2-2020

The Value of Cultural Hospitality within the Seventh-Day Adventist Church in the United States of America

Kara Johnsson

GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY

THE VALUE OF CULTURAL HOSPITALITY WITHIN THE SEVENTH-DAY

ADVENTIST CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO

THE FACULTY OF PORTLAND SEMINARY

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

KARA JOHNSSON

PORTLAND, OREGON

FEBRUARY 2020

Portland Seminary
George Fox University
Portland, Oregon

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

_____

DMin Dissertation

_____

This is to certify that the DMin Dissertation of

Kara Johnsson

has been approved by
the Dissertation Committee on February 20, 2020
for the degree of Doctor of Ministry in Leadership and Spiritual Formation

Dissertation Committee:

Primary Advisor: Phil Newell, DMin

Secondary Advisor: Sarita Edwards, PhD

Lead Mentor: MaryKate Morse, PhD

DEDICATION

To my love, Dr Terry Lyndon Johnsson. Thank you for sharing the adventure of this life with me.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

iv

EPIGRAPH

Hospitality may be a mark of God's new reign, and strangers may be its bearers.[1]
Amy G. Oden

---

[1] Amy G. Oden, ed. And You Welcomed Me: A Sourcebook on Hospitality in Early Christianity (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2001), 52.

Table of Contents

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

SDA: Seventh-day Adventist

Adventist: Seventh-day Adventist

ABSTRACT

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in the United States has the ironic and complex tension of being the most ethnically diverse denomination, as well as one of the most structurally segregated in terms of ethnicity. This structural segregation both highlights and represents a deep need for the development of intercultural community. The intentionality and value of unified diversity can be traced from the very beginning of Scripture through to Revelation, with Jesus living out its expression during his ministry here on earth. Significantly, the practice of hospitality is also a strong theme that is traced throughout the breadth of Scripture, providing both challenge and encouragement. Biblically defined as "love of the other," it is a core tenant of the gospel and serves as a step in the journey toward greater unified diversity of cultures, providing both impetus from its theological imperatives and a possible framework for moving forward. This framework, referred to as "Cultural Hospitality," suggests three practices that would assist the Seventh-day Adventist church in experiencing greater cultural unity: the practice of humility, welcome, and empathy. Each individually significant on their own, when practiced together, they provide a scaffolding that facilitates growth in intercultural unity. Humility provides a foundational awareness and posture that supports the practice of welcome. The practice of welcome, making space for the "cultural other" within one's community, worship experience, and leadership, in turn facilitates a growth in meaningful relationships that enable the practice of empathy. Practicing empathy leads to repentance and lament, a personal stake in, and concern, for issues of justice. In embracing the blessing of Cultural Hospitality, not only would the church enjoy the fruit

of a fuller expression of the gospel, but it would also have far greater relevance and

evangelistic reach within the rapidly diversifying society of the United States.

CHAPTER 1:

DIVERSE AND SEGREGATED: A COMPLEX TENSION AND OPPORTUNITY

It is a suburb that has attracted many Seventh-day Adventists over the decades, built around significant Adventist institutions such as a hospital, publishing house, elementary and high schools as well as a university. Further, its location is a cultural gateway to the United States. The potential for shared blessing is immense: enrichment from intercultural relationships, shared resources, and a deeper understanding of God through the different cultural lenses available. Yet within a five-mile radius, this denominational community is split into over 13 churches, many of which are racially specific, some of which are struggling to survive. How might Cultural Hospitality provide renewed energy, enrichment and shared blessing to this community of faith?

The light has been shining within a local Seventh-day Adventist Church community for over 90 years but shining in predominantly one color. As the suburbs in which it calls home have become increasingly rich in cultural diversity, it has maintained a strongly White American culture. While the median age of its congregants increase, overall membership steadily decreases. Passionate about sharing the gospel, its members express concern and frustration over how few people it appears to be reaching, particularly in its local surrounding community. How might Cultural Hospitality help to remove a critical barrier that is blocking the fullness of God's light in their surrounding community?

Seventh-day Adventists from the United States went to the far reaches of the earth to share the gospel to "every nation, kindred, tongue and people" and share it they did. Extensively. As globalization and immigration has progressed, many international

brothers and sisters have now come to the shores of the United States, bringing with them a shared spiritual heritage as well as their own unique cultural contribution to the Kingdom of God. Yet as they have settled in different cities, how accessible have the local church congregations been? Are racially specific churches fueled by language barriers alone, or are there deeper issues within the Seventh-day Adventist denomination in the United States? How might Cultural Hospitality enrich cultural relationships within an increasingly diverse denomination?

This dissertation explores both the call and value of unified diversity as well as the practice of hospitality, as traced throughout the biblical scriptures. It contends that unified cultural diversity is a much-needed focus for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the United States and that the practice of hospitality serves as a significant step in facilitating this.

A Complex Tension: Diverse and Segregated

The Seventh-day Adventist church within the United States faces the complex tension of being both incredibly diverse yet significantly segregated. "The gospel to every nation, tribe, kindred and tongue" is the mission that Seventh-day Adventists have firmly held to since the early stages of their development as a church. Today, with over 18 million members and an established presence in more than 200 countries, the Seventh-day Adventist Church could be regarded as one of the most culturally rich denominations in the world.[1] Yet within the United States, it has the ironic and complex tension of being

---

[1] "Seventh-day Adventist World Statistics 2014," Official website of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, accessed April 30, 2019, https://www.adventist.org/en/information/statistics/article/go/-/seventh-day-adventist-world-church-statistics-2014.

the most ethnically diverse denomination (see Appendix A), as well as one of the most structurally segregated in terms of ethnicity.[2] This structural segregation both highlights and represents a deep need for the development of intercultural community within the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the United States.

A Segregated Church Structure

A significant level of racial segregation has been built in to the Seventh-day Adventist Church administrative structure within the United States. The Seventh-day Adventist Church's world headquarters, known as the General Conference, is located in Washington, D.C. Employing a representative form of government, it is hierarchically organized into three tiers, each overseeing the next: Unions, Conferences, and local churches. Within the North American Division of the General Conference, the bottom two tiers are structurally segregated along Black and White[3] lines. There are nine Black conferences, known as "regional conferences," which cover differing areas within the United States,[4] many of which overlap other nonregional conference areas. The majority

---

[2] Cleran Hollancid, "Seventh-Day Adventists and 'Race' Relations in the U.S.: The Case of Black-White Structural Segregation" (DMin diss., Western Michigan University, 2016), i, https://www.scholarworks.wmich.edu/dissertations/1419.

[3] Terminology in regards to race can have unintended negative connotations. For the purposes of this dissertation, I have chosen to use the term "Black" to describe African Americans and African American churches, and "White" to describe Caucasians, particularly depicting the White American majority culture churches, as they are the most commonly used terms within the research that I have consulted.

[4] The nine regional conferences along with the areas they cover are listed as follows:
Northeastern Conference – Jamaica, New York
Allegheny East Conference – Boyertown, Pennsylvania
Allegheny West Conference – Columbus, Ohio
Lake Region Conference – Chicago, Illinois
Central States Conference – Kansas City, Kansas
South Atlantic Conference – Atlanta, Georgia
Southeastern Conference – Mount Dora, Florida
South Central Conference – Nashville, Tennessee

of African American churches fall under the regional conference administration, while

other churches, including many ethnic-specific ones, belong to nonregional conferences.

The west coast of the United States does not have regional conferences, rather, the

majority of their conferences have a regional director responsible for Black ministries. A

slightly different format again, has been adopted by the Southern California Conference.

That particular conference is split into four ethnically grouped regions (Hispanic, African

American, Southeast Asian, and White), each with a director serving predominantly their

respective ethnic churches.[5] At the local church tier, most churches are organized and

identified (if not White) by ethnicity, such as the "Korean SDA[6] Church," the "Romanian

SDA Church," or the "Russian SDA Church." Some of these churches are language

specific, but not necessarily. There are some intentionally established multicultural

church congregations within the North American Division, but they are not common.[7]

This structural segregation was largely introduced as a way of abating the growing racial

tension between the church's administration and its African American constituents during

the mid-twentieth century.

Southwest Region Conference – Dallas, Texas
"North American Division," Official website of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, accessed April 30, 2019, https://www.adventist.org/en/world-church/north-american/.

[5] "Regions," Southern California Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, accessed April 30, 2019, https://scc.adventist.org/regions.
[6] The terms "SDA" and "Adventist" are used interchangeably to refer to the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

[7] Gerald Hansel Jones, "A Model for Multicultural Worship Developed at the Fallbrook Seventh-day Adventist Church" (DMin dissertation, Andrews University, 2013), 76, https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dmin/63.

Racial Prejudice & Tension

This segregated administrative structure reflects much deeper experiences of

racial segregation and prejudice within it history, experiences that still echo pain today.

Regional conferences were organized in 1944 as a proposed solution to the heightened

tension and lack of equality experienced by Seventh-day Adventist African Americans

within their denomination.[8] With its roots in the United States, the Seventh-day Adventist

Church did little to stand apart from the wider society's prejudiced and segregated culture

and laws. It was not until as late as 1965, that "the General Conference committee

resolved that no denominational institutions, most of which had followed the prevailing

local custom, could practice racial discrimination."[9] Highly influential leader and writer

within the Adventist church, Calvin Rock comments that

> As was typical, the Seventh-day Adventist church was not merely guarded in its response to the era's racial tensions and disparities; it functioned in strict obedience to the patently discriminatory laws of the land, believing that it should leave issues of civil and social justice exclusively to civic authorities. In consequence, Black Adventists found themselves locked out of worship in White churches, denied admittance to White hospitals and schools, shut out of policy making/leadership positions within the church structure, and generally embarrassed in the Black community because of Adventism's radical withdrawal from social protest.[10]

According to historian Delbert W. Baker, very few administrative positions were

available to African Americans despite their growing numbers. Further, the limited

---

[8] Calvin B. Rock, *Protest & Progress: Black Seventh-day Adventist Leadership and the Push for Parity* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2018), 48.

[9] Gary Land, "Coping with Change 1961–1980," in *Adventism in America,* ed. Gary Land, Godfrey T. Anderson, & Wm. Frederick Norwood (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998), 17.

[10] Rock, *Protest & Progress: Black Seventh-day Adventist Leadership and the Push for Parity*, 30.

number of African American individuals who did work in the General Conference itself were not permitted to eat in the general cafeteria with everyone else.[11] Even when an administrative department was eventually established in 1909 for "The North American Negro," the leader for the first nine years was white.[12]

This ongoing injustice was not without protest from the Seventh-day Adventist African American community. In 1906, an African American congregation, The People's Church of Washington, D.C., petitioned the General Conference "to retain tithes and offerings in view of racial exclusion from institutions built in Takoma Park, combined with failure to fund separate black institutions."[13] This petition was rejected and The People's Church would find itself in a continuing struggle with the denomination in the coming decades. In the ensuing years, there were also prominent African American pastors who withdrew their membership; Pastor Lewis Sheafe and Pastor John W. Manns started the Free Seventh Day Adventist denomination in 1916 as a way of resisting the inequality within the Seventh-day Adventist denomination and in 1929, Pastor James Humphrey, along with his local church, separated from the denomination after he was defrocked for not "cooperating" with administration.[14] Despite such significant ongoing protest from their African American constituents, the administration did little to address their concerns.

---

[11] Delbert W. Baker, "Regional Conferences: 50 Years of Progress," *Adventist Review* (November 1995): 12, accessed May 1, 2019, http://www.blacksdahistory.org/files/101748135.pdf.

[12] Jones, "A Model for Multicultural Worship Developed at the Fallbrook Seventh-day Adventist Church," 76.

[13] Benjamin Baker, *African American Seventh-day Adventist Timeline 1900–1944*, Black SDA History, accessed May 30, 2019, http://www.blacksdahistory.org/1900–1944.html.

[14] Baker, *African American Seventh-day Adventist Timeline 1900–1944*.

This ongoing racial tension within the Adventist church came to a head in what is now referred to as the "Lucy Byard Case." Regarded by historians as "the final link in a long and thick chain of SDA systematic racial discriminatory practices,"[15] Lucy Byard, an African American woman in need of medical attention, chose to be taken to her church's Washington Adventist Hospital. Due to her light skin color, she was initially admitted. However, as soon as it was found that she was not "white," she was discharged notwithstanding her medical needs. She then endeavored to obtain medical care at the Freedmon's hospital, located on the other side of town, but tragically died before she arrived.[16] The outrage that arose from this horrendous treatment served as a catalyst for change within the Seventh-day Adventist administrative structure as it pertained to regional conferences.

It was at this juncture that a trajectory towards the establishment of segregated conferences within the administrative structure of the North American Division was set in motion. A committee was formed by African American church members who produced and widely circulated the statement document "Shall the Four Freedoms Function Among Seventh-day Adventists?" which was a clear theological apologetic against the inequality and segregation that existed within the denomination.[17] Rock asserts that "the broad circulation of protest materials, including missives to top Adventist church leaders by this blue-ribbon group of academicians, government employees, and other professionals,

---

[15] Hollancid, "Seventh-Day Adventists and 'Race' Relations in the U.S.: The Case of Black-White Structural Segregation.," 62.

[16] Baker, "Regional Conferences: 50 Years of Progress," 12.

[17] "*Shall the Four Freedoms Function Among Seventh-day Adventists?*" ed. Benjamin Baker, Black SDA History, accessed May 1, 2019, http://www.blacksdahistory.org/files/128590723.pdf.

jolted the church system and awakened White church leadership to new and potentially very divisive currents in the church."[18] It was in response to this call for justice and equality, that the General Conference administration proposed to introduce regional conferences. Bert Haloviak observes that "the momentum from General Conference headquarters for movement toward Black conferences sprang from a realization that SDA institutions were unwilling for integration to occur."[19] Ricardo Graham expands on this, stating that "the formation of Black conferences was proposed by the White leadership as a response to Black SDAs request for integration," and that "making the best of the situation, they settled for self-determination… [opting] to take full advantage of the separation that was foisted upon them by White leadership."[20]

The introduction of regional conferences provided a certain degree of self-determination for Seventh-day Adventist African Americans but did nothing to alleviate the strong racial prejudice that continued to be a cultural reality throughout much of the Adventist Church in the United States. During the proceeding decades, "membership and admission were still not being granted in White churches, schools, and hospitals in the South and much of the Midwest."[21] In researching the experience of students attending Oakwood College (a regional Adventist college located in Alabama) during the civil rights era, Holly Fisher found that African American students who attempted to worship

---

[18] Rock, *Protest & Progress: Black Seventh-day Adventist Leadership and the Push for Parity*, 47.

[19] Bert Haloviak, "Impact of SDA Eschatological Assumptions on Certain Issues of Social Policy" (paper presented at Race Summit Workshop, October 27, 1999), 15, http://www.blacksdahistory.org/files/118422186.pdf.

[20] Ricardo B. Graham, "Black Seventh-day Adventists and Racial Reconciliation," in *Perspectives: Black Seventh-day Adventists Face the Twenty-first Century*, ed. Calvin Rock (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1996), 136.

[21] Rock, Protest & Progress: Black Seventh-day Adventist Leadership and the Push for Parity, 98.

in local White churches were met with extremely hostile resistance. Holly states that White members "frequently would change the order of Sabbath School (comparable to Sunday School) and the regular worship hour (11 o'clock) so that the students would miss the service. At other times, the White deacons and other church officials called the local police to 'efficiently' remove the students from church property."[22] Further, students were discouraged, and even penalized, by the college for taking part in activities supporting the Civil Rights Movement.[23] Samuel G. London would add that this illustration was not isolated to Oakwood College and that "most Adventists did not participate in the civil rights movement."[24] Drawing on unpublished research by James Kyle Lewis Jr. who analyzed the denomination's official publications during the years of 1956–1966, he found that the denomination was "practically silent on the issue of black civil liberties."[25] It was not until as late as 1965 that the General Conference committee took steps to address the systematic prejudice within their institutions, moving that no denominational institution such as hospitals, colleges, and schools, could practice racial discrimination.[26]

The mandate against the practice of racial discrimination within its institutions was a significantly positive step, however, the segregated regional structures, along with a deeper spiritual need for healing and intercultural community, remained. Sociologist Cleran Hollancid, whose dissertation explored race relations within the Seventh-day

---

[22] Holly Fisher, "Oakwood College Students' Quest for Social Justice Before and During the Civil Rights Era." The Journal of African American History 88, no. 2 (Spring, 2003): 11, ProQuest.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Samuel G. London, *Seventh-day Adventists and the Civil Rights Movement* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2009), 3.

[25] London, Seventh-day Adventists and the Civil Rights Movement, 4.

[26] Land, "Coping with Change 1961–1980," 174.

Adventist Church, posits that though today's segregation within Adventism may not be as oppressive as it was during the Jim Crow era, with the majority of Blacks today preferring local control of church administration, the structure itself "is a direct continuation of Jim Crow mentality, unchecked prejudicial attitudes, and rampant racial discriminatory practices and policies."[27] This dissertation is not focused solely on the experience of African Americans within the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the United States, but rather, the broader need for intercultural unity. However, their unaddressed painful and unjust experience is not only a significant factor in this context, but also serves to vividly illustrate the deep need for the development of Cultural Hospitality within the denomination.

The intentionality and value of cultural diversity and hospitality are both central themes throughout the Old and New Testaments, revealing a desire by God for his people to experience the immense benefits of cultural diversity. Traced from the very beginning of Creation, through the life of Jesus and the early church and pointing forward even to the throne room of God, unified diversity is continually featured and upheld. The journey to experiencing this unified diversity as a church is not necessarily simple or without challenge, but its value is immense, particularly in a nation whose very own society is becoming increasingly multicultural.

The practice of biblical hospitality is also a central theme throughout the scriptures. Its definition, love of "the other," is particularly applicable to intercultural relationships. In exploring the applicability of biblical hospitality to these particular needs

---

[27] Cleran Hollancid, "Racial Segregation Practice in a Religious Context," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 23, no. 2 (2012): 60, https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1105&context=jats.

within the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the United States, this dissertation draws out a model of disciplines that serve as steps in the journey towards the experience of unified cultural diversity. Termed as "Cultural Hospitality," it provides both impetus from its theological imperatives as well as a possible practical framework for moving forward.

Cultural Hospitality is not without its challenges and complexity, yet the potential blessings that it holds for the Seventh-day Adventist Church are significant. Its practice would increase the diversity and intercultural awareness within congregations. In a society that is rapidly becoming multicultural and skeptical of religion, Cultural Hospitality has the potential to lead churches to become far more relevant to the communities in which they seek to minister. In doing so, the evangelistic potential for sharing the gospel is greatly enhanced. Further, the development of diverse communities within church congregations gives strength and serves to develop much needed awareness and concern for issues of social justice. The nature of its disciplines also gives it an adaptability that lends itself to the complexity of contexts that churches find themselves in.

CHAPTER 2:

A THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISM'S

HISTORICAL RACIAL ROOTS

Adventism Birthed in a Racialized United States

The segregated cultural dynamics that were so vividly observable in the experiences of African Americans during the early decades of the denomination, and which culminated in the implementation of structural and institutional segregation, finds at least some of their roots in the historical context in which the Seventh-day Adventist Church was formed. As a denomination founded in the United States, there is a wider historical context pertaining to racial dynamics that has influenced the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The exploitation and enslavement of men and women from the continent of Africa became a central facet to the financial, cultural, and religious identity of the United States of America. Slavery's permeating presence was found in every one of the English colonies that would become the United States, lasting for two centuries.[1] In and of itself, slavery was not unusual in the world at that time and its trade was not confined to the United States alone; both Spain and Portugal had been active in the slave trade as early as the 1400s and Latin America ended up receiving far more slaves than the northern continent ever did.[2] However, fermenting within the developing society of the infant republic that would become the United States was a "strongly liberal national ideology

---

[1] Robert J. Cottrol, *The Long, Lingering Shadow: Slavery, Race, and Law in the American Hemisphere*. Studies in the Legal History of the South (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2013), 16, accessed Aug 21, 2019, Proquest Ebook Central.
[2] Ibid., 14.

and normatively antihierarchical national culture."[3] It was a society that proclaimed

freedom and equality, education, and access to land by more than just the elite; a

dismantling of England's noble caste system. This is significant, because it called for

greater justification of slavery, leading to racial divides that would become far more

rigidly set into the nation's cultural fabric. Robert J. Cottrol explains that

> Slavery had to be justified in racial terms in a way that did not occur in other New World slave societies … the racial rationale for slavery in a society that otherwise celebrated freedom meant that the barriers between black and white had to be made more rigid, less permeable … the notion of race as a fixed caste line would strengthen in the early nineteenth century and would shape the world of American race relations long after emancipation.[4]

The justification of slavery's stark dissonance within the United States was

further strengthened through a religious veneer. The New England Puritans used the idea

of "just wars" to legitimize the enslavement of those "taken captive." For slave holders in

Virginia, the religious justification was even more overt. The act of bringing slaves from

the continent of Africa was claimed to be a method of evangelism and eventual salvation.

This "salvation" took place through "conversion" by "Christian masters."[5] These fixed

racial and religious caste lines wove a deeply racialized mentality into the very fabric of

cultural life, one which echoes to this day. As an American-born denomination, it was

within this racialized society that the Seventh-day Adventist denomination was birthed

and formed.

---

[3] Cottrol, The Long, Lingering Shadow: Slavery, Race, and Law in the American Hemisphere, 14.
[4] Ibid., 19.
[5] Ibid., 70.

Millerism Roots

The Seventh-day Adventist Church traces its roots to the Millerite movement of the eighteenth century, part of the much larger "Second Great Awakening" religious cultural wave that swept through the United States in the late 1790s. The Millerites, led by William Miller, believed in a premillennial and immanent return of Christ. Holding to a literal interpretation of the Bible and using the commonly held "year to a day" prophetic system of interpretation, Miller's study of the books of Daniel and Revelation led him to predict and preach the second coming of Christ to take place at the end of 1844. Many were sincerely convinced, selling property, leaving jobs, and committing all they had to the effort of sharing the message of Christ's immanent return. Known as "The Great Disappointment," this long-predicted and fervently anticipated "Second Coming" did not take place, leaving a great many individuals spiritually demoralized.[6] It was out of the ashes of this experience that the Sabbatarian Adventist movement eventually emerged;[7] a group of believers that continued to hold to the soon coming of Christ, and who were also eventually convicted of the holiness of the seventh day of the week as the sabbath described in the Genesis creation week and 10 Commandments.

