will need good publications.

Excellent evangelical agencies that offer international training for writers and publishers include Media Associates International, Magazine Training Institutes, Cook Communications Ministries International, and, for Latinos, Letra Viva network.

This article was first published in the February 27, 2004 Vol 39, No. 4 issue of World Pulse. Website: www.worldpulseonline.com, e-mail: <info@worldpulseonline.com>.

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The EMS constituency has many writers and publishers. But are we falling into the consumer trap of "what sells?" or "what is the latest hot topic or fad that people are talking about?" Miriam Adeney has challenged us to develop publications that are not only marketable in the local languages and dialects where missionaries work, but also relevant to the community needs that will help people biblically and spiritually. She gives several examples of good literature produced by national authors. We do well to take heed to her advice to have good publications that will help nationals to "grow into maturity in Christ."

What is the meaning of end times and the coming of the Lord in rela-

As seen
through
the Lenz . . .



tion to world evangelization? Even though the article is an old reprint, Frank Jansen has given us a thoughtful perspective on the last days, and a word study on the concept of the Greek word *telos* in relation to the world being reached before Christ returns. His conclusion might seem "radical" (his word), but reflecting on the word in relation to Christ's return gives us something to think about.

Our annual conference is around

the corner, and hopefully this issue will be in your hands before September 23, which is the theme of the conference this year. Gailyn Van Rheenen has done us a service in preparing research questions to consider on the topic of syncretism. This will prove helpful as we interact and dialogue with the speakers and topics during the sessions. Take this edition of *OB* with you to conference and use it as a guide in your thinking. At the same time share your copy with others and ask them if they are members of EMS (?). Thanks Gailyn for your thoughtful insights! Norm Allison has also contributed his thoughts to the annual meeting in this edition. As always, Norm has a good handle on our direction in EMS.



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