Birthed during the antebellum years, there were significant abolitionist voices who would become leaders in Adventism's ranks that spoke strongly against the prevailing racial injustice of their time. Yet, the movement's overriding apocalyptic focus

---

[6] Everett N. Dick, "The Millerite Movement 1830–1845," in *Adventism in America*, ed. Gary Land, Godfrey T. Anderson, & Wm. Frederick Norwood (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998), 1.

[7] Adventism was one of a number of movements that came out of the Millerite Movement.

appeared to preclude social justice from becoming part of their core identity. In reflecting

on Miller's initial influence, Everette N. Dick noted that

> Although reform pervaded the world in which Miller began to preach, he was not
> of the class of intellectuals seeking to make the world better by human effort. In
> fact, isolated as he was in the rustic environment of the Lake Champlain region,
> he was not in touch with those reformers whose background was urban. He had
> made a great discovery—that Christ was coming soon—and he felt a tremendous
> responsibility for warning people to get ready to meet the Lord.[8]

Miller's theology of Christ's Second Coming was centered on the prophecies

found in Daniel and Revelation, specifically the passage of Daniel 8:14, "Unto two

thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed" (KJV).[9] The

"sanctuary," he believed to be the earth, and therefore he deduced that it's "cleansing"

would take place at the return of Christ. As mentioned previously, Miller held that a

prophetic day equaled a year, and from his study, concluded that this time prophecy

corresponded with the "seventy weeks of years" time prophecy of Daniel 9, which was

held to start with Artaxerxes' decree in 457 B.C.[10] The calculations of when that time

period would end were not completely clear. Due to differing interpretations of Jewish

Calendar years, the date of Christ's return was initially predicted to be in 1843 and then

later amended to 1844.[11] When this did not take place, some of the believers, though

deeply disappointed, returned to their study of the prophecies and concluded that the

timing of the prophecy was correct, but rather than pointing to Christ's return to earth, the

momentous time prophecy of Daniel 8:14 referred to Christ's work in the sanctuary in

---

[8] Dick, "The Millerite Movement 1830–1845," 1.

[9] All Bible passages will be cited from the New Internationl Version unless otherwise stated.

[10] Richard Rice, Reign of God: An Introduction to Christian Theology from a Seventh-day Adventist Perspective, 2nd ed. (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1997), 327.

[11] Dick, "The Millerite Movement 1830–1845," 21.

heaven.[12] This became a central teaching within the Advent movement, legitimizing their

spiritual journey thus far, despite the grave disappointment, and bolstering their focus on

Christ's immanent return, believing that Christ's work in the sanctuary indicated that they

were in the last stages of earth's history.[13] Another strengthening factor to the emerging

movement was the influence of church prophet, Ellen G. White. She was a young woman

who had also journeyed through the Great Disappointment and during the early years of

the Sabbatarian Advent movement, started to receive spiritual visions. Her ministry came

to be regarded as authoritative, providing further legitimacy to their spiritual journey and

evolving beliefs.

Establishment of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

What began as disparate Adventist believers, sincerely processing their spiritual

journey and continuing in their search for truth, eventually came together as a cohesive

Sabbatarian Advent movement that would in 1860 officially form the Seventh-day

Adventist denomination.[14] Considering their distinctive history and theology, it is not

surprising that they were overtly apocalyptic in focus. According to theologian Raoul

Dederen,

> Three key teachings, each developed independently, merged into one message
> that began to characterize the movement of Sabbatarian Adventists: Christ's final
> ministry in the sanctuary, the Sabbath as a sign of obedience to God's
> commandments, and the application of the phrase "Testimony of Jesus" to a new
> manifestation of the prophetic gift through Ellen G. White in the "remnant"
> church (Rev. 12:17; 14:12; 19:10) … [Held] in common belief [was] that in the

---

[12] Raoul Dederen. *Handbook of Seventh-Day Adventist Theology*. Electronic ed. vol. 12. Commentary Reference Series (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2001), 883.

[13] Rice, Reign of God: An Introduction to Christian Theology from a Seventh-Day Adventist Perspective, 327.

[14] G. T. Anderson, "Sectarianism and Organization 1846–1864," in *Adventism in America,* ed. G. Land, G. T. Anderson, & W. F. Norwood (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998), 48.

post-1844 period all biblical truth had to be restored among God's remnant people before the Second Advent would take place.[15]

This focus on the restoration of "truth" within the context of Christ's immanent return, engendered within their values from inception, a strong focus on biblical understanding and proclamation, always with an apocalyptic focus.

Within the context of Christ's soon return and in keeping with their prophetic focus, the three angels' messages of Revelation 14 became an identifying mission for the emerging denomination.

> Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people. He said in a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water." A second angel followed and said, "'Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great,' which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries." A third angel followed them and said in a loud voice: "If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives its mark on their forehead or on their hand, they, too, will drink the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. They will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment will rise for ever and ever. There will be no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and its image, or for anyone who receives the mark of its name." This calls for patient endurance on the part of the people of God who keep his commands and remain faithful to Jesus (Rev 14:6–12).

The three angel's messages were regarded as timely warnings given them, the Remnant, to share with the world; the "restoration of biblical truth" prior to Christ's return. The first angel's message identified the timeliness of the prophecy; "the hour of his judgement" was applied to the soon return of Christ, and specifically to the Millerite movement's reformation.[16] Further, the call to "worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and springs of water" (Rev 14:7) was applied to the truth of the creation

---

[15] Dederen, Handbook of Seventh-Day Adventist Theology, 883.
[16] Dederen, Handbook of Seventh-Day Adventist Theology, 884.

week's seventh day sabbath; they believed that true worship of the Creator called for observing the day that he sanctified at creation.[17] The second angel's message was regarded as a judgement on much of Christendom who had strayed from the biblical truth by worshipping on the first day of the week, believing in the immortality of the soul, practicing infant baptism and allowing an unification of church and state, which historically had led to the persecution of believers. In this vein, the strain of Revelation 12 "Come out of her" was taken up, urging Christians to leave their denominations whose truth had been compromised and join their "Remnant" movement. Finally, the third angel's message highlighted "the people of God" as "those who keep his commandments," again pointing to their mission of restoring biblical truth, particularly the fourth commandment pertaining to the seventh day sabbath, which would serve as the antithesis to the mark of the beast warned against in Revelation 14:11.[18]

As a denomination, this apocalyptic message not only infused their identity, but became a central influencer within the community culture, providing a source of ongoing energy, urgency, and loyalty for their mission as a church. The Matthew 24:14 call to "preach the gospel in all the world and then the end will come" became the denomination's mantra, eventually mobilizing incredible missionary endeavors throughout the world and propelling the fledgling movement into the worldwide denomination that it has become.[19] Sadly though, this apocalyptic focus that engendered

---

[17] As opposed to the first day of the week which was commonly held as the Christian day of worship.

[18] Dederen, Handbook of Seventh-Day Adventist Theology, 886.

[19] The Seventh-day Adventist church has a membership of over twenty million and a presence in 213 countries. It has an extensive education and healthcare system, including 8,515 schools, 20 hospitals and sanitariums, as well as 20 healthfood industries. It also operates a disaster and relief agency that has a presence in 131 countries. "Statistics," The Official website of the Seventh-day Adventist World Church, accessed September 5, 2019, https://www.adventist.org/en/information/statistics/article/go/-/seventh-day-adventist-world-church-statistics-2016-2017/.

such zeal and unifying strength, also became a significant factor in weakening the gospel's potential for bringing much needed racial healing and unity in their community.

Early Potential for Racial Unity

Initially, within the reformation that accompanied the growth of the Adventist movement, calls for a deeper experience of the gospel, one that included equality and justice for all, were heard. As mentioned previously, Millerism took place during the antebellum years, a time when social reform was on the rise. Many of the leaders within the Millerite movement had come from abolitionist ranks.[20] Joshua Himes, Miller's foremost associate, was a committed abolitionist on every front, including the anti-slavery movement. As illustrative of his commitment and zeal, in 1846, he attended the Evangelical Alliance in London where he was almost alone, among the Americans present, in support of a resolution to refuse a seat on the Alliance to slaveholders. Joseph Bates was also a leading figure who became an abolitionist during the early years of the Advent movement. A former sea captain who had made his living transporting slaves, upon conversion, Bates founded the Fairhaven Anti-Slavery Society.[21] Bates would go on to become a core leader in the establishment of the Sabbath doctrine within the movement.

Four of the most significant voices within the early leadership of the denomination itself who spoke against racial injustice, were Ellen G. White, church prophet; John Byington, first General Conference President; Uriah Smith, first General

---

[20] George Knight, *Millenial Fever and the End of the World: A Study of Millerite Adventism* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1993), 133.

[21] Ronald D. Graybill, "The Abolitionist Millerite Connection," in *The Disappointed: Millerism and Millenarianism in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Ronald L. Numbers and Jonathan M. Butler (Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 1993), 141.

Conference Secretary; and James White, husband of Ellen G. White, early church organizational leader and editor of the church's official paper. In his position as Editor of The Review and Herald, James White wrote fervently against the evils of slavery. In one particular article he stated that "slavery is pointed out in the prophetic word as the darkest and most damning sin upon this nation."[22] John Byington was also an active and influential abolitionist in his role as General Conference President[23] and Uriah Smith adamantly argued against the religious leaders of the day for giving support to the evils of slavery from their pulpits.[24]

Arguably the most influential voice in the denomination, church prophet Ellen G. White, also spoke strongly against the evils of slavery. According to Roy Branson, she "declared that Adventists holding proslavery views were anathema'" and demanded that "its [slavery's] public defenders be disfellowshipped from the Advent Movement."[25] In 1891 she produced a leaflet entitled "Our Duty to the Colored People" which rebuked Seventh-day Adventist leadership for neglecting to reach the Black community. Some of her statements in it included the following:

> The color of the skin does not determine character in the heavenly courts …
> All are one in Christ. Birth, station, nationality, or color cannot elevate or degrade men …
> Those that slight a brother because of his color are slighting Christ ...
> No distinction on account of nationality, race, or caste is recognized by God. He is the Maker of all mankind. All men are of one family by creation, and all are one through redemption. Christ came to demolish every wall of partition …[26]

---

[22] Calvin B. Rock, Protest & Progress: Black Seventh-day Adventist Leadership and the Push for Parity (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2018), 3.

[23] John Byington also used his farm as station for the Underground Railroad, transporting fugitive slaves to Canada. Roy Branson, "Ellen G. White: Racist or Champion of Equality?" in *Oakwood University Goldmine*, accessed September 5, 2019, http://www.oakwood.edu/additional_sites/goldmine/hdoc/blacksda/champ/index.html.

[24] Rock, Protest & Progress: Black Seventh-day Adventist Leadership and the Push for Parity, 2.

[25] Branson, "Ellen G. White: Racist or Champion of Equality?"

[26] Ellen G. White "Our Duty to the Colored People," Black SDA History, ed. Benjamin Baker, accessed September 5, 2019, http://blacksdahistory.org/New_Custom_1.html.

Her counsel at that point, appeared to provide strong impetus for the Seventh-day

Adventist Church to take a leading role in facilitating racial healing within their own, as

well as wider, communities.

As years went by though, it could seem that White was not completely congruent

on the issue of race. Towards the first decade of the 20th century, White appeared to

pragmatically pull back from her earlier bold position due to the heightened conflict

involving the color line. Hollancid asserts that White, "countered her own position on

unity, when racial tensions were so bitter so as to threaten physical harm, or serious

injury of whites and blacks involved in interracial religious practice."[27] Branson posits

similarly, clarifying that her words of caution were context driven. Due to the severe

economics of the time, the south had become a cultural seedbed for aggression against

the minority race, with former factions uniting in scape-goating the black man:

> It cannot be said too emphatically that Mrs. White's statement that "colored
> people should not urge that they be placed on an equality with white people"
> referred to certain social arrangements--forms of integration--she considered not
> possible during the crisis of the nineties. She did not want to move too rapidly at
> that precise moment when Adventists were being physically attacked, but she
> most definitely was not talking about the possibilities of social and civil
> integration in the United States of the l970's. Nor, most assuredly, was she
> discussing the fundamental nature--physical, mental, or spiritual--of the black
> man.[28]

An area that some have regarded as challenging to her call for racial equality were her

written views on interracial marriage:

> But there is an objection to the marriage of the white race with the black. All
> should consider that they have no right to entail upon their offspring that which

---

[27] Cleran Hollancid, "Seventh-Day Adventists and 'Race' Relations in the U.S.: The Case of Black-White Structural Segregation," (DMin diss., Western Michigan University, 2016), 78, https://www.scholarworks.wmich.edu/dissertations/1419.

[28] Roy Branson, "The Crisis of the Nineties," *Oakwood University Goldmine*, accessed September 5, 2019, http://www.oakwood.edu/additional_sites/goldmine/hdoc/blacksda/champ/champ3.htm.

will place them at a disadvantage; they have no right to give them as a birthright a condition which would subject them to a life of humiliation. The children of these mixed marriages have a feeling of bitterness toward the parents who have given them this lifelong inheritance. For this reason, if there were no other, there should be no intermarriage between the white and colored race.[29]

In reply to inquiries regarding the advisability of intermarriage between Christian young people of the white and black races, I will say that in my earlier experience this question was brought before me, and the light given me of the Lord was that this step should not be taken; for it is sure to create controversy and confusion. I have always had the same counsel to give. No encouragement to marriages of this character should be given among our people. Let the colored brother enter into marriage with a colored sister who is worthy, one who loves God, and keeps His commandments. Let the white sister who contemplates uniting in marriage with the colored brother refuse to take this step, for the Lord is not leading in this direction.[30]

According to her written work, it appeared that she did not change these views on intermarriage. However, when taken alongside her many other calls for racial equality, as well as the context of her day, she is still generally considered a strong voice for racial equality. Historian Benjamin Baker, who has researched a comprehensive compilation of White's statements pertaining to African Americans, endorses her strong stance on racial equality, stating that

Ellen White was prolific in her writings on slavery, the Civil War, Reconstruction, segregation, Jim Crow, race relations, and the black American experience in general. In particular, she stressed Adventists' responsibility to repair the egregious wrongs and injustices perpetrated on African Americans by engaging in systematic efforts in the South to educate, evangelize, and better their quality of life.[31]

---

[29] Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, vol. 2 (Washington D.C, Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1958), 343.

[30] Ibid., 344.

[31] "Counsels on Blacks: A Comprehensive Compilation of Ellen G. White's Statements on Black People," Black SDA History, ed. Benjamin Baker, accessed May 1, 2019, http://www.blacksdahistory.org/files/125793452.pdf.

Considering her authoritative voice in the denomination, and the general tenor of her stance, White's counsels provided significant potential for the development of racial equality and unity.

Another example of the initial potential for the development of racial equality and unity within the Seventh-day Adventist Church, three decades into their journey as an official denomination, was the First Church of Washington, D.C. Established in 1889, it drew much attention within the nation's capital as a church that was racially integrated. Led by a committed core group of Black and White believers, they held fast to a commitment of racial unity in Christ. Historian Douglas Morgan writes that "the First Adventist Church in the nation's capital, racially integrated from its organization in 1889 forward, began to attract attention for living out gospel principles in race relations at a time when very few churches in American society did." [32] This community of Black and White Seventh-day Adventists was further developed by the arrival of Lewis Sheafe, a powerful and highly successful Adventist evangelist who held a series of evangelistic meetings in the capital, attracting a large attendance of both Blacks and Whites. According to Morgan, it would seem that an "opportunity lay wide open for Adventists to make known, in this venue of unparalleled influence, their message about the culmination of God's plan to restore lost humanity and to demonstrate the power of that restoration to overcome the sin of racism so deeply embedded in both individual hearts and in the fabric of society." [33]

---

[32] Douglas Morgan, "Adventism and America's Original Sin Part 3," *Against the Wall,* June 22, 2019, https://againstthewall.org/blog/2018/6/22/adventism-and-americas-original-sin-part-3.

[33] Douglas Morgan, "Adventism and America's Original Sin Part 6," *Against the Wall*, June 23, 2019, https://againstthewall.org/blog/2019/6/23/adventism-americas-original-sin-part-6.

The leadership of the General Conference, however, was of a very different persuasion, pragmatically leaning towards separate congregations that they felt would make evangelism "easier," particularly towards the White population of Washington, D.C. [34] In the end, and despite much protest from the First Church of Washington leaders, separate congregations along color lines was the chosen way forward. So significant and influential was this decision, that the New York Times announced the direction that the denomination chose to take in their headlines "Seventh-day Adventists Split, White and Colored Members of Washington Church Finally Separate."[35] Though pertaining to one congregation, a single action in and of itself, it heralded what would become an ongoing attitude towards racial issues within the Seventh-day Adventist Church, much of which found roots in the apocalyptic theology of its three angels messages.

An Apocalyptic Focus

A significant factor that has influenced the Seventh-day Adventist Church to refrain from pushing back against the racial injustices within both their own community and the wider society, is the belief in the immanent return of Christ and their role in heralding it. As was illustrated so vividly early on at the First Church of Washington, D.C., proclaiming the immanence of Christ's return was considered of far greater importance than working on racial inequalities; indeed, why spend time on social reform when Christ's return was so soon? Heaven would prove a far better, and perhaps easier, place to work out social issues.

---

[34] Douglas Morgan, "Adventism and America's Original Sin Part 5," *Against the Wall*, June 9, 2019, https://againstthewall.org/blog/2019/6/09/adventism-americas-original-sin-part-5.

[35] "Seventh-day Adventists Split, White and Colored Members of Washington Church Finally Separate," *New York Times*, September 22, 1902, 8.

The influence that this apocalyptic focus had was illustrated in the life of church leader Joseph Bates and the leadership of General Conference President Elder McElhany. As mentioned previously, Bates had been a passionate abolitionist, but as articulated in his autobiography, his belief system shifted due to the influence of the belief in Christ's immanent return:

> In embracing the doctrine of the Second Coming of the Savior, I found enough to engage my whole time in getting ready for such an event, and aiding others to do the same, … further I could not see my duty in leaving such a great work to labor single-handed as we have done, when so much more could be accomplished in working at the fountainhead, and make us every way right as we should be for the coming of the Lord.[36]

Adventism's overriding attitude of the superseding importance of Christ's return in regards to issues of racial justice was also demonstrated by Elder McElhany, General Conference President at the time regional conferences were initiated. When reflecting on the racial issues at hand, he asserted that "the thing for us to do is get this work finished just as soon as we can and go to our eternal home where these racial conditions do not exist … it will be a glorious thing when we can go to our eternal home. We will forget all the things that have troubled us in this world."[37] In reflecting on his own research, Hollancid too observes that "Adventism stresses Christ's return as the solution to the problems of this world, [which] leads largely to a hands-off approach to sociopolitical activism or any type of social activism in general."[38] Rock also asserts the denomination's imbalance in this area, stating that an "apocalyptic eschatology, or high expectation for

---

[36] Joseph Bates, *The Autobiography of Elder Joseph Bates* (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press, 1868), 261, accessed September 5, 2019, https://egwwritings.org/?ref=en_AJB.261.2&para=1086.1050.

[37] Delbert W. Baker, "Regional Conferences: 50 Years of Progress," *Adventist Review* (November 1995), 14, http://www.blacksdahistory.org/files/101748135.pdf.

[38] Hollancid, "Seventh-day Adventists and 'Race' Relations in the U.S.: The Case of Black-White Structural Segregation," 59.

the future kingdom of glory, without proper concern for the present kingdom of grace, guarantees passivism in matters of social concern."[39]

Separation between Church and State

In step with this apocalyptic focus was also the firmly held principle of separation between church and state, also a contributing factor to the denomination's reticence for involvement in issues of social justice. From their historical observations, much erroneous theology as well as persecution against God's people had developed during times when the church had become entwined with the political governments of the time and so deeply ingrained within Advent theology and culture, was a belief in keeping these entities separate. Further, too much concern or interaction with political issues was also regarded as a distraction from "the work of sharing the gospel." This deeply rooted belief led to a strong cultural reticence towards involvement in social and political issues, including those of racial equality. Hollancid asserts that "the SDA Church does not encourage political activism, social activism, or much involvement in politics, part of which has to do with the advocacy of separation of church and state, along with a strong opposition to ecumenism."[40] Evidence of this position can be found in the denomination's official Bible Commentary:

> The kingdom Jesus came to proclaim "was not of this world" (see John 18:36). He never commissioned His disciples as agents of social justice, important as that may be, nor did He at any time attempt to adjudicate between men (see John 8:3–11). Like the prophets of old (Micah 6:8; etc.). Jesus clearly set forth the principles that should govern a man's relationships with his fellow men … but left

---

[39] Rock, *Protest & Progress: Black Seventh-day Adventist Leadership and the Push for Parity*, 185.

[40] Hollancid, "Seventh-day Adventists and 'Race' Relations in the U.S.: The Case of Black-White Structural Segregation," 59.

the administration of civil justice exclusively to the duly appointed civil authorities.[41]

This belief system as it interacted with racial issues, was clearly illustrated during the early years of the United States Civil Rights movement. In the church's official magazine, the Seventh-day Adventist General Conference President at the time, Elder Figuhr, addressed "the race issue" and cautioned church members from letting "temporal matters" distract them from the more important work of sharing the gospel. He highlighted that "there were many issues in Christ's day, heatedly discussed by various groups" but that Christ "refused to interfere in temporal matters." His concluding remarks pointed them to the soon coming of Christ that would "sweep aside all national and racial divisions."[42] The strength of this position is further illustrated by a private letter (published for the first time in 2005), penned to Elder Figuhr in response to his article by Charles Bradford, the Lake Region President. Bradford was fervently challenging in his response:

> I feel constrained to say that your recent letter to the believers, in the January 2 issue of the *Review & Herald* is definitely out of harmony with the time in which we live, as well as the timeless counsels of the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. Having nothing positive and encouraging to say to 45,000 loyal Seventh-day Adventists of color, who live in the context of present-day society and who must constantly battle with the stern realities of life, we certainly must not revert to the 1904–1909 era for our framework of reference … If Jesus were here in the flesh today, He would certainly pronounce a woe upon the Pharisees who pay tithe and make disciples yet have no respect of persons. The issue *is* moral. The Bible says it is moral.[43]

---

[41] F.D. Nichol, *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5 (Washington, DC.: Review and Herald, 1956) 796.

[42] H. L. Lee, & M. Sahlin, *Brad: Visionary Spiritual Leadership* (Lincoln, NE: Center for Creative Ministry, 2005), ch. 7, Logos Bible Software.

[43] Lee, & Sahlin, Brad: Visionary Spiritual Leadership, ch. 7.

That the response was private, and the church's official position undeterred, further highlights the strength of the apocalyptic focus and firmly held principle of separation between church and state as it pertains to racial justice issues within the denomination.

Political Apocalyptics

The interpretation of the book of Revelation, as it pertained to the United States, also contributed to the denomination's lack of involvement in issues of social justice. The United States was interpreted to be the two-horned beast, as described in Revelation 13, a religious/political power that would persecute God's people prior to Jesus' return. In this vein, little hope was even held out for any long-term social reform within the nation. Historian Gary Land writes,

> Although the *Review and Herald* gave infrequent consideration to political issues, it was clear that the sympathies of the Advent believers were with the North in the debate over slavery. To a large extent, the views the believers held, as with those of the Millerites before, were similar to abolitionism in general. When the matters of slavery or the government's handling of related problems appeared at all, the *Review* referred to the nation as the "two-horned beast" (Rev. 13) and held out little hope for finding a human solution, especially since the church leaders believed that prophecy indicated otherwise. Jonathan Butler calls the Sabbatarian Adventists of this period "political apocalyptics;" for, although completely pessimistic about political actions changing the national situation, they did criticize the nation on the basis of an assumed political platform.[44]

Along with this apocalyptic pessimism, there was also a fear of coming persecution which led to a reticence to cause any chaos within society. According to Land, they believed that political chaos, "would lead the national government to take strong action to maintain unity. In doing so, it would trample into the dust civil and religious liberty, the two horns of the lamblike beast of Revelation 13, which had

---

[44] Anderson, "Sectarianism and Organization 1846–1864," 36.

characterized American origins."[45] Again, involvement with issues of social justice was discouraged.

Birthed in the deeply racialized nation of the United States, the Seventh-day Adventist Church had opportunity to facilitate much-needed racial healing within both its own and the wider community. It had incredible potential and Spirit-led invitation to enjoy and share the blessing of unified cultural diversity. Yet despite this opportunity, and the significant influence of early leaders who spoke strongly against racial injustice, particularly that of their prophet, Ellen G. White, the denomination chose not to embrace its opportunity. A theology of the immanent return of Christ and the need to warn the world of His coming and its need to return to "biblical truth," as well as a deeply held belief in the principle of separation between church and state, have both featured as significant prohibiting factors for the prioritization of any issues of social justice. Therefore, though opportunity for experiencing the blessing of unified cultural diversity has been presented, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the United States has not yet fully stepped into this space of healing and blessing. Theology has significantly contributed to this paralysis. And it is theology that calls them out of it.

---

[45] Anderson, "Sectarianism and Organization 1846–1864," 37.

CHAPTER 3:

A THEOLOGY OF DIVERSITY

The blessing of cultural diversity has had a tragically limited experiential history within the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the United States. The appalling truth, articulated by Martin Luther King "that the most segregated hour of Christian America is eleven o'clock on Sunday Morning," sadly, continues to ring true. Shifting this reality towards a church that enjoys the benefits of unified cultural diversity is complex. An integral piece within this process is a biblical understanding of God's heart for the variety of cultures that He created. From the very beginning of this world's history, as expressed in the book of Genesis, God's design and pleasure was for a diverse planet of people groups with differing languages and cultures. God continued to reveal his heart for an inclusiveness of cultural diversity through the life of Jesus. This intentionality of cultural diversity within his people was then further emphasized by God at Pentecost as the gospel was shared in multiple languages, and through the teaching of the apostles in the early church. This unified cultural diversity then culminates in a vivid eschatological portrayal of a multitude of nations, worshiping before the throne of God.

Cultural Diversity as God's Plan from the Beginning

Created in the Image of the Triune God

From the very beginning of this earth's history, God's design for unity within cultural diversity can be seen. In Genesis we read that God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness" (Gen 1:26), a statement that not only points to a unity of

diversity within God, but gives humanity as a whole that same diverse yet unified characteristic as God's image bearers. Understood within Christianity as the Trinity, God's own personhood reveals a relational quality of unified diversity. As clearly as the Bible states that God is one (Deut 6:4), it also attests that the oneness comprises God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit; three distinct persons in perfect relational unity. John depicted this distinctive unity and its allusions to creation in the opening verses of his gospel, attesting that "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made" (Jn 1:1–2). In reference to God the Father, Jesus said that, "I and the Father are one" (Jn 10:30), suggesting both distinctness and relational closeness. Further, in his closing commission to his disciples, Jesus instructed that his followers be baptized "in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit" (Matt 28:19), again describing a God of three persons. This God who embodies unified diversity, chose to create humanity in their image.

As a community of image bearers, the church is called to reflect these diverse and unified values. This "image bearing calling," challenges our homogeneous tendencies. In considering the Trinity as it relates to humanity within the church, Robert Muthiah suggests that

> The unity of the Trinity coexists with and requires diversity. The church is to reflect the diversity found in the Trinity … By looking at the nature of the Trinity, we are able to more clearly understand the nature of the church. We must see relationality, presence, equality, non-domination, unity, and differentiation in the nature of the church if the church is to correspond to the Trinity.[1]

---

[1] Robert Muthiah, *The Priesthood of All Believers in the Twenty-First Century* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2009), 68.

Soong-Chan Rah concurs with this, speaking specifically to the value and necessity that an understanding of the Trinity gives to cultural diversity within the church. He states that by creating humanity in his image "he gave us the capacity to reflect the community that is found in the Trinity" and that through "the unity that is found in diversity, humanity can reflect the image of God."[2] This understanding imparts a necessary value to all human beings, including their culture, and guards against humanity's tendency to create monocultural images of God, particularly by those in power.

The tendency of creating monocultural images of God can often be exacerbated within traditionally homogeneous churches. Even as individuals of minority cultures join, there is often an implicit expectation that they leave their minority culture at the door. DeYoung warns against this tendency, asserting that "a distorted image of God not only hurts the person who is being marginalized by the image; it also affects the person who benefits from the image. Feeling "superior" or "chosen" because of one's whiteness or maleness causes a spiritual and psychological isolation from the rest of the family of God."[3] In contrast, there is great value and growth to be experienced when multiple expressions of God are experienced in diverse worship communities. This all-encompassing value of humanity is further developed in the creation account.

---

[2] Soong-Chan Rah, *The Next Evangelicalism: Releasing the Church from Western Cultural Captivity* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2009), 206.

[3] Curtiss Paul DeYoung, *Coming Together in the 21st Century: The Bible's Message in an Age of Diversity* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2009), loc 622. Kindle.

Diversity in Creation and the Cultural Mandate

The creativity that is imbedded within creation itself further reflects God's intended design for unified diversity. The varied shades of color used, the seemingly countless species of flora and fauna, speak to an overt intentionality and value for diversity; even within specific types of flora and fauna, there is found variation. It could be argued that this extreme diversity found within creation may even suggest that God has an aversion to homogeneity! At the very least, within His creation we see a God whose intended design was one of great diversity. Further, when He looked at all that He had made, He pronounced it "very good" (Gen 1:31), again highlighting the value that is inherent within His diverse creation. The narrative of the creation week led up to the formation of humanity's parents: Adam and Eve. As previously highlighted, they were created to be image bearers of the triune God, giving humanity immense value and responsibility. This narrative also reveals an inherent equality between humanity's different races and cultures. Alex D. Soul and Desmond Henry point out the significance of the singularity of humanity's parenthood, stating that "historically, if God has made us all from a singular set of original parents, then no individual, culture or 'race' may consider themselves or itself above others."[4]

The subsequent mandate "to be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it" (Gen 1:28) continues to underscore this intended design for cultural diversity. It gave humanity the authority and capacity to not only procreate, but to spread throughout the earth, resulting in differing languages and cultures that would naturally

---

[4] Alexander D. Soal and Desmond Henry, "The Reversal of Babel: Questioning the early church's understanding of the gift of the Holy Spirit in Acts as a reversal of the cruse of Babel," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 39 (Aug 2018), https://verbumetecclesia.org.za/index.php/ve/article/view/1842/3502.

develop over time.[5] According to Randy Woodley, this mandate suggests that, "racial and lingual diversity has always been part of His plan for humanity."[6] God's response to the migratory halt at the Tower of Babel further supports this. It was on the plains of Shinar that humanity chose to "settle" in one place where they had "one language and a common speech" (Gen 11:1), rather than continuing to explore the earth as they had been instructed by God to do. In response to their disobedience, God multiplied their languages, bringing a stop to their prideful disobedience by making it impossible for them to communicate and effectively forcing them to decentralize.

It could be suggested that this multiplication of languages was a punishment by God, a curse on humanity for their prideful actions. However, Woodley convincingly points out "that when God blocked this opposition by a sudden introduction of different languages, he sped up what would have been a natural progressive outcome if they had obeyed his initial command; a diversity of people groups and languages throughout the world."[7] Frank Chan comments similarly that the introduction of different languages was "God's benevolent act of correction, to keep humankind from remaining in the one location at Babel."[8] Chan also notes that the fact that there is "no mention of God's wrath anywhere in Genesis 11" further confirms this interpretation.[9] In line with the intentional

---

[5] Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion & Embrace* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 226.

[6] Randy Woodley, *Living in Color: Embracing God's Passion for Ethnic Diversity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 21.

[7] Woodley, *Living in Color: Embracing God's Passion for Ethnic Diversity*, 21.

[8] Frank Chan, "Biblical Materials for a Theology of Cultural Diversity: A Proposal," in *Understanding Diversity: Theological Views on Diversity*, ed. Annie N. Mundeke (Dubuque: Kendall / Hunt Publications, 2005), 139–147.

[9] Ibid.

and blessed diversity found in creation, both the cultural mandate and God's response at

Babel strongly suggest that a diversity of cultures is clearly an intentional part of God's

design for humanity. As stated by Rah, "the cultural mandate reveals that there is value in

the variety of cultures that are created by the creatures made in the image of God. There

is worth afforded all cultures because of the image of God."[10]

An Alternative Interpretation to the Cultural Mandate

There are some who would interpret the multiplication of languages and cultures

initiated at the Tower of Babel, as a punishment from God, and therefore something that

in his ultimate plan, would be reversed. It was commonly held by theologians of the

middle ages that the diversity of cultures was a result of humanity's sin as depicted in the

Babel narrative. [11] Similarly, theologian Gerhard Von Rad in his commentary on Genesis,

views the results of Babel as "disorder in the international world … that was not willed

by God but is punishment for the sinful rebellion against God."[12] Terrence E Fretheim

also suggests that the Tower of Babel narrative reveals that "the diversity among peoples

are not due to the natural movements of peoples, but to a special intervention of God

because of man's attempt to overstep the bounds of creatureliness."[13] According to Rah,

interpretations such as these "lead[s] to the belief that the various cultures of the world do

not have a divine origin but rather, a sinful one … that God's original plan involved the

formation of one perfect culture that was lost because of human pride and sinfulness."[14]

---

[10] Rah, *The Next Evangelicalism: Releasing the Church from Western Cultural Captivity*, 206.
[11] C. Peter Wagner, Our Kind of People: The Ethical Dimensions of Church Growth in America (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1979), 111.
[12] Gerhard Von Rad, *Genesis* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1972), 148.
[13] Terrence E. Fretheim, *Creation, Fall, and Flood* (Minneapolis, MN: Ausburg Publishing House, 1969), 123.

Though God clearly did step in to halt humanity's prideful plan by employing a multiplication of languages to do so, as explained earlier, the scattering that came from it was an efficient redirection to his earlier command in Genesis to be "fruitful and multiply and fill the whole earth" (Gen 1:28). The clear implications of this earlier command present a formidable challenge to interpretations that point to the diversity and scattering as a curse in need of reversing. Further, Rah notes that clear differences were already present within people prior to the scattering that occurred after the Tower of Babel. These differences can be found in the Table of Nations described in Genesis 10. Here a human genealogy is recorded that reveals "differences along racial, ethnic, and cultural lines already beginning to form."[15] Similarly, Woodley explains:

> Over time all languages naturally change. And people would eventually develop different characteristics according to the laws of genetics … Distinctions would have developed naturally over time, and changes would undoubtedly have taken place anyway if the people had spread out and obeyed God. His intervention merely sped up the process of developing the various ethnic groups that brought about His intended diversity.[16]

It has even been suggested that the Tower of Babel itself represented an enforced and unholy homogeneity that God disrupted. In direct contradiction to God's instruction to "fill the earth," humanity purposed to "settle" and "build a city in order to avoid being 'scattered' over the face of the earth" (Gen 11:1–4). Miroslav Volf strongly asserts:

> God opposed the totalitarian thought that "nothing that we purpose" is impossible (v. 6), and interrupted the totalitarian project to centralize, homogenize, and control. Differences are irreducible. Political, economic, and cultural centers must be plural. Unity ought not leave "scattering" behind. Without preservation

---

[14] Soong Chan Rah, *Many Colors: Cultural Intelligence for a Changing World* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2010), 75.

[15] Rah, *Many Colors: Cultural Intelligence for a Changing World*, 76.

[16] Woodley, *Living in Color: Embracing God's Passion for Ethnic Diversity*, 21.

of differences, without multicentrality and dispersion, violence will reign, sanctioned by a "justice" designed with no other purpose than to keep the homogenizing "tower" in place.[17]

It would seem that rather than being a curse in need of reversing, the scattering itself may have even been a rescue mission from an enforced homogeneous existence. This necessity and blessing of diversity, divinely given and protected, presents a significant challenge to the cultural homogeneity that is both found and cultivated within Adventist churches, as well as the wider Christian community within the United States.

The Purity Laws and Homogeneity in First Century Palestine

God's design for the blessing of cultural diversity within his creation, so clearly depicted and protected in the beginning of this earth's history, is given further color in the life of Jesus. His cultural context, first century Palestine, represented a milieu of races and cultures living in sharp segregation. DeYoung describes it as a world with "ethnic tensions simmering just below the surface and communities isolated from each other."[18] Within this context, the Jewish culture operated on a social currency of honor versus shame, with much of the currency maintained by purity laws comprising a rigid system that defined how and who had access to God and the community. The Jewish nation "believed they were the chosen people of their ancestral God, living in this God's land" while "persons of all other ethnic groups (gentiles) were an abomination, simply off the purity scale altogether."[19] This purity was considered to be God given, and directly

---

[17] Volf, *Exclusion & Embrace*, 225

[18] DeYoung, *Coming Together in the 21st Century: The Bible's Message in an Age of Diversity*, loc 859.

[19] Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (Louisville, KY, 1993), 161.

influenced a person's access to not only social acceptance but the promised age to come.[20] The strict purity laws encompassed all areas of society, including who one could associate with. Those from other cultures were strictly off limits and regarded as outside of God's blessing.

Jesus Intentionally Inclusive of Other Cultures

In both personal interaction and teaching, Jesus opposed the homogeneity and racial segregation that these purity laws enforced. A people group that were particularly resented were the Romans who occupied Israel. As gentiles, they were regarded as unclean and therefore outside of God's favor. Yet when presented with a young Roman boy who was in need of healing, Jesus not only healed him, but praised the gentile Centurion commander as having greater faith than any in Israel (Lk 7:9), openly challenging the laws that pronounced him unclean and outside of God's blessing as a gentile. Another people group who were also particularly racially ostracized in Jesus' day were the Samaritans. They too were considered unclean and outside of God's blessing, so much so that it was considered an insult to be called a Samaritan (Jn 8:48).

In response to these segregated cultural lines, Jesus publicly associated with Samaritans, healed them, and stayed in their villages (Lk 17:11–19; Jn 4:1–26, 39–42). In the story of the Woman at the Well, Jesus openly conversed with a Samaritan woman, asked her for a drink, and then empowered her to share the news of his kingdom with the rest of her Samaritan village, signaling that in his kingdom, at his table, Samaritans were both welcome and empowered. DeYoung describes this aspect of Jesus' ministry as

---

[20] Ibid., 159.

intentionally inclusive towards the marginalized, including those from other races, stating

that "Jesus' call to holiness embraced those whom society viewed as unholy … Jesus'

holiness was not about separation. Holiness in the new covenant was about access. It was

inclusive. It was the new wine that bursts the old wineskins.[21]

Jesus also employed positive imagery of Samaritans in his teaching, further

highlighting the racial inclusivity of His kingdom. The parable of "The Good Samaritan"

famously casts a Samaritan as the hero of a story, exceeding the honorable actions of the

most favored character types of Jewish society, a Levite and priest (Lk 10:25–37)!

DeYoung points out that by "[infusing] the culture with new and positive images of

Samaritans [Jesus] accurately declared their full humanity,"[22] again revealing an

intentional dismantling by God of long-held divisive boundaries between races.

A story that does not line up as inclusively as these others at first reading,

however, is that of the Canaanite woman asking for the healing of her daughter. Found in

Matthew and Mark, the story records a short conversation between Jesus and the woman,

with Jesus initially appearing to show preference for Israelites over Canaanites!

> A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is demon-possessed and suffering terribly." Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, "Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us." He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel." The woman came and knelt before him. "Lord, help me!" she said. He replied, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs." "Yes it is, Lord," she said. "Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table." Then Jesus said to her, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted." And her daughter was healed at that moment. (Matthew 15:22–28)

---

[21] DeYoung, *Coming Together in the 21st Century: The Bible's Message in an Age of Diversity*, loc 920.

[22] Ibid., loc 2558.

It is a challenging story. Dorothy A. Lee affirms that "in modern sociological and psychological terms, Jesus' reaction to the woman is cruel and unfeeling and, from this perspective, depicts Jesus in the most unflattering of terms."[23] Within this interpretation, it depicts Jesus as potentially racially prejudiced! Lee further asserts however, that it "is not a psychological narrative … rather, it is a stylized and highly structured narrative, a classic genre narrative."[24] From this reading, she affirms that "Jesus' initially negative rejoinders are best seen as a narrative device that heightens the oppositions and ambiguities of the story" and needs to be "interpreted in light of Matthew's Christology, where Jesus is the lowly and beloved Son who reveals the face of God and lives out authentically God's righteousness."[25] Further, as one examines the dialogue, the story could also be interpreted as an object lesson for the disciples. The initial statement "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel" appears to be said to the disciples rather than the woman, as if Jesus was giving articulation to their own prejudiced belief system and then allowing the woman to challenge it. Even if one does not accept that interpretation, what is clear is that Jesus engages in her clever word play and in the end commends her faith and grants her request, again giving a favorable portrayal of a gentile's faith. As Lee contends, when viewed in the wider context of Jesus' inclusivity of gentiles, it serves to continue the narrative of inclusivity rather than challenge it. The intentional inclusivity taught and lived by Jesus, embodied within such a segregated society, clearly reveals God's heart for a diverse and unified community, a diverse and unified community that was also clearly developed in the early church.

---

[23] Dorothy A. Lee, "The Faith of the Canaanite Woman (Mt 15:21–28): Narrative, Theology, Ministry," *Journal of Anglican Studies* 13, no. 1 (May 1, 2015): 19, EBSCOhost.

[24] Ibid., 19.

[25] Ibid., 20.

Cultural Diversity at the Inception of the Early Church

The importance and value of cultural diversity that Jesus lived and taught was

further shared in the life of the early church, not only by the apostolic teaching, but in its

very inception. The exciting and explosive imagery that is seen in the book of Acts as the

early church was birthed, reveals a direct inclusion by God of multiple races. It took

place in Jerusalem, following Christ's ascension and during the feast of Passover:

> When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a
> sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole
> house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that
> separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy
> Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. Now there
> were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven.
> When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because
> each one heard their own language being spoken (Acts 2:1–6).

The outpouring of God's Spirit was both in multiple languages and upon a racially

diverse group of people. DeYoung interprets this as an overt sign that God's kingdom

was to encompass all cultures, stating that, "access to God was no longer attained through

an elite group of Jewish males, but through God's Spirit, who drew three thousand to

faith from many tribes and nations."[26] Further, the story of Pentecost has strong allusions

to God's interaction with his people at the Tower of Babel. Multiple languages are again

enabled, yet in this instance, unity and clarity are present. Rah suggests that though the

multiplication of languages and scattering that occurred at the Tower of Babel fulfilled

God's initial plan, the negative consequences of sin's interaction was racial division, and

at Pentecost, it was redeemed.[27] Volf comments further, observing a polarity between the

---

[26] DeYoung, *Coming Together in the 21st Century: The Bible's Message in an Age of Diversity*,
Loc 929.

[27] Rah, *The Next Evangelicalism: Releasing the Church from Western Cultural Captivity*, 207.

homogeneous unity found in Babel and a harmony of cultural diversity blessed at

Pentecost:

> At Pentecost an alternative to the imperial unity of Babel is created, yet without a return to a pre-Babel state. Before Babel the whole of humanity spoke one language; in Jerusalem the new community speaks many languages … Pentecost overcomes the "confusion" and the resulting false scattering, but it does so not by reverting to the unity of cultural uniformity, but by advancing toward the harmony of cultural diversity.[28]

This blessed diversity at Pentecost is regarded as an integral part of God's design for His

church by Oscar Garcia-Johnson:

> The church, though Jewish by origin and context, transforms at Pentecost into polyphonic-multiracial cultural community. The Pentecost is the formative biblical narrative revealing how the Spirit intersected a cultural milieu, respecting, embracing, and affirming its various and multiple stories and identities.[29]

Anthony Smith is even stronger in his interpretation, stating that cultural diversity is not

even optional for God's church:

> If we are to take seriously the Bible's witness regarding Pentecost, we must take another look at the racial divisions that continue in the body of Christ. We must look at the beliefs and praxis that appear to be thoroughly wedded to what the New Testament refers to as the "present age." Practicing Pentecost is about participating in the shalom of God - a peace that inspires local ekklesias to embody a racial and cultural unity while resisting death-dealing exclusionary Powers.[30]

Peter's vision of the clean and unclean animals, as recorded in Acts 10 also points

to God's vision of a kingdom that includes all cultures. Though the vision used Peter's

understanding of clean and unclean foods to communicate its message, it is generally

---

[28] Volf, *Exclusion & Embrace*, 227.

[29] Oscar Garcia-Johnson, *The Mestizola Community of the Spirit* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2009), 9.

[30] Anthony Smith, "Practicing Pentecost: Discovering the Kingdom of God amid Racial Fragmentation," in *An Emergent Manifesto of Hope,* ed. Doug Pagitt and Tony Jones (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007), 280.

interpreted within Adventist theology as a message of inclusivity for gentiles. Adventist

theologian, Clinton Wahlen asserts that "Peter's vision in Acts 10 focuses on food, while

the surrounding narrative applies the vision to people."[31] Vanthanh Nguyen extends the

interpretation further, suggesting that there is also meaning in the fact that both clean and

unclean animals were seen to descend and ascend between heaven and earth:

> The vertical movement between heaven and earth, particularly by clean and
> unclean animals, metaphorically as well as theologically implies that for Luke
> there is no longer a division between sacred space (heaven) and profane space
> (earth). In other words, even the topographical, spatial boundaries between
> heaven and earth are now fluid and no longer defined by ethnic demarcation.
> Furthermore, the "descents" and "ascents" of the animals reveal that even the
> heavenly realm—where traditionally only the holy ones (that is the Jews) dwell—
> now hosts Gentiles as well.[32]

In further highlighting the blessing of cultural diversity embodied within the early

church, Mark DeYmaz points to the church at Antioch, noting that it was the most

influential in the early church and the fulfillment of Christ's prayer that "they all may be

one" as Jews and Gentiles came together in worship. It was a church that had multiple

ethnicities even in their leadership.[33] Luke lists in Acts 13 not only the names of the early

leaders, but also their ethnicity, "which included a former Pharisee (Paul), a former

Gentile (Lucian), a former Levite (Barnabas), a member of the court of Herod (Manaean),

and a man of dark skin (Simeon, called Niger)."[34] DeYmaz also points out that Antioch

---

[31] Clinton Wahlen, "Peter's Vision and Conflicting Definitons of Purity," *New Testament Studies* 5, no. 4 (Oct. 2005): 1, ProQuest.

[32] Vanthanh Nguyen, "Dismantling Cultural Boundaries: Missiological Implications of Acts 10:1–11:18," *Missiology: An Internaional Review* 40, no. 4 (Oct. 2012): 456, https://journals-sagepub-com.georgefox.idm.oclc.org/doi/pdf/10.1177/009182961204000406.

[33] Mark DeYmaz, Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church: Mandate, Commitments, and Practices of a Diverse Congregation (San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons Inc., 2007), 23.

[34] Aubrey M. Sequeira, Harry Kumar and Venkatesh Gopalakrishnan. "Caste and Church Growth: An Assessment of Donald McGavran's Church Growth Principles from An Indian Perspective," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Missions and Evangelism*, 2, (Fall 2016): 106, https://sbts-wordpress-uploads.s3.amazonaws.com/sbts/uploads/sites/8/2012/08/SBJME-2-Final-1.pdf.

was the first to both take a collection for those in need and the first to send out missionaries to the world.[35] It could be said that their greater diversity significantly contributed to their ability to fulfill the gospel in such a profound way. This cultural diversity of the early church that is so vividly illustrated in the scenes of Pentecost and Antioch, is also found in the teachings of the Apostles.

Cultural Diversity in the Teaching of the Apostles and Eschaton

The Apostle Paul is forthright in his writings concerning the clear inclusivity that God envisions for his church; an inclusivity that embraces cultural diversity. The most direct of his statements regarding inclusivity are found in his letter to the church of Galatia. He makes clear that *all* are children of God, stating that "there is no longer Jew nor Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28). In reference to Paul's clear statements on inclusivity, Richard B. Hayes asserts that "the church's unity at table, across ethnic boundaries, is an outward and visible sign of the breaking down of these barriers, a prefiguration of the eschatological banquet of the people of God."[36]

This inclusive nature of God's love, as found in the gospel, was not always easily facilitated in the early church. The idea of Gentiles being included became a "sharp dispute" that was addressed by Paul at the Council of Jerusalem. There the church as a whole came to a consensus that the blessing at Pentecost made clear God's kingdom was for all cultures (Acts 15).[37] Through Paul's writings, a picture of a multicultural

---

[35] DeYmaz, Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church: Mandate, Commitments, and Practices of a Diverse Congregation, 23.

[36] Richard B. Hayes, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), 440.

community, at times struggling through cultural clashes yet unified in Christ, emerges.

Barclay asserts that

> Paul does not "erase" or "eradicate" cultural specificities, but relativizes them …
> Thus Jews and Gentiles are simultaneously affirmed as Jews and Gentiles and
> humbled in their cultural pretensions … No one's culture is despised or
> demonized but by the same token none is absolutized or allowed to gain
> hegemony.[38]

Ronald W. Duty also asserts that a "dynamic of multiculturalism continued in the early

formation of Christian communities that transcended the constraints of class, race,

ethnicity, color, gender, and profession."[39]

Paul gave correctives to both fellow leaders and individual churches who

struggled with the need for cultural inclusivity. In hearing of Peter's reticence at Antioch

to eat with Gentile Christians, Paul "opposed him to his face" (Gal 2:11). In the eyes of

Paul, Peter's behavior was "not merely a social affront to the Gentile converts but a

betrayal of the truth of the Gospel."[40] Within the church in Rome, Paul counselled the

"stronger brother" (most likely gentile) to refrain from eating meat in front of the

"weaker brother" (most likely Jewish) in order "not to be a stumbling block" (Rom

14:21). This suggests that the church fellowship was multicultural in nature and that

cultural accommodations were needed to be given by all, in order for the church to grow

in unity.[41]

---

[37] Mark Lau Branson and Juan F. Martinez, *Churches, Cultures & Leadership: A Practical Theology of Congregations and Ethnicities* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011), loc 312. Kindle.

[38] John M.G. Barclay "Neither Jew Nor Greek," in *Ethnicity and the Bible*, ed. Mark G. Brett, (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill Academic Publishers, Inc, 1996), 211.

[39] Ronald W. Duty, *Talking Together as Christians Cross-culturally: A Field Guide, rev. ed.* (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2009): 176, https://wordandworld.luthersem.edu/content/pdfs/24-2_Loehe/24-2_Wilson.pdf.

[40] Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, 439.

[41] Sequeira, Kumar and Gopalakrishnan "Caste and Church Growth: An Assessment of Donald McGavran's Church Growth Principles from An Indian Perspective," 106.

In the church of Corinth, a trading city that was called home by many cultures, there also appeared to be division amongst its members, with differing groups starting to place their identity in differing apostles (of different ethnicities). Again, Paul rebuked them, calling them back to a unity of "mind and thought" in Christ (1 Cor 1:10).[42] Mark Lau Branson and Juan F. Martinez observe,

> In the ethnic and cultural diversity of the Mediterranean, the church repudiated any attempts to create culture-based fellowships. Even when Paul had a direct word concerning class distinctions in Corinth, his solution was not to form different worshipping groups but to minimize the effect of their differing habits (1 Cor 11).[43]

As depicted through Paul's writings, the early church was clearly and intentionally culturally diverse, and persisted through intercultural challenges to grow in their unified diversity.

Finally, in the very last book of the Bible, the book of Revelation, the writer John gives a description that overtly portrays a diversity of people in heaven itself. The vision is set in the throne room of God, pointing to a future eschatological fulfillment and in this vision, he describes a multitude of culturally diverse people:

> After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands (Rev 7:9).

God's intentionality towards cultural diversity, divinely marked at Pentecost, upheld within the early church and guarded by intentional inclusive teaching and correctives by the apostles, gives a clear mandate for Christianity, a mandate that challenges the

---

[42] Ibid.

[43] Branson and Martinez, *Churches, Cultures, & Leadership: A Practical Theology of Congregations and Ethnicities*, loc 345.

homogeneous nature of Christianity, including Seventh-day Adventism, within the United States.

Cultural Diversity and the Homogeneous Unit Principle

The blessing of cultural diversity, so clearly embedded within the gospel core, challenges a rationale that has been predominantly used within church growth movements over the past few decades and an ethos that has influenced greatly the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the United States. Initially coined by Donald A. McGavran, the Homogeneous Unit Principle (HUP) encouraged homogeneous evangelism for greater numerical success. As a missiologist in India, McGavran faced significant challenges sharing the gospel within a culture of rigid caste divides. It was with this background that he developed the methodology of using people groups, or as he termed, homogeneous units, to share the gospel with greater efficiency and effectiveness. McGavran notably argued that "it takes no great acumen to see that when marked differences of color, status, income, cleanliness, and education are present, unbelievers understand the gospel better when expounded by their own kind of people. They prefer to join churches whose members look, talk, and act like themselves."[44] McGavran drew a distinction between conversion and the process of sanctification, believing that following conversion, the process of sanctification would then take care of breaking down hostile barriers between people. McGavran stated that "the goal is to multiply churches in every

---

[44] Donald A. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 167.

people, every homogeneous unit, on earth. The central task is the communication of the Gospel to the billions who have yet to believe."[45]

This methodology of focusing on conversion and targeting people groups was one that was enthusiastically embraced by many within Christendom. Stephen Neill states that "experience has shown that the order of priority must always be first conversion and then social change; if the inner transformation has been brought about, the problem of social change and uplift can be tackled with far greater prospects of success."[46] In considering the issue of racism in particular, John Michael Morris posits that "racism stems from fallen world influences and sinful flesh, but the maturation process gradually reduces Christians' racist impulses and impels them to make positive changes in their environment."[47] In this light, McGavran argued that the verses in Galatians 3:28, which were at times seen as a refute to HUP, referred to Christians; sanctification that occurred post conversion. [48] In his view, conversion stood distinct from sanctification and therefore the focus of HUP was on non-Christians rather than Christians and not at odds with Galatians 3:28.[49]

Though many decades removed, the arguments for HUP are similar to those expressed by the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church when presented with the idea of multicultural churches, as highlighted in chapter one. The general consensus was that Black and White churches would be a prohibiting factor in the

---

[45] McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 456.
[46] Stephen Neill, *Call to Mission* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1970), 56.
[47] John Michael Morris, "McGavran on McGavran: What Did He Really Teach?," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Missions and Evangelism*, vol. 2 (Fall 2016): 11, https://sbts-wordpress-uploads.s3.amazonaws.com/sbts/uploads/sites/8/2012/08/SBJME-2-Final-1.pdf.
[48] Ibid., 15.
[49] McGavran, Understanding Church Growth, 238.

conversion of the majority of White people who were challenged by the idea of worshiping with Blacks. Rather than a valuable opportunity, multicultural churches were regarded as a hinderance to the gospel and discouraged.

The Core of the Gospel Cannot be Compromised

As important as evangelism is, the central core of the gospel is relational in nature, both between God and man, and humanity itself. The union inherent in the gospel must be understood in the context of conversion. It cannot be separated. If someone is converted, an understanding of Galatians 3:28 is essential. A church that aligns itself with the gospel, cannot be built without kingdom values. In reflecting on HUP, Bruce Fong poses the challenging question,

> How long after a person becomes converted to Christianity does the miracle of oneness in Christ take to manifest itself? The New Testament speaks of a newness that results from being converted to Christianity. But, if a person can deliberately avoid association with other Christians while joining a church and being baptized and learning about his new faith over an indeterminate length of time, when does the newness begin? And if this newness of sanctification is not an immediate factor in a Christian convert's new ethic but education is, then why after nearly 2000 years of church history has the church still "tended to grow within particular homogeneous units."[50]

If repentance and reconciliation are not part of the conversion experience, at what point do these communities choose to extend themselves and connect with those who may differ from them? As articulated by Fong, there would seem to be little evidence of this happening within Christendom. In response to McGavran's hopes and assumptions, Aubrey M. Sequeira, Harry Kumar, and Venkatesh Gopalakrishnan observe similarly:

> Reality has not been kind to McGavran's hopes. Christians who have maintained their caste identity are often marked by ethnocentrism, ethnic prejudice, and racial

---

[50] Bruce W. Fong, Racial Equality in the Church: A Critique of the Homogeneous Unit Principle in Light of a Practical Theology Perspective (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1996), 53.

superiority of the worst kinds. McGavran's homogeneous unit model actually serves to reinforce sinful prejudices already present within segmented populations.[51]

As Indians ministering in the contemporary Indian context, Sequeira, Kumar and Gopalakrishnan gave a gracious yet concerned critique of the HUP model of church growth. Their concerns were summarized into five points:

> (1) Missiology characterized by church growth principles underestimates the diabolical nature of the caste system; (2) The church growth model fosters nominal Christianity and perpetuates a deeply entrenched ethnocentrism in the church of Jesus Christ; (3) McGavran's theology does not sufficiently reflect a biblical understanding of conversion, particularly of repentance; (4) McGavran's church growth principles have not adequately taken into account the New Testament call to embrace Christ at the expense of being excluded and ostracized by society; and finally, (5) Church growth missiology exalts pragmatic considerations over biblical faithfulness.[52]

Their challenge is gracious yet strong: without a call for repentance and faithfulness to biblical values, true conversion is lacking. Further, from their perspective, "McGavran's willingness to accommodate *caste identity* in the church indicates that he misunderstood and underestimated the diabolical nature of the caste system."[53] Mark DeYmaz shares their concern, stating that "one of the major concerns that I have with the broad acceptance of his conclusions, is that McGavran's original research was conducted in India—a country both then and now dominated by the caste system."[54] The concern that HUP has enabled an anti-gospel caste system to continue within the church in India[55] is shared by Bruce W. Fong, who contends that it has had a similar effect within the

---

[51] Sequeira, Kumar, and Gopalakrishnan, "Caste and Church Growth: An Assessment of Donald McGavran's Church Growth Principles from An Indian Perspective," 98.

[52] Ibid., 95.

[53] Ibid., 96.

[54] DeYmaz, Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church: Mandate, Commitments, and Practices of a Diverse Congregation, 62.

[55] Sequeira, Kumar, and Gopalakrishnan, "Caste and Church Growth: An Assessment of Donald McGavran's Church Growth Principles from An Indian Perspective," 96.

racialized context of the United States. He suggests that the United States' historical

context of segregation provides a particularly problematic backdrop for HUP. In a

racialized culture such as the United States, HUP has the potential to exacerbate racial

divides.[56] This is a reality that the Seventh-day Adventist Church now must tackle. The

regional conference structure, birthed in segregation, [57] is now seemingly entrenched

within the Seventh-day Adventist community in the United States.

The Contention for Healthy Homogeneity

Inclusivity and self-determination within homogeneous churches has been

contended as the differentiating factors between a healthy homogeneous church and a

prejudiced church. In response to concerns of racist leanings inherent within HUP,

McGavran clarified that the HUP "should not be understood as condoning White racial

pride."[58] He further stated that "the refusal of any congregation to admit Blacks as

members is a sin."[59] In reference to this, Rainer assures that McGavran himself believed

that "structuring society into the classes and masses is displeasing to God" and that God's

"ideal is a society in which all men ... are judged by the same standards ... receiving equal

opportunity and equal justice."[60] According to McGavran, the practice of exclusion was

the negative factor. He stated that segregation "is a sin because it is an exclusion enforced

---

[56] Fong, Racial Equality in the Church: A Critique of the Homogeneous Unit Principle in Light of a Practical Theology Perspective, 65.

[57] Cleran Hollancid, "Racial Segregation Practice in a Religious Context," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 23, no.2 (2012): 127,
https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1105&context=jats

[58] McGavran, Understanding Church Growth, 238.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Thom S. Rainer, *The Book of Church Growth: History, Theology, and Principles* (Nashville: Broadman, 1993), 262.

by one group on another" and that "churches that comprise 'one-people' without being racist result from a group's language or custom preferences and not from 'a desire to exclude "inferiors"'—quite the contrary."[61] The desire to gather in culturally specific yet not exclusive groups, is also supported by leading African American Seventh-day Adventist theologian and church administrator, Calvin Rock. He affirms the tendency of humans to want to connect with those who have similar backgrounds to them, including the need for homogeneous churches, citing an experience that he had as President of Oakwood University, as illustrative of this. Oakwood, a predominantly African American university, had a significant minority of international students at the time he was president. He states,

> What caused a number of students, faculty and administrators a good deal of angst was the seeming social divide between this group and the much larger number of African American students. The most obvious way this gap manifested itself was that Black Americans regularly ate on one side of the cafeteria and international students on the other. Thus, I decided that would be a good place to begin correcting the situation … They tried, I tried; but in spite of their efforts and mine, within a few days the former patterns returned … But as an eyewitness to the strength of the pull of cultural solidarity, I never again felt impelled to alter the very natural and affirming fellowship the students were enjoying.[62]

Rock asserts that,

> A nation proclaiming equal justice should not tolerate discrimination. On the other hand, adults divinely granted the power of choice should not, and cannot, be forced into warm personal relationships. Under freedom's grand provision, desegregation—the absence of barriers to access and opportunity—is appropriately a mandate. But integration, or private, personal relationships with individuals of other cultures is always an option, not dictate.[63]

---

[61] McGavran, Understanding Church Growth, 141.

[62] Calvin B. Rock, Protest & Progress: Black Seventh-day Adventist Leadership and the Push for Parity (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2018), 173.

[63] Rock, Protest & Progress: Black Seventh-day Adventist Leadership and the Push for Parity, 168.

In line with this, Peter Wagoner would assert that as long as culturally homogeneous churches are formed voluntarily and are open to any individuals who wish to become members, they are operating healthily.[64]

The support of homogeneous yet open church communities is one that is shared by those who value the regional conference structure within the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Rock contends that the pluralistic nature of United States society calls for differentiation in church culture and leadership.[65]

> While it is true that Regional conferences began, in part, because of racial indignities, it is not true that their continued presence ignores obvious progress in this regard or clings to feelings of animosity because of past hurts. They exist today, in part, because in spite of social progress in America in general and in the church in particular, Black America remains a distinct cultural reality with specific needs. That the cultural distance between Whites and Blacks within the Seventh-day church is just as real as that of society as a whole is verified by the pervasive pattern of "White Flight" by White Adventists all across the land, and by the choice of most Blacks to congregate together even when they have the option to establish membership elsewhere.[66]

Rock also points to the "exponential growth under Regional conference direction" as evidence of its merit, citing that indigenous leadership is most effective in most cases around the world.[67]

Culturally relevant worship experiences are also suggested as reason for homogeneous churches.

> The point to keep in mind is that a non-diversified culture is a necessary condition for a non-diversified worship profile … Seventh-day Adventist membership in North America does not, in the main, qualify in this regard. Wishing it were so, or declaring it to be so, or programming as if it is so, does not make it so. The vast majority of Christian congregations in the United States remain primarily and often entirely, either Black or White. A main reason is that ethnic solidarity, a

---

[64] Peter Wagoner, "How Ethical," 3.
[65] Rock, Protest & Progress: Black Seventh-day Adventist Leadership and the Push for Parity, 170.
[66] Ibid., 179.
[67] Ibid., 176.

seemingly inescapable social reality, dictates with a stern hand a people's preference for worship.[68]

Further,

> With the exception of what Eugene Robinson terms the "Transcendent Elite" the spiritual needs of all other segments of the Black community—the abandoned "left behind," the mainstream middle class, and the Newly Emergent—are, as a rule, most meaningfully met not by the liturgy of an alien culture but that which expresses the understandings and feelings inherent to the group in which they have been acculturated … [and] communities formed by such groups are most effectively served by indigenous leadership.[69]

A similar ethos was shared by a seasoned Seventh-day Adventist pastor in a series of interviews that were conducted for this research. His ministry background included extensive experience as both a conference administrator and pastor of White, Black, and multicultural churches. In reflecting on his experiences, he expressed reticence for the multicultural church model, contending that it presented a worship experience where no one was truly fulfilled; an endeavor where in trying to please everyone, no one truly benefited. Echoing Wagoner's assertion, he too contended that as long as a church community was open to any who wished to join, homogeneity was a desired worship characteristic.[70]

The complexities surrounding culture, leadership and worship present significant questions that need to be considered. Differing cultural needs, particularly within the worship service, do present significant challenges to a diverse community. Joining diverse communities can feel incredibly foreign for individuals who have not experienced relationships with those of different backgrounds to them. Historical, and perhaps not so historical, institutional racism has created mistrust between racial groups within the

---

[68] Ibid., 174.

[69] Ibid., 177.

[70] Interview conducted March 30, 2019. Washington, D.C. Pastor wished to remain anonymous.

denomination. However, if God's intention, so clearly revealed in His Word, is for his people to live out the blessing of cultural diversity, could He have a way for us to work through these questions and challenges?

Individual Cultures Must be Valued

A positive ethos of HUP is the consideration and value that it gives to all cultures. It challenges the view that in joining Christianity, all cultural ties must be cut. A passionate advocate of the renouncement of culture was Jurgen Moltman, who regarded reconciliation as a central facet to Christianity and in order for that to be achieved, differences had to be eradicated. In his vision for a kingdom free of racism, injustice, war, and hate, believers would embrace a new identity free of cultural distinctives. [71] In practice, this kind of model has tended to promote and develop a European Christianity. According to John M. G. Barclay, the European culture has tended to masquerade as "nonspecific" and in doing so, gained dominance in these contexts. [72] Wagner rightly asserts that within the United States, both the "Anglo-conformity" and "melting pot" models effectively gave the Anglo-worship culture dominance.[73] In reference to Seventh-day Adventism, Rock asserts that "Adventist theology is highly Eurocentric, shaped almost exclusively by White European, American, and Australian theologians."[74]

---

[71] Jurgen Moltmann, *The Gospel of Liberation*, tr. H. Wayne Pipkin (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1973), 91.

[72] John M.G. Barclay "Neither Jew Nor Greek," in *Ethnicity and the Bible*, ed. Mark G. Brett (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill Academic Publishers, Inc, 1996), 208.

[73] Wagner, Our Kind of People: The Ethical Dimensions of Church Growth in America, 47.

[74] Rock, Protest & Progress: Black Seventh-day Adventist Leadership and the Push for Parity, 195.

Advocates of HUP argue that "the culture, traditions, and needs of each group be considered separately, and without paternalism or interference."[75] In reflecting on this ethos, Peter C. Wagoner asserts that HUP actually provides an avenue for much-needed racial reconciliation in America: "the best way to bring about the ultimate reconciliation of group to group in America and elsewhere is to recognize the right of each homogeneous unit to be Christian and to do theology in its own way, in other words, to be liberated from the ecclesiastical oppression of a dominant group."[76] The need to value differing cultures is valid, particularly in the context of so much European dominance. Yet, does that automatically call for separate cultural communities? Further, as suggested by Sequeira, Kumar, and Gopalakrishnan as well as DeYmaz, there appears to be limited evidence that reconciliation has been achieved through this model.

The Need for Biblical Values *and* Cultural Equity and Respect

The concerns over European dominance within Christianity and the natural tendency of humanity to desire to connect and worship with those of similar culture and background are valid; however, within God's church, God's principles must take precedence. Kingdom values must be sovereign over pragmatism and within those values, racial equality and reconciliation are core. They are not "add on's" or "extra's" for when one becomes mature, they are core to the gospel itself and are clearly traced throughout the Bible. A biblical church growth model must include repentance and an understanding and acceptance of kingdom values, at the inception, the very embryonic core of one's conversion. Fong asserts that,

---

[75] Ezra Earl Jones, *Strategies for New Churches* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), 21.

[76] Wagner, Our Kind of People: The Ethical Dimensions of Church Growth in America, 98.

It is clear from the text that segregation in the church is an indefensible position … nor is there an allowance made for some kind of delayed post-salvation union with the new humanity. Instead, at the point of conversion there is a new level of spiritual being where all men with their differences are elevated into a common brotherhood. Therefore, it seems highly contradictory to build churches on the principle of racial, cultural or linguistic differences and hope that they will later on convert into the picture of unity that Christ completed on the cross.[77]

There are also strong grounds that the very ethnocentric European dominance within Christianity that supporters of HUP challenge, can be fueled by homogeneous communities. Walter Brueggemann contends that a significant challenge that a homogeneous community presents, is the tendency for cultural superiority to develop.

There is a fearful hunger for sameness among us. The more anxious we are, moreover, the more we hunger for sameness. Sameness for rules against odd family configurations, sameness expressed for straight folks against gays and lesbians, sameness expressed as Christian hostility against Muslims, sameness expressed as white citizenship against Mexicans who are in any case rapists, sameness expressed against blacks who now insist on medical coverage, sameness among the prosperous to keep the poor invisible and in debt … sameness permits a conviction about being chosen.[78]

In response to this, Brueggemann states that God intentionally desires for us to connect with "the other," observing that "the Tower of Babel and Pentecost together show the way in which God puts the other in front of us, the other as companion and neighbor, not as threat of competitor, but as neighbor." [79] Sequeira, Kumar, and Gopalakrishnan are similarly strong in their conclusions, highlighting the deep evil of the ethnocentrism that HUP inadvertently supports and the gospel's role in confronting it.

The social problem of ethnocentrism flows out of sinful human depravity, which must be confronted in the call to repentance (Cf. Matt 3:9). The problem is not merely "social" but profoundly "theological," and any attempt to sidestep this

---

[77] Fong, Racial Equality in the Church: A Critique of the Homogeneous Unit Principle in Light of a Practical Theology Perspective, 81.

[78] Walter Brueggemann, Tenacious Solidarity: Biblical Provocations on Race, Religion, Climate, and the Economy (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2018), 172.

[79] Ibid.

social problem—like the use of the HUP in evangelism—also sidesteps the deeper theological issue that must be addressed.[80]

Christina Cleveland also suggests that homogeneous churches can unwittingly encourage intolerance and prejudice amongst members:

> Research on group processes shows that group separation and prejudice have a bidirectional relationship—that is, prejudice tends to result in division between groups and division between groups tends to result in prejudice. What begins as seemingly harmless homogeneity often snowballs into distrust, inaccurate perceptions of other groups, prejudice and hostility.[81]

As explored earlier, this ethnocentrism was not absent from the early church context and the biblical text provides clear example and counsel in challenging it. Curtiss Paul DeYoung asserts:

> The ancient Israelites often found themselves struggling with ethnocentrism and the resulting tendencies to feel superior and uniquely special. The early church proclaimed the message of Jesus in a world where diversity in culture (Jew and Gentile), gender (male and female), and social class (slave and free) caused tensions. In the midst of these challenges, the biblical authors recorded how followers of God not only coped but also made surprising contributions to showing the importance of diversity.[82]

Barclay points to Paul's leadership as one that both valued culture and avoided cultural hegemony:

> Paul could serve as a valuable resource in our struggles to fashion a harmonious but multicultural society. It reads Paul as a fashioner of multiethnic and multicultural communities, which function not to erase but to moderate between differing cultural specificities. It could be claimed that any community which relativizes difference sets itself up as, in effect, a new hegemonic culture. But I have suggested that Paul never intended to found a "Christendom," and his prescription, at its most basic, could be taken as elevating only what accords with love and enhances community.[83]

---

[80] Sequeira, Kumar, and Gopalakrishnan, "Caste and Church Growth: An Assessment of Donald McGavran's Church Growth Principles from An Indian Perspective," 104.

[81] Christena Cleveland, *Disunity in Christ: Uncovering the Hidden Forces that Keep Us Apart* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2013), 33.

[82] DeYoung, *Coming Together in the 21st Century: The Bible's Message in an Age of Diversity*, 8.
[83] Barclay "Neither Jew Nor Greek," 213.

Further, "Paul does not present the gospel as if it carries a whole new cultural package,

designed to eradicate and replace all others. It is rather a cluster of values, focused in

love, which enables the creation of a new community in which variant cultural traditions

can be practiced."[84]

There are those who challenge this interpretation, asserting that the early church

was built using a homogeneous unit method. Wagner contends that:

> Christians, wherever they were, felt a unity with one another centered in their
> common relationship to Jesus Christ, and yet they did not feel obligated to give up
> their culture or betray their own people in order to become believers. New
> Testament churches were homogeneous unit churches, just as most churches are
> today. They could not have been otherwise and still have multiplied as rapidly as
> they did in a pluralistic society.'[85]

It would appear that giving up one's culture was not necessary, but the conflict that Paul

deals with repeatedly through his letters, as discussed previously, indicates that the

churches were not of a homogeneous nature. The differing cultures that new believers

brought to the communities of faith were very present and took time and counsel to work

through in order to live out the gospel of peace that they committed to. In reflecting on

Paul's rebuke of Peter, as mentioned earlier, Sequeira, Kumar, and Gopalakrishnan

observe:

> Here, the acceptance of Gentiles—those from a differing ethnic group—as fellow
> members of God's family by sharing table fellowship, takes priority over the
> pragmatic desire to avoid offending others. But Paul's actions are the exact
> opposite of the church growth model. In McGavran's model, Peter's actions
> would be entirely justified. [86]

---

[84] Barclay "Neither Jew Nor Greek," 211.

[85] Wagner, Our Kind of People: The Ethical Dimensions of Church Growth in America, 117.

[86] Sequeira, Kumar, and Gopalakrishnan, "Caste and Church Growth: An Assessment of Donald McGavran's Church Growth Principles from An Indian Perspective," 105.

From a human perspective, it does appear to be far more efficient and pragmatic for church growth to make allowance for ethnocentrism and prejudice. One could definitely surmise that such explosive growth as seen in the early church must have allowed for homogeneity. It would not have otherwise been humanly possible. However, that is a key point, God's church is not reliant on human pragmatism or power, but on His Spirit.

It is clear that God intended for humanity to enjoy cultural diversity. Diversity can be found within the very personhood of God himself, and as human beings created in his image, we fall short of our intended design and potential if we neglect it. Jesus, God in the flesh, openly pushed back against the rigid homogeneous culture of his day, and at the inception of the church, the Holy Spirit displayed an unquestionable inclusivity of all cultures at Pentecost. Finally, as the apostles continued to work for its reality within God's early church, God gave John the vision of the throne room in heaven to share, depicting God's church robed in white and beautifully diverse. This presents a rebuke to a church that has carried the name of Christ yet has historically denied equal fellowship and ministry to those of a different race. This challenges a church who carries the name of Christ yet has not chosen to support issues of racial justice in their local communities. And it confronts a church that carries the name of Christ yet continues to ignore, and even bolster, the racial barriers that exist between churches and individuals within its denomination. These barriers are challenging and complex. The way forward is not a simple one. Differing cultures do bring differing needs and ways of worship. And structures such as regional conferences have been imbedded within the cultural framework of the denomination for generations. There are wounds in need of healing and shame in need of shedding. It is not a simple way forward. However, the scope of

evidence within the Bible that points to God's desire for cultural diversity within humanity is overwhelmingly present and it presents both challenge and encouragement to the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the United States. Her potential for growth in this area is immense. It is to this momentous challenge that I suggest Cultural Hospitality as an initial step in the journey towards a fuller expression of the body of Christ.

CHAPTER 4:

A CALL TO A THEOLOGY OF CULTURAL HOSPITALITY

Biblical hospitality is a practice that has been largely left behind within

contemporary Christianity, yet it holds significant potential for assisting the Seventh-day

Adventist Church in taking initial steps towards a journey of experiencing the value of

greater cultural diversity within its churches in the United States. The word "hospitality"

has morphed in meaning through the ages. In popular culture it often refers to being

friendly or welcoming to guests. On an organizational level it can refer to the food and

entertainment that is provided.[1] This has meant that it has often been considered to be a

"nice extra" quality to a person's or community's character, rather than a core need or

practice. Practitioner of hospitality, Christine D. Pohl observes that "today most

understandings of hospitality have a minimal moral component—hospitality is a nice

extra if we have the time or the resources, but we rarely view it as a spiritual obligation or

as a dynamic expression of vibrant Christianity."[2] This is far removed from the

significant value that it has historically been given.

Hospitality was considered an integral value within cultures of the Ancient Near

East. According to John Koenig, these cultures considered hospitality to be "one of the

pillars of morality upon which the universe [stood.] When guests of hosts [violated] their

obligations to each other, the whole world [shook] and retribution [followed]."[3] The

---

[1] Cambridge Dictionary, s.v. "hospitality," accessed April 27, 2018, https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/hospitality.

[2] Christine D. Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1999), loc 80, Kindle.

[3] John Koenig, New Testament Hospitality: Partnership with Strangers as Promise and Mission (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1985), 2. See also Pohl, Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition, loc 87.

practice of hospitality is also overtly present within the Old and New Testaments, providing an integral foundation and identity marker for followers of God. Within the early church, it was considered to be a moral principle that went beyond private virtue, extending to the Christian community as a sign of God's presence and "an embodiment of a biblical ethic."[4] According to Pohl, hospitality was integral to the credibility and spread of the gospel, facilitating the transcendence of ethnic distinctions in the church as well as caring for the sick, strangers, and pilgrims.[5] Its definition can be deceptively simple, described as "intentional acts that welcome and provide resources for one who is previously unknown"[6] or simply "the act or process whereby the identity of the stranger is transformed into that of guest."[7] Yet within the biblical framework, its power and depth is immense. Henry Nouwen asserts,

> At first the word "hospitality" might evoke the image of soft sweet kindness, tea parties, bland conversations and a general atmosphere of coziness. Probably this has its good reasons since in our culture the concept of hospitality has lost much of its power and is often used in circles where we are more prone to expect a watered-down piety than a serious search for an authentic Christian spirituality. But still, if there is any concept worth restoring to its original depth and evocative potential, it is the concept of hospitality. It is one of the richest biblical terms that can deepen and broaden our insight in our relationships to our fellow human beings.[8]

---

[4] Amy G. Oden, ed. And You Welcomed Me: A Sourcebook on Hospitality in Early Christianity (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2001), 16.

[5] Pohl, Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition, Loc 109.

[6] Shannon Frances Garvin, "Hospitality and The Kingdom of God: Our Invitation to Join the Work of Restoration," (DMin dissertation, George Fox University, 2016), 5, http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/dmin/149.

[7] Joshua W. Jipp, *Saved by Faith and Hospitality* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2017) 2.

[8] Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975), 66.

It is this biblical understanding of hospitality that this dissertation will be exploring as it

pertains to cultural diversity within the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the United

States.

Hospitality in the Old and New Testaments

Biblical Hospitality is grounded within the hospitable character of God,

particularly in his relationship to humanity. According to Letty M. Russell, J. Shannon

Clarkson, and Kate M. Ott, God's holiness "provides the basic theological understanding

of hospitality in both Hebrew and Christian scriptures: Human beings are created by God

and are to be holy, and to be treated as holy or sacred."[9] Joshua W. Jipp also suggests that

"God's relationship to his people is fundamentally an act of hospitality to strangers, as

God makes space for 'the other,' for his people, by inviting humanity into relationship

with him."[10] Through the relationship that he initiated and enabled with humanity, God

demonstrated an ultimate "love of the other." According to Amy G. Oden,

> The larger spiritual context in which hospitality is practiced always begins with
> God ... God offers hospitality to all humanity, first by establishing a home (*oikos*)
> for all. God provides creation and its glories for the happiness and enjoyment of
> all creatures. Second, God offers an abundant grace that pulls us into God's
> presence and life. Through God's hospitality we can participate in the divine life
> and be saved therein.[11]

Pohl also asserts,

> Images of God as gracious and generous host pervade the biblical materials. God
> provides manna and quail daily in the wilderness for a hungry and often
> ungrateful people. God offers shelter in a hot and dry land, and refreshment
> through living water. Israel's covenant identity includes being a stranger, an alien,

---

[9] Letty M. Russell, J. Shannon Clarkson, and Kate M. Ott, *Just Hospitality: God's Welcome in a World of Difference*, 1st ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 87.

[10] Jipp, Saved by Faith and Hospitality, 2.

[11] Oden, ed. And You Welcomed Me: A Sourcebook on Hospitality in Early Christianity, 87.

a tenant in God's land—both dependent on God for welcome and provision and answerable to God for its own treatment of aliens and strangers.[12]

Grounded in God's character and interaction with humanity, hospitality was also notably demonstrated by the patriarch Abraham, who received a visit from strangers, later finding out that they were really Angels (Gen 18). His hospitality was also one that was personally embodied, and though extending hospitality to strangers was a cultural norm within the Ancient Near East,[13] Abraham's demonstration has been held as the pivotal example of hospitality within both Jewish and Christian traditions. Though of high status, he personally oversaw preparations of food for these "strangers," and then again, personally served them (Gen 18:6–8). So significant were his actions, that when Paul wrote to the Jewish Christians, reminding them to practice hospitality, he referenced Abraham's story (Heb 13:2).

The practice of hospitality was also included within the laws given to the Israelites following their deliverance from Egypt. They were counselled to remember the foreigners and poor, as they too had been foreigners in Egypt (Lev 19:33–34). Pohl asserts that "the expectation that Israel would understand and respond to the plight of sojourners, based on its own experience of having been mistreated aliens in Egypt, is clear."[14] The nature of hospitality that is found within the Old Testament, one that is particularly focused on sojourners and immigrants, is expanded in the stories and teaching of the New Testament.

---

[12] Pohl, Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition, loc 218.

[13] T. Raymond Hobbs, "Hospitality in the First Testament and the 'Teleological Fallacy'," Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, no. 95 (2001): 29.

[14] Christine D. Pohl, "Responding to Strangers: Insights from the Christian Tradition," Studies in Christian Ethics 19, no. 1 (2006): 87.

In the New Testament, the Greek word φιλόξενος literally means "love of strangers." The prefix "philo" means "love" and suffix "xenos" means both "stranger" and "host," suggesting both "love for the stranger" and "love from the host."[15] Within this definition, an underlying sense of mutuality can be found between "host" and "stranger."[16] Further, this hospitality looks not only to the sojourner and immigrant, but broadens to include "the other."[17] Significantly, hospitality was a stated necessary character trait of a chosen leader within the church.[18] 1 Timothy and Titus both list it:

> Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, *hospitable*, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. (1 Tim 3:2, emphasis mine.)

> Since an overseer manages God's household, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. Rather, he must be *hospitable*, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. (Tit 1:7–8, emphasis mine.)

That hospitality is given equal weight to qualities such as a lack of violence and drunkenness, faithfulness, and even honesty, highlights its essentiality and significance within the church. It is even listed first in Titus' list of necessary qualities for a leader, again highlighting the value attached to its practice.

Most impactful of all is Jesus' example and exhortation of hospitality. In becoming "flesh," "dwelling among us" (John 1:1) and then giving his life for us (John 3:16), Jesus demonstrated the ultimate love of the "other." In the words of Paul, "while

---

[15] Mark Van Steenwyk, *The Unkingdom of God: Embracing the Subversive Power of Repentance* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 171.

[16] Thomas E. Reynolds, "Welcoming without Reserve? A Case in Christian Hospitality," *Theology Today* 63, no. 2 (2006): 198.

[17] Oden, ed. And You Welcomed Me: A Sourcebook on Hospitality in Early Christianity, 87.

[18] Pohl, Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition, loc 87.

we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8). Jipp notes that "the Gospel of John presents Jesus as the heavenly stranger who through the incarnation shares divine knowledge and presence with alienated humans by enabling them to partake of the hospitality of God."[19] That Jesus takes the role of both stranger and host again alludes to the mutuality that is inherent within the practice of hospitality. Further, this visceral embodiment that Jesus demonstrated, by taking on human form and living amongst humanity in all its joy and sorrow, strongly suggests that hospitality is not just a philosophical idea but has practical implications for followers of God.

The value of hospitality's practice can also be seen within Jesus' teaching, particularly highlighting the inclusive nature of it. The parables of the lost sheep, coin, and prodigal son all point to a Kingdom that is concerned with those who would typically be regarded as "least." Most significant was Jesus' teaching on judgement, with the heart of it balancing on how one treated the stranger, the sick, or those in prison (Matt 25:44), again articulating Gods concern for "the least" in communities; "whatever you do for the least of these, you do for me" (Matt 25:45). In reference to this text, Deames affirms that the hospitable practice of "welcoming the stranger and offering care to the marginalized has become one of the distinguishing characteristics of the authentic Christian gospel, and suggests that Jesus went out of his way to identify himself with the 'least of these' that were oppressed and exploited."[20] Pohl also holds to this interpretation:

> Ordinary hosts invited friends, relatives, and rich neighbors to their banquets. In
> so doing, they solidified relationships, reinforced social boundaries, and

---

[19] Jipp, Saved by Faith and Hospitality, 80.

[20] Deames, Matthew D., "Inviting and Encouraging Racial, Cultural, Ethnic, and Generational Diversity within Ecclesial Community" (DMin diss., George Fox University, 2012), 17, http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/dmin/25.

anticipated repayment from their guests. By contrast, hosts who anticipated the hospitality of God's Kingdom welcomed the poor, lame, crippled, and blind, those who were more dependent and lived on the margins of the community.[21]

This inclusive nature of biblical hospitality, as taught by Jesus, clearly calls followers of God outside of their comfort zones and familiar cultures.

The tangible and inclusive nature of hospitality was further demonstrated by Jesus through the sharing of food. Eating together was a repeated theme throughout Jesus' ministry as he not only shared food with others, often those deemed on the margins of society, but also used the imagery of food within many of his parables depicting the Kingdom of Heaven being inclusive of all. In the parable of the Great Wedding Banquet, it was those from the streets who ended up enjoying the feast (Matt 22:1–14; Luke 14:7–14). Further, those who opposed Jesus, even used his habit of eating with those on the margins as an attack against him (Matt 9:11). Miriam Therese Winter suggests that the story of the feeding of the five thousand is particularly significant, noting that it was the only miracle recorded in all four gospels and observing that many of the people that Jesus enabled to eat together that day, would not have been permitted to by the purity laws that existed in their community.[22] The feeding of the four thousand (Matt 15:29–39) further illustrates God's hospitable heart for all as in this case, the miracle was performed for a crowd of gentiles. Brian K. Blount observes that "the loaves are multiplied for four thousand Gentiles; it is they who eat, with the table language of the Last Supper rippling through the story, until they are satisfied … Jesus has offered the bread on God's table to

---

[21] Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition*, 262.
[22] Miriam Therese Winter, *Eucharist with a Small "e"* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005), 75.

people of all the nations."[23] In reflecting on this theme, Mark Van Steenwyk suggests that it is directly applicable to the church:

> The posture of our way of life as the church is, in some ways, summarized by the table. The table is the place of mutuality and respect for our sisters and brothers. The table is the place where we welcome the outsider. And the table is the place for which we leave the comfort of our own home to dine with "sinners."[24]

Further,

> The table is a place without judgment. It is a place of acceptance and mutuality. It is a place where all of us come just as we are before God to experience God's presence in and through one another. Jesus' way of hospitality goes way beyond welcome—it is transformative. The ultimate goal of hospitality is tearing down the walls of division.[25]

Within his ministry Jesus was overt in demonstrating and calling for a hospitality that was inclusive to all, employing the common meal as a facilitator and symbol of this.

Prior to his selfless death on the cross, Jesus again used a shared meal to demonstrate the hospitality of his Kingdom. Taking the role of a servant, Jesus washed his disciples' feet, including the ultimate "other" within his community of disciples—Judas the betrayer—and then broke bread and shared wine, again with all of them, calling on them to "do this in remembrance of me" (Matt 26:26–28; Mk 14:22–24; Luke 22:15–18). In reflection on this remembered meal, Winters suggests that he was calling attention not only to his death on the cross, but all the inclusive meals, the hospitality, that they had witnessed and shared throughout his ministry, a call to continue extending welcome to the table.[26] In reflection on this interpretation, Garvin notes:

---

[23] Brian K. Blount, "The Apocolypse of Worship: A House of Prayer for All Nations," in *Making Room at the Table: An Invitation to Multicultural Worship*, ed. Brian K. Blount and Leonora Tubbs Tisdale (Louisville, KY: Westminister John Knox Press, 2001), 21.

[24] Steenwyk, The Unkingdom of God: Embracing the Subversive Power of Repentance, 171.

[25] Ibid., 173.

[26] Winter, Eucharist with a Small "e", 75.

> This broader reflection on the Last Supper opens the doors on a dusty theology of hospitality. Jesus did not live for nor minister to an exclusive group, why would he ask us to remember him that way? Jesus continuously reminded his disciples that the Kingdom of God, rather than redemption, was coming as he called them to follow him in welcoming, healing, feeding, and proclaiming the Kingdom of God.[27]

Volf is similar in his reflection, suggesting that the Eucharist is a participation in the welcoming embrace of God:

> We would most profoundly misunderstand the Eucharist, however, if we thought of it only as a sacrament of God's embrace of which we are simply the fortunate beneficiaries. Inscribed on the very heart of God's grace is the rule that we can be its recipients only if we do not resist being made into its agents; what happens to us must be done by us. Having been embraced by God, we must make space for others in ourselves and invite them in—even our enemies. This is what we enact as we celebrate the Eucharist. In receiving Christ's broken body and spilled blood, we, in a sense, receive all those whom Christ received by suffering.[28]

Volf further suggests that "God's reception of hostile humanity into divine communion is a model for how human beings should relate to the other."[29] The practice of biblical hospitality, making space for "the other" at our tables, even those who have hurt us, speaks directly to issues of race within the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the United States.

Biblical Hospitality and Cultural Diversity

Biblical hospitality, as it pertains to cultural diversity within the Adventist Church in the United States, is both challenging and encouraging. It gives the practical impetus and scaffolding for embracing the blessing of cultural diversity. Biblical hospitality calls us out of our homogeneous comfort, beyond abstract and philosophical assent, to active

---

[27] Garvin, "Hospitality and The Kingdom of God: Our Invitation to Join the Work of Restoration," 52.

[28] Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion & Embrace* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 129.

[29] Ibid., 100.

participation in breaking down racial divides amongst us. If God calls his people to

actively embrace the "other," then intercultural relationships are not optional, they are a

necessary part of building His Kingdom. Garvin asserts that "hospitality, rightly engaged

within the Scriptures and streams of spirituality history, fiercely and faithfully engages

established cultural and religious traditions which marginalize, condemn, and seek to

forget the unknown, the stranger, the one who is different from us."[30] Leaders in the

ancient church actively embraced this aspect of hospitality. Volf reflects that,

> For Chrysostom, Lactantious, Jerome, and other leaders of the ancient church, hospitality was a significant context for transcending status boundaries and for working through issues of respect and recognition. Christian hospitality was remedial, counteracting the social stratification of the larger society by providing a modest and equal welcome to everyone.[31]

> There are some who would challenge the view that biblical hospitality pertains to

issues of racial justice. L.R Martin contends that,

> Writers often appeal to the customs of hospitality as support for justice on behalf of the poor, immigrants and other marginalized groups, groups that might correspond to the biblical 'stranger' (*ger*) or 'foreigner' (*nokri*). But whilst demands for justice are abundant in the Old Testament, hospitality is something else entirely. Old Testament hospitality, therefore, must not be equated with social justice.[32]

When interpreted solely within the confines of the Old Testament, there is room for

understanding hospitality in a narrower definition. However, as an overarching theme

that is so clearly traced from creation, the patriarchs, the Children of Israel, and then

developed fully through the "Word becoming flesh" and the teaching of the apostles,

---

[30] Garvin, "Hospitality and The Kingdom of God: Our Invitation to Join the Work of Restoration," 31.

[31] Pohl, Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition, loc 238.

[32] L. R. Martin, "Old Testament Foundations for Christian Hospitality," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 35, no. 1 (2014), Art. #752, 3, http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/ve.v35i1.752.

hospitality's understanding is given greater depth and reach, extending to encompass "the other."

Differing cultural groups all feature, to some extent, the identity of "the other" as they interact, both collectively and as individuals. The significance and marginality of this "cultural other" is further increased when working between a dominant and minority cultural group. A passionate visionary for cultural diversity, Soon-Chan Rah writes,

> As the church in the United States seeks to fulfill the biblical mandate for unity, we are coming to the realization that we desperately need proper motivation, spiritual depth, interpersonal skills, and gracious communication in order to live into God's hope for the church. In short, the church needs to develop cultural intelligence in order to fully realize the many-colored tapestry that God is weaving together.[33]

An understanding of biblical hospitality gives significant motivation. An understanding of biblical hospitality contends that making space for the "cultural other" is an imperative, not an option, in order to enjoy the blessing that God envisions for his church. An understanding of biblical hospitality calls for the practice of Cultural Hospitality.

Biblical Hospitality Calls for a Balance in Adventism's Theological Prioritization

The centrality and significance of hospitality within both the Old and New Testaments as it pertains to cultural diversity, challenges the overriding apocalyptic focus of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which has superseded concerns for racial justice and reconciliation, as discussed in chapter two. The centrality of hospitality does not discount the significance of truths such as the second coming of Christ and the blessing

---

[33] Soong Chan Rah, *Many Colors: Cultural Intelligence for a Changing World* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2010), 11–12.

of the Sabbath, but it calls for a balancing of priorities, particularly as they pertain to

proclamation of biblical truth and fully embracing God's kingdom now.

Seventh-day Adventists have traditionally found strength and unity around their

Adventist theological understanding. Shaw and Hollancid describe Adventist theology as

"the nexus around which all SDAs find common ground."[34] Yet there remains great need

in developing positive intercultural relationships within church congregations and

institutions. Rock asserts that "sustained racial association in the Adventist church at the

personal level is rare on a large scale. That is true not only within the pattern of church

attendance, but also in a more telling manner within Adventist colleges and

universities."[35] This presents a clear lack of biblical hospitality as it pertains to cultural

relationships. The theoretical unity that has been developed around distinctive theology is

valuable, but imperative to that is a commitment towards practicing biblical hospitality.

The passion and commitment that theological understandings of the Sabbath and

Second Coming have received, must also be given to biblical hospitality, which calls for

a practical and tangible love of "the other." In reflecting on the call of hospitality as it

pertains to theology of the Second Coming, Garvin asserts that "Christ came not to die so

we could all live a waiting game. Christ came to bring life. Christ calls us to live as the

continued incarnate Body of Christ on earth."[36] Further, "when we invite in the stranger,

we embrace a different ethic than marginalization, ignorance, or feigned concern. When

we believe that we are co-creating the Kingdom of God, we live as if God is with us not

---

[34] Talbot O. Shaw, "Racism and Adventist Theology." *Spectrum* – Autumn 1971, 3(4): 29–38, and Hollancid, "Seventh-day Adventists and 'Race' Relations in the U.S.: The Case of Black-White Structural Segregation," 13.

[35] Calvin B. Rock, Protest & Progress: Black Seventh-day Adventist Leadership and the Push for Parity (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2018), 178.

[36] Garvin, "Hospitality and The Kingdom of God: Our Invitation to Join the Work of Restoration," 33.

as if we are frittering away our time on religious activities until Christ finally returns."[37] The Seventh-day Adventist Church is not necessarily "frittering away our time," but there does appear to be significant room for embracing the practice of hospitality, living out God's Kingdom now, even as we look forward to and proclaim the coming of the next.

Cultural Hospitality

Significant work has been done in the area of biblical hospitality with multiple models of application available. Christine Pohl's text *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* has served as a watershed resource for the resurgence of hospitality within the Christian community in recent decades. Pohl speaks to the strength of the tangible nature that hospitality provides as a discipline, explaining that "hospitable attitudes, even a principled commitment to hospitality, do not challenge us or transform our loyalties in the way that actual hospitality to particular strangers does. Hospitality in the abstract lacks the mundane, troublesome, yet rich dimensions of a profound human practice."[38] Amy Oden has also contributed significantly in her text *And You Welcomed Me: A Sourcebook on Hospitality in Early Christianity*, suggesting that "hospitality moves through several stages. It frequently begins with welcome, then turns to restoration of the guest, followed by being with or dwelling with the other, and ends in sending forth."[39] Common elements of hospitality include communicating welcome,[40] presence, and a mutual experience of blessing.[41]

---

[37] Ibid., 29.

[38] Pohl, Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition, loc 189.

[39] Oden, ed. And You Welcomed Me: A Sourcebook on Hospitality in Early Christianity, 145.

[40] Pohl, Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition, loc 1997.

[41] Thomas E. Reynolds, "Welcoming without Reserve? A Case in Christian Hospitality," *Theology Today* 63, no. 2 (2006): 198.

In surveying the valuable work that has been contributed in the field of biblical hospitality, three practices are particularly applicable to a model of Cultural Hospitality: humility, welcome, and empathy. They are each individually significant yet also provide a scaffolding that facilitates growth as they build on each other. Humility provides foundational awareness and posture that supports the practice of welcome. The practice of welcome in turn, facilitates a growth in the practice of empathy.

Cultural Hospitality: Humility

One of the most challenging yet imperative practices to Cultural Hospitality is humility. This practice of humility does not tend to come naturally. It can be both challenging and confronting. It must come from a grounding in our own identity in Christ, a Christ that both embodied and reached out to "the other." Oden states that "early Christian voices … reflect the profound conviction that Christian identity is rooted in otherness. Before one can truly offer hospitality, one must understand one's own marginal position."[42] Within this understanding, humility has space to grow. Pohl asserts that humility is a "crucial virtue for hospitality," particularly as it pertains to power.[43]

Practicing humility calls for an acknowledgement and sharing of power. As has been explored in chapters one and two, White culture has historically held the dominant cultural space within the Adventist denomination as well as the wider community of the United States.[44] Humbly acknowledging this place of privilege and power is a significant

---

[42] Oden, ed. And You Welcomed Me: A Sourcebook on Hospitality in Early Christianity, 39.
[43] Pohl, Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition, loc 1377.
[44] Michael O. Emerson and George Yancey, *Transcending Racial Barriers: Towards a Mutual Obligations Approach* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011), 13.

and necessary step for those within its group to take. Sociologists Michael O. Emerson

and George Yancey describe this privilege and power in three dimensions:

1. **White Structural Advantage**: Whites occupy the location of dominance—politically, economically, culturally, and numerically—within racial hierarchy. They disproportionately control influence of political parties, the legal system, government-controlled institutions, industry and business, and so on. . . .
2. **White Normativity**: Structural advantage facilitates white normativity—the normalization of white's cultural practices, ideologies, and location within the racial hierarchy such that how whites do things, their understandings about life, society, and the world, and their dominant social location over other racial groups are accepted *as just how things are*. Anything that diverges from this norm is deviant. . . .
3. **White Transparency** is defined as the "tendency of whites not to think . . . about norms, behaviors experiences, or perspectives that are white-specific" . . . Whites typically lack a racial consciousness. Most whites are unaware that they are "raced" and that their race has real consequences for their lives. Rather, they believe that they earn what they get and that their achievements are nearly all based on individual effort, talent, and creativity. Whites often believe they are cultureless; it doesn't "mean" anything to be white, they may think … White transparency is a powerful tool for maintaining privilege because of its elusive nature.[45]

Practicing humility through taking time to understand and acknowledge this reality is

essential in order for meaningful Cultural Hospitality to take place. Emerson and Yancey

assert that "these three dimensions of whiteness … work together to sustain white

hegemony … importantly, these dimensions can produce dominance without whites'

feeling like it is true."[46] Without this understanding, much of the continued pain and

injustice continues with minimal awareness within the dominant culture.

This need for understanding and acknowledgement of white culture and privilege

calls for gracious education to be shared within traditionally White congregations, and

the practice of humility in order for this confronting reality to be understand and

---

[45] Emerson and Yancey, *Transcending Racial Barriers: Towards a Mutual Obligations Approach*, 12.

[46] Ibid., 13.

acknowledged. Walter Brueggemann is strong in his call for pastors to take on the

challenge of leading this education:

> It is the pastoral task of the church to help and guide people to engage in and process the reality for the end of exceptionalism. That task is not easy, partly because exceptionalism, powerful as it is, is mostly unacknowledged except in the case of national posturing. We do not usually think of Christian or white as exceptional status, even though we count on it. Relinquishment of such claims is a process of allowing for the legitimacy of nonwhite, nonstraight, nonmale, non-Western, non-Christian neighbors as first-class citizens in the common good. It is exceedingly difficult for some to make this allowance, and it surely cannot be done if it is not talked about honestly and frontally.[47]

Without engaging in this practice of humility, the journey in Cultural Hospitality is

greatly hampered. Brueggemann further asserts,

> It is clear that "the other"—non-Christian, non-white, non-Westerner—does not need to be honored if and when Christian white Westerners are in all cases and circumstances superior. The entire trajectory of superiority serves to diminish and dismiss "the other" as an important and defining presence in the world … in each of us there is a clash between fear of "the other" and welcome of "the other". And how we work out that clash is decisive for our common human future.[48]

This practice of humility is not only decisive for common good, but specifically

for the good of facilitating racial wholeness in our churches. In writing specifically about

creating multicultural ministry between American Koreans and White Americans, Sang

Hyun Lee also points out the significant responsibility for White American Christians to

embrace humility.

> [If] the state of being freed up from status and hierarchy is going to happen for Korean American and white Americans gathered together for worship, white Americans have in fact more status to give up and must give up more … when we discuss multicultural worship or any other kind of multiculturalism, we must keep

---

[47] Brueggemann, Tenacious Solidarity: Biblical Provocations on Race, Religion, Climate, and the Economy, 145.
[48] Ibid., 116.

in mind the different social positions that white Americans and minority peoples hold in the United States.[49]

Though the practice of humility is one that all are called to embrace, within the context of Cultural Hospitality it is particularly valuable and pertinent to the majority culture, which within the United States of America, is White.

This practice of humility within the particular historical context of the United States also calls for an acknowledgement and surrender of the Europeanization of Christianity, including the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Curtis Paul DeYoung suggests that a pivotal aspect of this is a historically accurate Afro-Asiatic portrayal of Jesus in the use of images. He contends that the inaccurate white image of Jesus and the misuse of his character through colonial and slave practices, necessitates an intentional reorientation to the fact that the "Jesus of the Bible, who lived in Nazareth, was an Afro-Asiatic Jew."[50] He states, "people of color need to visually see that Jesus was not white. Although the messages of the colonizer, the slaveholder, and the white supremacist were all lies, the image of a white Jesus is deeply imbedded in the psyche."[51] In embracing an Afro-Asiatic Jesus, one makes a statement not only to a community, but also to oneself. Not only does it reduce the baggage that a church may inadvertently carry from the history of racial and cultural prejudice, but it also serves as a tool for re-orientating racial inclinations within White membership.[52] DeYoung contends,

> If white people are able to visualize the Jesus of the Bible as Afro-Asiatic, brown or black, perhaps this will facilitate the removal of the blinders of prejudiced attitudes. If white people can pray to and express love for an Afro-Asiatic Jesus,

---

[49] Sang Hyun Lee "Worship on the Edge: Liminality and the Korean American Context," in *Making Room at the Table: An Invitation to Multicultural Worship*, ed. Brian K. Blount and Leonora Tubbs Tisdale (Louisville, KY: Westminister John Knox Press, 2001), 105.

[50] Curtiss Paul DeYoung, *Coming Together in the 21st Century* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2009), 61.

[51] Ibid., 62.

[52] Ibid.

something profound will happen to their souls. This could lead to a heartfelt understanding of people of color as sisters and brothers in the human family. Whites who intellectually assent to an Afro-Asiatic Jesus cannot then experientially accept society's racial hierarchy.[53]

It also reaffirms the heritage of persons of Africa, reminding them that God was at work within their peoples long before "the colonizer missionaries in Africa or the slave master's preacher in the United States."[54] As much as this practice of humility presents challenges, particularly for those of European descent who perhaps have not faced these truths, it also extends the potential for great blessing. It prepares the heart for the practice of welcome.

Cultural Hospitality: Welcome

Core to Cultural Hospitality is also the practice of "welcome." Deceptively simple in brevity, it not only describes the initial act of welcoming the "cultural other," but also the recognition of their value, and the creation of space for them. The practice of welcome within Cultural Hospitality, calls for intentional inclusion of those from other cultures by individuals of the dominant culture. Welcome calls for more than an assent to the presence of the "cultural other;" more than a warm greeting at the door, it calls for an intentional recasting of social relations. Oden writes,

> An important component of hospitality is helping the outsider or the poor feel welcomed… a recasting of social relations. Including the other in one's circle of friends or business associates, sponsoring an outsider, welcoming a servant, or mentoring an apprentice can be acts of social hospitality. Acts of inclusion and respect no matter how small, can powerfully reframe social relations and engender welcome.[55]

---

[53] DeYoung, Coming Together in the 21st Century: The Bible's Message in an Age of Diversity, 62.

[54] Ibid., 19.

[55] Oden, ed. And You Welcomed Me: A Sourcebook on Hospitality in Early Christianity, 14.

Pohl develops an understanding of this practice and speaks to the significance of the tangible nature of welcome, stating that "recognition and respect cannot be sustained at the level of abstract claims or commitments. To have any meaning, they must be lived out in concrete everyday relations—in the family, church, community, and political sphere."[56] Intentional and sustained inclusion is an imperative aspect of facilitating meaningful welcome.

The sharing of meals has traditionally been a central facet of the practice of welcome and is particularly valuable to extending welcome within the context of Cultural Hospitality. For many cultures, the table is the space where relationships are developed. According to Pohl, "in almost every case, hospitality involved shared meals; historically, table fellowship was an important way of recognizing the equal value and dignity of persons."[57] As explored earlier, Jesus was overt in his employment of "table ministry," repeatedly using food and meal imagery to represent the Kingdom of Heaven. Further, in the early church, "the common meal … was a symbol and medium of the gospel."[58] Pohl suggests that "when strangers and hosts are from different backgrounds, the intimacy of a shared meal can forge relationships which cross significant social boundaries."[59] Jipp writes similarly, stating that "sharing meals, eating with someone at the same table, and receiving guests into one's home (and entering into others' homes as a guest) function as opportunities to increase our friendship and intimacy with others."[60]

---

[56] Pohl, Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition, loc 714.

[57] Ibid., loc 102.

[58] John Koenig, New Testament Hospitality: Partnership with Strangers as Promise and Mission (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1985), 54.

[59] Pohl, Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition, loc 822.

[60] Jipp, Saved by Faith and Hospitality, 17.

In the sharing of meals, not only is there space created for the forging of relationships, but opportunity is presented for giving value to different cultures as culturally specific foods are shared. In a church context, encouraging shared meals between individuals of differing cultures, either in potluck style or at people's homes is an effective method of creating welcome and breaking down barriers. One of the churches under study for this dissertation, a traditionally White congregation that is in the initial stages of their journey of Cultural Hospitality, found great success in hosting an international food fundraising social where members were encouraged to share favorite culturally specific foods. Leaders reported that not only was it one of the most attended socials they had organized in recent years, but the interaction of members of different backgrounds created "a buzz" within the congregation. Members of minority cultural backgrounds who had not typically attended other socials, were an integral aspect of this one. There was a sense of celebration of the church's developing diversity and the ability for members of minority cultures to not only attend but meaningfully contribute, gave a sense of recognition and value to their belonging in the community. The use of food, as humble as it may appear, should not be discounted in its value to the practice of welcome within Cultural Hospitality.

Another facet of the practice of welcome within Cultural Hospitality is recognition. Pohl describes recognition as "respecting the dignity and equal worth of every person and valuing their contributions, or at least their potential contributions, to the larger community."[61] Recognition calls for a wider identity that encompasses all; a shift for any congregation that has had a dominant cultural identity. This is not easy;

---

[61] Pohl, Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition, loc 693.

many long-held traditions within churches are cultural, and so broadening a community

identity can involve change. Yet without broadening identity, we are not giving

meaningful recognition:

> When we idolize our cultural group identity, giving it higher priority than our
> common group identity, minority group members are not truly invited to
> participate in the organization as valuable members of the all-inclusive we …
> Until we relativize our smaller cultural identities and adopt a common ingroup
> identity, our diversity initiatives are doomed to failure because we will never fully
> appreciate our diverse brothers and sisters and they will not feel appreciated.[62]

Though challenging in its employment, recognition is an incredibly powerful aspect of

developing diverse congregations, even extending positive transformation that goes

beyond the congregation itself. Pohl observes that "people view hospitality as quaint and

tame partly because they do not understand the power of recognition. When a person who

is not valued by society is received by a socially respected person or group as a human

being with dignity and worth, small transformations occur."[63] Two significant areas of

recognition within congregations involve worship and leadership.

Recognition through the Worship Service

The culture of the worship service is an integral aspect of recognition and one that

can often present challenges. Differing cultures can have very different styles of music

and preaching that are meaningful in culturally specific ways, presenting as incredibly

foreign to those of differing cultural backgrounds. Further, there is greater complexity

when dealing with cultural traditions that have experienced disadvantage and exclusion.[64]

---

[62] Christena Cleveland, Disunity in Christ: Uncovering the Hidden Forces that Keep Us Apart (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2013), 184.

[63] Pohl, Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition, loc 700.

[64] Pohl, Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition, loc 693.

For those of the dominant culture, the worship service is often the place where the

accepted philosophy of Cultural Hospitality suddenly becomes painfully real. It is in this

space that supporters of HUP have their strongest case; how can you truly facilitate

united, diversely represented, *and* meaningful worship experiences for a community with

such differing worship traditions and values? There are different approaches to this

challenge that have varying success, with many leaders admitting that they do not have

all the answers on a practical level. The contemporary worship service appears to present

greater flexibility and inclusivity for diverse recognition, yet this does not adequately

speak to many members of Adventist churches who are used to traditional services.

Albeit the practical questions that remain, theological approaches are significantly

united in their call for humility amongst worshippers and the need for recognition of

multiple cultures. Sang Hyun Lee suggests that the worship experience is liminal and so

individuals of all cultural backgrounds "should be led by their joint worship to an

experience of being freed up from their own cultural structures as well as from their

status in society as a whole."[65] Lee uses the symbol of the wilderness to embody this

experience, suggesting that multicultural worship serves to remind worshipers that they

are all pilgrims in this world.[66] Brian K. Blount posits a similar theology, speaking

against homogeneous worship and calling for a worship service that gives recognition to

multiple cultures.

> There are, to put it simply, in the present, as there were in the past, practical
> reasons why a preoccupation with monocultural worship is desirable. Survival
> itself—as survival depends on evangelism, and evangelism appears more
> successful when the homogeneity principle is practiced—depends on it. Just as
> the survival of an entire people appeared to depend on strict adherence to the
> holiness and purity codes of the first century. And yet Mark's Jesus stood against

---

[65] Lee "Worship on the Edge: Liminality and the Korean American Context," 104.
[66] Ibid.

those very codes and condemned the Temple because it stood as their fruitless embodiment. If Jesus could combat them then, there is no doubt that we who follow him should combat the principles they represent today.[67]

In a similar vein, K. J. Scriven points to humility as central to multicultural worship, calling for believers to "put down your preference, and pick up your cross for your brother and sister."[68] He admits that "at some point in a diverse body, the culture will clash, but, when you are a follower of Christ, even if [you are] offended, [your] calling in Christ supersedes [your] offense."[69] In reflecting on the theology of surrender as it pertains to hospitality in general, Oden appears to speak directly to the challenge of recognition within the worship service:

> In giving away one's life, one gains new life as well. Early Christians describe the transformative power of the practice of hospitality in biblical terms, "Those that want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it" (Matthew 16:25; cf. Mark 8:34–9:1, Luke 9:23–27). This inverse equation of losing and finding one's life particularly resonates in the context of hospitality. The more tightly one holds on to oneself and one's world, the less one is able to receive the guest or host as Christ. Conversely, the more one risks losing oneself and one's world, the more one can enter the world of the other and dwell therein, finding Christ.'[70]

It appears to be a natural tendency of congregations to want to hold on to their specific cultural traditions at the expense of embracing a posture of hospitality, of welcome, to individuals from other cultures and giving them space to express their individual culture in worship. Could it be that God calls us to a deeper worship experience than tradition provides? In the letting go of our own familiar ways, could we make space for God to reveal himself in deeper ways both in us and through us? Conversely, for many

---

[67] Blount "The Apocolypse of Worship: A House of Prayer for All Nations," 27.
[68] K. J. Scriven, "How to Create Multiethnic Worship Environments in Your Church" Exponential Multiethnic Worship Kit. Podcast.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Oden, ed., And You Welcomed Me: A Sourcebook on Hospitality in Early Christianity, 133.

congregations, by attempting to "save their lives," their tradition, could they risk losing them? Old wineskins break and numbers dwindle. A hospitality of recognition within the worship service calls us out of these tendencies and into a newness of life and worship.

Recognition through Empowerment

Practicing recognition through empowerment is also a key area of practicing welcome within church congregations. This calls for established churches to consider their cultural representation within leadership at all levels and intentionally work towards healthy representation of differing cultures. In reflecting on building effective multicultural churches, Fong asserts that the nature of the church's leadership is integral to its success, stating that "it is difficult for ethnics to believe that a church is eager to display the reconciliation of Christ in a multi-cultural community when all of the church leadership are of the majority or controlling culture."[71] David A. Anderson also asserts the need for recognition through empowerment:

> We can tell house guests that they are welcome in our homes (and churches). We can tell them that our home is their home. But if we refuse them the right to touch the thermostat, hang their pictures, or place their food on the table for dinner, they will know the truth; they are not home, and it will be necessary to move ... The sharing of power, responsibility, investment, and accountability is critical for one to feel ownership, especially home ownership.[72]

Fong suggests that part of the reason that culturally specific churches often desire to remain separate rather than share in Cultural Hospitality is that they do not feel that they would be empowered and truly included.

---

[71] Bruce W. Fong, Racial Equality in the Church: A Critique of the Homogeneous Unit Principle in Light of a Practical Theology Perspective (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1996), 161.

[72] David A. Anderson, *Multicultural Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 42.

One dynamic that drives immigrants to segregate into their religious havens is a feeling of superiority demonstrated by the natives of the host country. If Christianity is introduced into this scheme, then, native Christians should act differently. Knowing that true Christianity is a life of humility and equality, feelings of superiority would be suppressed. Instead, hospitality and courtesy with the intent of communicating the love of the gospel would be generously given. Their churches would open their doors to the new immigrants who have become Christians and warmly accept them at the Table of Communion as equals.[73]

Extending empowerment is not easy, in a similar vein to giving recognition in the worship service, recognition through empowerment calls for humility and surrender. A surrender of power. Brueggemann observes that this is not something that the church has traditionally done well. He reflects that traditional efforts towards an idea of Cultural Hospitality were "confined to generous charity that resulted in the church's good works of compassion with soup kitchens, tutoring programs, and work camps but never a question of structural power arrangements that sound, on the face of it, too dangerous."[74] Yet there is much to be gained for congregations who give recognition through empowering the "cultural other." Cleveland suggests that in order for a community to fully utilize "the wider range of resources and increased learning that diversity offers, each member of the diverse group must be of equal status."[75] Further, when one gives space and power to those who are different, it opens one up to become a learner. It provides opportunity to see God through differing cultural lenses than one's own. It gives space for God to move and lead in ways that are wider and deeper than the familiar and known.

---

[73] Fong, Racial Equality in the Church: A Critique of the Homogeneous Unit Principle in Light of a Practical Theology Perspective, 56.

[74] Brueggemann, Tenacious Solidarity: Biblical Provocations on Race, Religion, Climate, and the Economy, 170.

[75] Cleveland, Disunity in Christ: Uncovering the Hidden Forces that Keep Us Apart, 40.

Mutuality of Blessing through Welcome

It may seem that the bulk of the practice of Cultural Hospitality is on the shoulders of the dominant culture. And to some extent, that is true. Within the practice of biblical hospitality, it is the host that plays that key role, and for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the United States, the White culture has held the place of power. However, an integral aspect of the practice of welcome is also the mutual blessing that is experienced. Reynolds describes this mutuality as "a liminal zone of mutual sharing, a kind of covenantal exchange that both receives and gives. In this exchange something counterintuitive happens. As the host gives to the guest, the host paradoxically gains a gift, unexpectedly becoming more than he or she was before."[76] How powerful would it be for Seventh-day Adventist churches in the United States to experience this mutual sharing?

Acknowledging this mutual sharing is also important for the health of the intercultural relationships developed. Pohl asserts that within the practice of hospitality, "respect is sustained in the relationships in two related ways—by recognizing the gifts that guests bring to the relationship and by recognizing the neediness of the hosts."[77] Without this understanding, even the act of welcome and surrender could take on a paternal rather than respectful nature. H. S. Wilson describes the mutual blessing that comes from experiencing worship and community within a congregation of multiple cultures:

> The Christian newcomers in the neighborhood and those hitherto relegated to the margins of the (Christian) societies will be able to enrich historical churches in North America with their experience, articulation, and practice of the Christian

---

[76] Reynolds, "Welcoming without Reserve? A Case in Christian Hospitality," 198.
[77] Pohl, Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition, loc 814.

faith, shaped by their worldviews and cultural heritages. Their experience of the divine, gained through the means of their own cultures, and their spirituality and religiosity, shaped by their cultural perspectives, are equally as valuable as the experiences and religiosities of other Christians.[78]

In practicing welcome, a welcome of space and inclusion, a welcome of recognition through worship and leadership, and experiencing the mutual sharing that comes from it, one is also led to the practice of empathy.

Empathy

The third practice of Cultural Hospitality is empathy. As one practices humility and welcome, intercultural relationships are developed. Within these intercultural relationships, the "cultural other" becomes known in all their joy, sorrow, and complexity. This leads to the practice of empathy. In reflecting on the practice of empathy within hospitality, Pohl observes,

> To be welcomed as guests, strangers had to be viewed as similar to the hosts, "like us" in needs, experiences, and expectations. It was not sufficient that strangers be vulnerable; hosts had to identify with their experiences of vulnerability and suffering before they welcomed … Responses of care depend significantly on empathy.[79]

It is in this practice of empathy that "love of the other" is given a powerfully transformational platform. This is significant, particularly for a denomination that is part of such a racialized society as the United States.

The need for empathy both within congregations and the wider community is great. Cleveland reflected on this need when working with a group of White pastors,

---

[78] H. S. Wilson, "Multicultural Christian Community – A Bouquet of Multiple Flowers," *Word & World* 24, no. 2 (Spring 2004): 177, https://wordandworld.luthersem.edu/content/pdfs/24-2_Loehe/24-2_Wilson.pdf.

[79] Pohl, Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition, loc 1104.

observing that "as members of the largest racial group in America, who are also heavily involved in a predominantly white organization, the white pastors to whom I was speaking can easily go their entire lives without ever knowing what it's like to be a person of color."[80] This observation is not limited to the pastors that Cleveland interviewed, it reflects a reality of many White Seventh-day Adventists. Due to the homogeneous communities that many belong to, there is little meaningful interracial contact and therefore limited empathy is experienced. Without engaging in empathy, much-needed lament and justice are left dormant. The practice of empathy within Cultural Hospitality has the potential to transform this.

The practice of empathy is one that can often call for intentionality. In his text *Empathy: A Handbook for Revolution* Roman Krznarik suggests six behaviors that are particularly helpful in facilitating empathy.

1. "Switch on your empathic brain" - be intentional about seeing the other person.
2. "Make the imaginative leap" - either figuratively or actually try to step into the shoes of others.
3. "Seek experiential adventures" - explore lives and cultures different than your own.
4. "Practice the art of conversation" - talk to people!
5. "Travel in your armchair" - learn about others through literature, art, movies and documentaries.
6. "Inspire a revolution" - generate empathy on a mass scale.[81]

Some of these behaviors are particularly pertinent to the local church congregation, particularly the art of conversation. Dr MaryKate Morse asserts that the experience of "[receiving] information from outsiders… [listening] to contrary opinions and [examining] one's own motives and values" develops a culture that is open rather than

---

[80] Cleveland, Disunity in Christ: Uncovering the Hidden Forces that Keep Us Apart, 76.
[81] Roman Krznarik, *Empathy: A Handbook for Revolution* (London: Ebury Publishing, 2014), xv.

closed.[82] Further, Julie A. Dodge suggests that "stories can allow people to find meaning and form connections by expressing the thoughts and feelings that are sometimes difficult to identify."[83] Within church congregations, the facilitation of storytelling, whether in intimate settings over meals, or in larger groups such as church services or afternoon programs, is a valuable way of developing this behavior.

Empathy and Lament

Practicing empathy involves listening, acknowledging, and where appropriate, giving lament to aspects of the "cultural other's" story. Oden describes this practice of empathy within hospitality as shifting our frame of reference from self, to other, to relationship, which leads to repentance:

> Hospitality shifts the frame of reference from self to other to relationship. This shift invariably leads to repentance, for one sees the degree to which one's own view has become the only view. The sense one has of being at home and of familiarity with the way things are is shaken up by the reframing of reference to the other, and then to relationship.[84]

This practice is both personal and communal:

> This de-centering and reframing that accompanies hospitality is the very movement the New Testament calls metanoia, or turning, usually translated "repentance." This turning and repentance occurs not only in the interior landscape of the individual, but also in the exterior landscape of the community. As communities become more hospitable, they experience a de-centering of perspective, too: they become more aware of the structural inequalities that exist in and around them and repent.[85]

---

[82] MaryKate Morse, *Making Room for Leadership, Power, Space and Influence* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008) 46.

[83] Julie A. Dodge, ""But I Wouldn't Do That": Teaching Cultural Empathy" (DMin diss., George Fox University, 2016), 27, https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/dmin/127.

[84] Oden, ed., *And You Welcomed Me: A Sourcebook on Hospitality in Early Christianity*, 15.

[85] Ibid., 16.

This repentance, this decentering and reframing, leads to the practice of lament. Fong

calls for churches to "take clear steps to acknowledge past misdeeds and deliberately

perpetuate a priority in the church that follows a full and equal acceptance philosophy of

all men regardless of race, language or class."[86]

For the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the United States, this aspect of

empathy means listening to and lamenting the injustice that many minority cultures have

experienced, not only in the wider community, but as explored in chapters one and two,

within the denomination itself and particularly towards the African American

community. Douglas Morgan asserts,

> If we care about our movement today, we must face the failure and the pain. We
> cannot deal with its long-lingering, accumulating consequences by cheerily
> pretending it did not happen. The wound festers with ever more toxic
> consequences unless and until it is exposed to the light. Only then can the
> cleansing and healing begin.[87]

Rock contends similarly,

> Reconciliation does not mean organizing summits structured to promote fusion of
> cultures and denial of diversity. Rather, reconciliation means White Adventists
> apologizing for past indignities and Black Adventists, in turn, forgiving and
> experiencing a cathartic relief of suspicions or even animosities that some may
> hold.[88]

Great injustice has been committed and there are wounds that are far from healed. As we

practice empathy we acknowledge and lament the pain and injustice experienced. Much

---

[86] Fong, *Racial Equality in the Church: A Critique of the Homogeneous Unit Principle in Light of a Practical Theology Perspective*, 107.

[87] Douglas Morgan, "Adventism and America's Original Sin Part 7," July 7, 2019, https://againstthewall.org/blog/2019/7/07/adventism-americas-original-sin-part-7.

[88] Rock, *Protest & Progress: Black Seventh-day Adventist Leadership and the Push for Parity*, 222.

of it cannot be undone, but it can be acknowledged. Apology, particularly on a corporate

level, can and should be made in order for the process of healing to take place.

Encouragingly, there has been recent movement towards lamentation within three

Adventist entities in the United States: Lake Region Conference, Andrews University,

and College View Church in the Mid-America Union. During the Lake Region

Conference's seventieth anniversary celebrations, the president of the conference, Don

Livesay "surprised and sobered the large and appreciative congregation with a

courageous statement of apology"[89]:

> We apologize with sorrow for the failures of the Church in regard to race—for
> individuals disrespected, for the lack of time taken to understand, for the
> mistreated, the leadership marginalized and for students of our college who were
> only able to sit with Black students in the cafeteria, for Lucy Byard, and for the
> slowness, reluctance and the stubbornness to do the right thing. We are sorry that
> we as a Church did not rise above the sins of society that day, and we are sorry for
> the lack of progress our Church has made in the last 70 years in the establishment
> of the Regional work. Our apology is from our hearts, but we recognize an
> apology is not enough. We also are committed to seek deeper, more meaningful
> understanding of each other, more sensitive approaches, more inclusive and
> stronger partnerships that will make us more united as God's people and for his
> cause, that we may come closer together, march together arm in arm, then and
> now, and then, someday, together into the Holy City to spend eternity with our
> God and with each other.[90]

Andrea Luxton, the president of Andrews University, one of the Seventh-day Adventist

Church's flagship universities, also practiced lament when she responded to a demand by

Black Students for an apology not only for present but historical racial indignities.[91] In

response to a video recorded by students and released on social media called "It is Time,"

---

[89] Rock, *Protest & Progress: Black Seventh-day Adventist Leadership and the Push for Parity*, 223.

[90] "The Lake Region Conference," accessed November 28, 2019, https://lrcsda.com/about/lrc-70th-celebration/

[91] Rock, *Protest & Progress: Black Seventh-day Adventist Leadership and the Push for Parity*, 223.

President Luxton not only apologized but put in place a series of next steps to move the

university toward greater equity and diversity, including creating a position of VP for

Diversity & Inclusion.[92] Recently, the largest Seventh-day Adventist church in the Mid-

American Union, College View Church, also expressed an official apology for the way

they have historically treated non-Whites. The Adventist Review reported that as part of

their 125th Anniversary Celebrations, the head elder Linda Becker, publicly "apologized

for the way people of color were treated in the church in previous generations."[93] In her

comments, she expressed, "we are sorry we did not see you as God's children just like us.

We ask you and God to forgive us."[94] Rock contends that these examples serve as

templates for the wider church body:

> The Livesay-Jones exchange and the Luxton response offer helpful templates for
> improved race relations in the North American Seventh-day Adventist church.
> More than a simplistic "life and let live," it is a conversation initiated by the
> historically advantaged part of the church acknowledging its culpability that at the
> same time requires from the historically disadvantaged a spiritual grace – the
> willingness to forgive.[95]

That there is already the start of a movement of lament with the Seventh-day Adventist

Church is encouraging, but there is much more that is needed.

Arguments exist in opposition to the need for lamentation, particularly a reticence

from individual White members to "apologize for things that they have not personally

---

[92] "It is Time" in Andrews University, accessed November 28, 2019,
https://www.andrews.edu/diversity/itistime/.

[93] Brenda Dickerson, "Iconic Adventist Church Celebrates 125 Years, Apologizes to People of
Color," *Adventist Review*, accessed November 24, 2019. https://www.adventistreview.org/church-
news/story14243-iconic-adventist-church-celebrates-125-years-apologizes-to-people-of-color.

[94] Ibid.

[95] Rock, *Protest & Progress: Black Seventh-day Adventist Leadership and the Push for Parity*,
223.

done." A brief survey of comments by readers following Adventist media publications on each of the previous examples of lament revealed elements of defensive commentary.[96] Rah also suggests that some believe that "we do not need to deal with our tainted past because we have risen above that problematic history and moved to a post-racial, colorblind America."[97] Yet when injustice is committed by an institution, corporate acknowledgment and repentance is necessary for healing to occur.[98] Further, as Cultural Hospitality is practiced, an understanding of White privilege and one's own inherent prejudice comes to light. Rah comments on this need within the church,

> There needs to be a personal connection to the corporate sin that has entered our culture. Our claims must first shift from the defensive posture of "I am not a racist" to "I am responsible and culpable in the corporate sin of racism." We must move from "let's just get over it" to "how do I personally continue to perpetuate systems of privilege?" Justice must move from the third person to the first person, from the abstract to the personal.[99]

Even more significantly, as one practices loving the "cultural other," the pain and injustice that they experience becomes personal. In this vein, lament not only acknowledges the injustice, but calls for action. Rah asserts that "listening to the previously silenced voices is an essential first step in the practice of lament. But a passive

---

[96] Media publications along with readers' comments can be accessed at the *Spectrum* website:
"#ItIsTimeAU: Listen. Dialogue. Change. Andrews University Responds to Viral Video" in *Spectrum* website, accessed November 28, 2019, https://conversation.spectrummagazine.org/t/itistimeau-listen-dialogue-change-andrews-university-responds-to-viral-video/12976/4.
"Lake Union Conference Says Racism Led to Regional Conferences, Formally Apologizes" in *Spectrum* website, accessed November 29, 2019. https://conversation.spectrummagazine.org/t/lake-union-conference-says-racism-led-to-regional-conference-formally-apologizes/8611/11

[97] Soong Chan Rah, *Prophetic Lament: A Call for Justice in Troubled Times* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 207.

[98] Ibid.

[99] Ibid., 126.

lament that fails to confront injustice fails to consider the power of prophetic advocacy in lament."[100]

Practicing Empathy and Justice

In practicing empathy, the cultural other becomes known, and their experiences of pain and injustice become personal. This leads to a personal stake in issues of social justice within both the church and wider community. An understanding of God's heart for the oppressed becomes more than abstract theology; the practice of empathy leads one to understand on a relational level that social justice is not a distraction from the gospel, but an integral part of living it.[101] Sociologists Emerson and Yancey have observed that the depth and nature of contact that can be experienced within church congregations is particularly valuable in developing an awareness and concern for issues of social justice.[102] They explain,

> Ideally, social contact would help promote knowledge that leads members of all races toward a more positive affect, attitudes, and lessens alienation. Research on interracial contact suggests that these effects are most likely to occur if the contact happens under certain conditions. These conditions require (1) non-superficial contact, (2) contact that is cooperative instead of competitive, (3) contact that is not coerced, (4) contact supported by relevant authority figures, and (5) contact between social equals … studies find that all groups benefit from interracial contact but that majority-group members benefit the most; that is, their racial attitudes change the most, and they change in the direction of holding views more similar to those of minority-group members.[103]

---

[100] Rah, *Prophetic Lament: A Call for Justice in Troubled Times*, 208.

[101] Fong, *Racial Equality in the Church: A Critique of the Homogeneous Unit Principle in Light of a Practical Theology Perspective*, 83.

[102] Emerson and Yancey, *Transcending Racial Barriers: Towards a Mutual Obligations Approach*, 74.

[103] Emerson and Yancey, *Transcending Racial Barriers: Towards a Mutual Obligations Approach*, 74.

The conditions that Emerson and Yancey describe are ones that Cultural Hospitality has

the potential to facilitate within church congregations; interracial relationships that are

nonsuperficial, cooperative, not coerced, between social equals, and supported by

authority figures such as the leadership within the church. In doing so, majority culture

members have the potential to grow in their awareness of the social structures continuing

to facilitate their own privilege. This empathetic awareness in turn leads to engagement

with these issues:

> Productive interracial contact helps majority-group members gain a deeper
> understanding of racism, an understanding which is often necessary to ally with
> people of color to work for positive racial change. Without such understanding,
> many majority-group members lack a sufficient understanding of the social
> structures hampering attempts to address racism.[104]

Practicing empathy within Cultural Hospitality has powerful potential for creating

communities that embody justice and equity. Emerson and Yancey have observed that a

great deal of modern racism "are not overt attempts to oppress those who are different

from the majority group" but are often "concepts that indicate the insensitivity that

majority group members have toward efforts to eliminate the effects of historical and/or

institutional racism."[105] Greater awareness along with personal engagement give

significant potential for challenging much of the institutional racism that continues to

exist. [106]

The practice of Cultural Hospitality, stemming from the biblical call to hospitality

that is so clearly revealed within the Old and New Testaments, is both challenging and

---

[104] Ibid., 83.

[105] Ibid., 27.

[106] Emerson and Yancey, *Transcending Racial Barriers: Towards a Mutual Obligations Approach*, 22.

encouraging. It challenges the Seventh-day Adventist Church to move toward a fuller expression of the gospel, one that balances the traditional apocalyptic focus that the Adventist church has held, with the call to embrace and live the kingdom of heaven now. As discussed, this is not an optional "add on" to the gospel; love of the other is a core element of the gospel itself, as lived out and taught in the life of Jesus and the apostles in the early church.

For the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the United States, the significant cultural divides that have been historically developed and entrenched, suggest that the practice of hospitality must include a focus on the "cultural other." A practice of Cultural Hospitality gives a possible framework for moving forward in this area of need. This practice includes three elements: humility, welcome, and empathy. Each individually significant on their own, when practiced together, they provide a scaffolding that facilitates growth in unified cultural diversity. Humility provides foundational awareness and posture that supports the practice of welcome. The practice of welcome, making space for the "cultural other" within one's community, worship experience, and leadership, in turn facilitates a growth in meaningful relationships that enable the practice of empathy. Practicing empathy leads to repentance and lament, a personal stake in, and concern, for issues of justice. Implementing the practice of Cultural Hospitality is not without its challenges, yet the gospel calls for the Seventh-day Adventist Church to take on this challenge. In doing so, it will not only enjoy a much fuller expression of the Kingdom of Heaven, but its practice also presents significant blessings in the area of growth.

CHAPTER 5:

BLESSINGS, CHALLENGES, AND COMPLEXITIES

OF PRACTICING CULTURAL HOSPITALITY

The Value of Cultural Hospitality for the Adventist Church in the United States

The biblical calling for Cultural Hospitality is clear and authoritative in and of itself. But as is congruent with the work of God, there is also great value that is gained through engaging in it. Significant to the Seventh-day Adventist church in particular, is the evangelistic strength that Cultural Hospitality has the potential to give, the increased relevance that it would provide the denomination within the wider community that it seeks to minister to and the strength and creativity that can be found within communities that are diverse. In light of the value that intercultural relationships and diverse communities present, this dissertation encourages the facilitation of multicultural congregations. However, this call is not without its challenges, and not all contexts are ready for a multicultural congregation. First generation immigrants particularly value a language and culturally specific worship experience, providing a space of familiarity and support as they transition into a new culture. In a similar vein, African American churches have also provided culturally specific support that extends beyond the worship experience, serving as civil congregating spaces. There are also still demographic areas within the United States that are made up of predominantly one racial group, precluding them to a great extent, from a multicultural congregation. It is also important to note that traditionally homogeneous congregations are still able to practice the disciplines of

Cultural Hospitality, even if they are not in a context that is ready or able to work towards a fully multicultural congregation.

The Value of Increased Relevance

A reality that is fast eclipsing the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the United States is the increasingly multicultural nature of its community, both within the church and the wider nation. Internationally regarded demographer, William H. Frey, asserts that "racial diversity will be the most defining and impactful characteristic of the millennial generation."[1] In contrast to the Baby Boomers who hold a 75% White majority, Millennials have a minority percentage of 45% (see appendix B). Within nine states of the United States, Millennials of minority ethnicity already eclipse the White majority in percentages (see appendix B). Multiracial marriages are also increasing, as are multiracial births. Frey indicates that these shifts are an "unmistakable trend toward a softening of racial boundaries that should lead to new thinking about racial populations and race-related issues."[2] He also asserts that "as millennials begin marrying, they are likely to continue the trend toward more multiracial marriages with 60 percent of them saying multiracial marriages are a change for the better."[3] By the year 2040, census data predicts that there will no longer be a racial majority within the United States.[4] The current White

---

[1] William H. Frey, "Diversity Defines the Millennial Generation," *Brookings Institution*, June 28, 2016, https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2016/06/28/diversity-defines-the-millennial-generation/.

[2] William H. Frey, *Diversity Explosion: How New Racial Demographics Are Remaking America*, 191.

[3] Ibid., 193–203.

[4] Ibid.

dominant ethnicity will drop to 46%.[5] As schools, neighborhoods, workplaces, and other

social networking clusters become more diversified, heterogeneity will eventually be

recognized to be the norm, not the exception.[6]

The practice of Cultural Hospitality provides churches with skills to meaningfully

interact with and contribute to this rapidly emerging cultural context. Woodley points to

the projected growth of former minority groups within the United States and cautions that

as society learns to embrace diversity, they will not find places of worship if the

American churches hold on to homogeneous structures.[7] It is pertinent to note that even

McGavran, as far back as 1970, recognized that areas with diverse populations may have

a different need than the HUP methodology. He stated that in some urban areas

"homogeneous units *are* disintegrating, many cross-class marriages *are* taking place, and

migrants from various parts of the country *are* becoming one new people."[8] He observed

that in these areas multicultural churches were experiencing healthy growth.[9] In light of

this reality, Rah challenges the Evangelical Christian Church within the United States,

> The American church needs to face the inevitable and prepare for the next stage
> of her history—we are looking at a nonwhite majority, multiethnic American
> Christianity in the immediate future. Unfortunately, despite these drastic

---

[5] D'Vera Cohn, "Future Immigration Will Change the Face of America by 2065," Pew Research Center, October 5, 2015, http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/10/05/future-immigration-will-change-the-face-of-america-by-2065/.

[6] Matthew D. Deames, "Inviting and Encouraging Racial, Cultural, Ethnic, and Generational Diversity within Ecclesial Community" (DMin diss., George Fox University, 2012), 43, http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/dmin/25.

[7] Randy Woodley, *Living in Color: Embracing God's Passion for Ethnic Diversity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 98.

[8] Donald A. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 244.

[9] Ibid.

demographic changes, American evangelicalism remains enamored with an ecclesiology and a value system that reflect a dated and increasingly irrelevant cultural captivity and are disconnected from both a global and a local reality.[10]

Cleveland is equally challenging in her observations of the increasing irrelevance of Christianity in the face of a growing socially aware society.

> The voices in the world have become increasingly diverse and interconnected; churches should be ready to welcome and engage individuals who represent all aspects of this diversity. Unfortunately, due to cultural isolation, most churches are not in a position to do this well. As churches have maintained and even increased cultural segregation, their ability to operate in and impact the diverse world has diminished.[11]

A similar challenge of homogeneous irrelevancy also presents itself to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Hollancid strongly posits that though today's segregation within the Seventh-day Adventist Church may not be as oppressive as it was during the Jim Crow era, with the majority of Blacks today preferring local control of church administration, the structure itself "is a direct continuation of Jim Crow mentality, unchecked prejudicial attitudes, and rampant racial discriminatory practices and policies."[12] Further, he asserts that "as a pervasive (North American) practice, SDA members and the church administrative structure advance 'segregationism' (seen by some as condoned by the General Conference), as they continue to congregate with other like themselves."[13] These are strong words, and they paint a disturbing picture. There would

---

[10] Soong-Chan Rah, *The Next Evangelicalism: Releasing the Church from Western Cultural Captivity* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2009), 12.

[11] Christena Cleveland, *Disunity in Christ: Uncovering the Hidden Forces that Keep Us Apart* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2013), 42.

[12] Cleran Hollancid, "Seventh-Day Adventists and 'Race' Relations in the U.S.: The Case of Black-White Structural Segregation," (DMin diss., Western Michigan University, 2016), 60, https://www.scholarworks.wmich.edu/dissertations/1419.

[13] Cleran Hollancid, "Racial Segregation Practice in a Religious Context," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 23, no. 2 (2012): 127. https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1105&context=jats

be many members who could be offended and defensive of this picture. Perhaps that is

even more reason to give attention to it. Rock would qualify that though the North

American Seventh-day Adventist Church was one of the last denominations in the

country to publicly affirm the nation's Civil Rights Act, indicating that there was, and

reoccurring events show that there still is, need for reconciling our social justice posture[14]

and that sustained racial association in the Adventist Church at the personal level is rare

on a large scale,[15] the regional conference structure itself cannot be defined by the term

"segregated" as it does not deny membership of other races. He states,

> One significant proof is that the nine Black conferences incorporate
> approximately 140 non-Black congregations: Caucasian, Hispanic, Asian, as well
> as thousands of individual non-Black members in their churches. Rather than
> being separatist, they are, in the truest sense, inclusive: a legitimate and an
> effective means of nurturing a historically separated people (at the local church
> level) into the spiritually united, worldwide church.[16]

Though complex in its formation, and perhaps less than segregated in its functioning, as

asserted by Rock, nevertheless, an organizational system that is racially separated in the

way the Seventh-day Adventist Conference structure is within the United States, presents

as disturbing when viewed from a cultural context that is becoming increasingly

integrated. In embracing the call of Cultural Hospitality, not only would the church

experience greater biblical congruence, but it would give a significant step forward in its

relevancy to the culture in which it seeks to minister.

---

[14] Calvin B. Rock, Protest & Progress: Black Seventh-day Adventist Leadership and the Push for Parity (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2018), 205.

[15] Ibid., 178.

[16] Ibid., 219.

There is also a growing concern for issues of justice within the wider community, particularly amongst younger generations, so many of which express that they find Christianity irrelevant to the world in which they live. Brueggemann is challenging in his assessment of the Christian church in the light of the social awareness and concern developing in the wider society. He states,

> We chose not to think of ourselves as chosen. But we operate so. We extract what is needed from the vulnerable in many ways, some overt. And now such practices become increasingly unacceptable: In the place of entitlement, there is neighborliness. In the place of exclusion, there is inclusion. In the place of extraction, there is the common good. In the place of violence, there is justice and compassion.[17]

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is arguably particularly challenged by these realities due to their historical reticence to engage in issues of social justice and their segregated structure. Rock asserts that "the toll on Blacks repelled from church membership because of its unnecessary caution, and of Whites who have lost faith in the church because of its continued silence regarding oppressive social practices, is incalculable."[18] Brueggemann's prophetic challenge to wider evangelicalism could also be sounded within the Adventist denomination:

> It is an urgent time for the church to teach, to teach directly and unambiguously that the truth of our faith has in purview a very different "last race." It is time for the faithful to see what our script teaches. All the worried lament about millennials who are absent from the church opens an opportunity for honesty about our narrative that many younger folk will find compelling. It is time for inviting folk out of lazy complacency to the hard work of interpretation. It is time to sound the sounds of alternative so that the public face of the church does not consist in the fear-mongers who defend privilege and entitlement with evangelical euphemisms. It is hard, but it is time.[19]

---

[17] Walter Brueggemann, *Tenacious Solidarity: Biblical Provocations on Race, Religion, Climate, and the Economy* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2018), 146.

[18] Rock, *Protest & Progress: Black Seventh-day Adventist Leadership and the Push for Parity*, 187.

[19] Brueggemann, *Tenacious Solidarity: Biblical Provocations on Race, Religion, Climate, and the Economy,* 170.

Practicing Cultural Hospitality would be a significantly positive step in meeting this

relevant challenge. Emerson and Yancey suggest that the development of intercultural

relationships positively contribute to a greater awareness and concern for issues of social

justice, particularly by majority culture members:

> Productive interracial contact changes the racial attitudes of majority-group members. These changes do not occur among people of color, likely because they have already been forced to confront racial issues before the contact. This suggests that productive interracial contact helps majority-group members gain a deeper understanding of racism, an understanding which is often necessary to ally with people of color to work for positive racial change. Without such understanding, many majority-group members lack a sufficient understanding of the social structures hampering attempts to address racism.[20]

Significantly, they also contend that the interracial contact experienced within a

congregational setting is of much greater positive impact in the area of race relations than

interracial contact that occurs within general neighborhoods.[21] As explored in chapter 4,

in practicing Cultural Hospitality, the "cultural other" becomes known, and their

experiences of pain and injustice become personal, leading to a personal stake in issues of

social justice. This is far more transformative than cognitive instruction, even from the

authoritative weight of the pulpit. This kind of transformation has powerful potential for

challenging the long-held distance between the Seventh-day Adventist Church and issues

of social justice. In doing so, not only would the church be fulfilling the gospel mission in

greater depth, but it's relevancy would increase significantly within the wider community

in which it seeks to minister.

---

[20] Michael O. Emerson and George Yancey, *Transcending Racial Barriers: Towards a Mutual Obligations Approach* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011), 83.

[21] Ibid., 74.

Cultural Hospitality Greatly Enhances Evangelism

The practice of Cultural Hospitality also provides the potential for greater

evangelistic reach and impact. The extent to which a church lives out the gospel, directly

impacts their efforts in evangelism. DeYmaz pertinently observes that "the homogeneous

church will increasingly struggle in the twenty-first century with credibility, that is, in

proclaiming a message of God's love for all people from an environment in which a love

for all people cannot otherwise be observed."[22] The Seventh-day Adventist Church has

historically employed "truth" orientated prophecy seminars and public campaigns,

sharing their unique interpretation and understanding of scripture.[23] In recent years, there

has been a move towards a greater emphasis in relational evangelism, which studies have

shown to be of greater effectiveness within the contemporary culture of the United

States.[24] Seventh-day Adventist professor, Joseph Kidder, asserts that "the most effective

means of evangelism is relationship-based."[25] These efforts are valuable, yet without the

heart of the gospel lived out within churches, even these efforts fall short of the potential

that God has for sharing the gospel through them. Cleveland asserts that "Paul, Peter,

Luke, John, James and the writer of Hebrews repeatedly and emphatically make the same

point: the unified church is the vehicle through which the kingdom of God is powerfully

---

[22] Mark DeYmaz, Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church: Mandate, Commitments, and Practices of a Diverse Congregation (San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons Inc., 2007), 14.

[23] J. L. Shuler, "Evangelistic Objectives and Techniques: Approach to Seventh-day Adventist Evangelism," *Ministry Magazine* (October 1950), https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/1950/10/approach-to-seventh-day-adventist-evangelism.

[24] Joseph Kidder, "Research Shows that Relationships Are the Best Form of Evangelism," Adventist News Network, accessed December 1, 2019, https://news.adventist.org/en/all-commentaries/commentary/go/-/research-shows-that-relationships-are-the-best-form-of-evangelism/.

[25] Ibid.

communicated to the world (see Acts 4:32; Rom 16:17; 1 Corinthians 1:10-17; Eph 4:1-7,

12-13; Heb 2:10-11; 1 Pet 5:5)."[26] In reflecting on Paul's writings concerning cultural

unity, DeYmaz suggests that the "mystery" that Paul often refers to throughout his

writings, is the unity found between diverse cultures as they come together in Christ. He

refers to Ephesians 3:6 as a significant verse in this regard: "This mystery is that through

the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body and

sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus."[27] Fong also asserts similarly:

> If the intense hostility between Jew and Gentile was made impotent by the death
> of Christ, then, it is presumptuous of the church to cater to lessor sociological
> phenomena as in the case of white versus all others, wealth versus poor, or caste
> verses caste. The significance of displaying this genuine internal change is a part
> of the church's mission and purpose. Essential to the Gospel is its proclamation.
> Part of that proclamation is the display of this oneness begun by Christ and
> carried out by His followers.[28]

This is particularly pertinent in light of the changing cultural landscape that is taking

place within the United States, as previously discussed. DeYmaz is bold in in his

prophetic call for the Christian church:

> In the twenty-first century it will be the unity of diverse believers walking as one
> in and through the local church that will proclaim the fact of God's love for all
> people more profoundly than any one sermon, book, or evangelistic crusade. And
> I believe the coming integration of the local church will lead to the fulfillment of
> the Great Commission, to people of every nation, tribe, people and tongue coming
> to know him as we do.[29]

---

[26] Christena Cleveland, *Disunity in Christ: Uncovering the Hidden Forces that Keep Us Apart* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2013), 38.

[27] DeYmaz, *Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church: Mandate, Commitments, and Practices of a Diverse Congregation,* 30.

[28] Bruce W. Fong, *Racial Equality in the Church: A Critique of the Homogeneous Unit Principle in Light of a Practical Theology Perspective* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1996), 83.

[29] DeYmaz, *Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church: Mandate, Commitments, and Practices of a Diverse Congregation*, 11.

Fong also asserts the effectiveness of Cultural Hospitality's practice on evangelism:

> What effect would the church have on the world if in great contrast to the habit of racial segregation congregations displayed a unity of its members from all different backgrounds sharing in a common worship around the Table of Communion? Would not the world which sees no possible solution to the race problems sit up and take note? Would they not ask how the church manages such a feat? And would not the church then have the opportunity of pointing the world to Christ?[30]

The practice of Cultural Hospitality clearly provides great potential value to the evangelistic efforts of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the United States. It does not replace proven methods but serves to greatly enhance their effectiveness. In a denomination that is so evangelistically orientated, the practice of Cultural Hospitality would have phenomenal potential to enhance the sharing of the gospel.

Cultural Hospitality Facilitates the Strength that is Gained through Diversity

Within the practice of Cultural Hospitality is the potential for far greater diversity within church congregations, particularly for those that transition to a multicultural congregation. And though diversity can present challenges to a community, as the HUP philosophy has outlined, there is also significant strength that is gained from a diverse community. Cleveland asserts that "contrary to common beliefs, the body of Christ's diversity is an asset, not a pain in the neck. Research shows that diverse groups are better groups—diverse groups come up with more creative and more effective ideas than groups composed of similar people."[31] Diverse groups are also proven to make better decisions due to their tendency to consider alternative perspectives. In reference to the value of

---

[30] Fong, *Racial Equality in the Church: A Critique of the Homogeneous Unit Principle in Light of a Practical Theology Perspective*, 84.

[31] Cleveland, *Disunity in Christ: Uncovering the Hidden Forces that Keep Us Apart*, 39.

diversity in teamwork, psychologists affirm that "research is beginning to acknowledge that organizations should focus on the shared and unique characteristics of team members. For instance, it may not be good for all members on a team to be agreeable because they will likely fall prey to groupthink."[32] This is also supported by business professors, Archie B. Carroll and Ann K. Buchholtz, who affirm that in the business world, "diverse boards are less likely to fall prey to groupthink because they would have the range of perspectives necessary to question the assumptions that drive group decisions."[33] This same strength that is advocated for the business world has significant merit for congregations. Healthy decision making is greatly enhanced by the contribution of individuals with diverse backgrounds and experience.

There could be concern that as individuals with minority backgrounds bring these diverse strengths to a congregation, that they themselves are at a disadvantage and lose their own sense of their distinct cultural backgrounds. Christerson et al. suggests that members belonging to the minority groups can often experience isolation. They found in their case studies that all groups tended to benefit from being part of a diverse church, but the cost was born primarily by those within the minority groups, particularly if their cultures were not represented in the organizational structure:

> The rejection felt by numerical minorities is more strongly related to the size of the majority group than to the individual racial views of majority members. The acceptance felt by numerical minorities is related to the structural inclusion they witness, such as the vision statement of the organization, the worship styles, leadership representation, and other structural arrangements.[34]

---

[32] Maria C. W. Peeters, Jan de Jonge, and Toon W. Taris, eds., *An Introduction to Contemporary Work Psychology* (Chichester, WS: Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2014), 451.

[33] Archie B. Carroll and Ann K. Buchholtz, *Business and Society: Ethics, Sustainability, and Stakeholder Management* (Mason, OH: South-Western Cengage Learning, 2012), 107.

[34] Christerson et al., *Against All Odds: The Struggle for Racial Integration in Religious Organizations*, accessed April 17, 2018. EBSCOhost.

Christerson et al.'s observations underscore the necessity of practicing the Discipline of

Welcome within Cultural Hospitality. Without giving significant space and

empowerment, there is clearly risk of loss for minority cultures. However, in their studies

of multicultural congregations Emerson and Yancey observed positive experiences by

individuals from both minority and majority cultures:

> For most members of interracial congregations, the experience of being with people from a variety of backgrounds leads them to positively value people's distinctiveness, to want to work together to reach a higher goal or to enrich themselves. In this sense, far from leading to assimilation, at least in the overall context of multiracial congregations we studied, integration helped people grow more secure in and proud of their cultural identities.[35]

Further,

> In these congregations, those in attendance learned that race and ethnicity should be openly discussed and are valuable human characteristics. At the same time, they came to see that race and ethnicity should not form barriers between people. Instead, they should be used to fulfill others, and to see the fullness of God and creation.[36]

The strengths that a diverse community bring to a congregation are significant. The

variety of perspectives and potential for creative ideas, along with the greater capacity to

consider alternative views have valuable potential both to practical as well as theological

contexts.

Challenges and Complexities to Consider

The call of the gospel along with the immense value that accompany Cultural

Hospitality do not negate the potential challenges and complexities that it also presents.

---

[35] Emerson and Yancey, *Transcending Racial Barriers: Towards a Mutual Obligations Approach,* 121.

[36] Ibid.

Change of any kind within congregations can be difficult. Long-term traditions are often

deeply and firmly held, and as explored in chapters one and two, the racial history and

divides that exist within the United States are complex and permeating. Even as he

prophetically works within his own denomination to develop multicultural congregations,

Rah comments:

> The idealism and optimism of developing multiethnic congregations … is being
> replaced by frustration and pessimism as the difficult realities of multiethnic
> ministry becomes more and more apparent. To reverse centuries of negative
> history between the races and to rectify ignorance and incompetency when it
> comes to cross-cultural sensitivity is not an easy task.[37]

The call of Cultural Hospitality can not only appear daunting, but possibly even

threatening to church congregations.

White Flight

A significant concern that leaders of congregations may have is that of "White

Flight." According to sociologists, "Whites are more likely than racial minorities to leave

interracial religious organizations if their particular preferences and interests are not

being met."[38] This pertains to attempts to diversify styles of worship services, reaction

against strong networked ties of minority groups within the organizational structure, and

a concern over children and youth programs that have a dominant minority population.

Christerson et al. found that White families tended to express anxiety about the

multicultural children's and youth programs. They stated that, "when children of these

---

[37] Soong Chan Rah, *Many Colors: Cultural Intelligence for a Changing World* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2010), 11–12.

[38] Christerson et al., *Against All Odds: The Struggle for Racial Integration in Religious Organizations*, accessed April 17, 2018, EBSCOhost.

families approach adolescence, and in some cases when they are just approaching school age, the concerned parents leave interracial churches for predominantly White churches with predominantly White youth and children's groups."[39] Rock also asserts that within the Seventh-day Adventist Church, "when significant numbers of Blacks venture to join a White congregation, the Whites tend to leave and either migrate to other White churches or begin again in a new location."[40] This historical, and potentially current, reality is not something that can be dismissed. The practical challenges that it can potentially present to a congregation are significant. Yet are they strong enough to preclude the biblical call of Cultural Hospitality?

Competitive Marketplace & Worship Experience

There is also the competitive marketplace that churches can feel that they are trying to survive in. In this context of thinking, homogeneity can present as efficient and attractive. Emerson and Smith found

> The cost of producing meaning, belonging, and security in internally diverse congregations is usually much greater—because of the increased complexity of demands, needs, and backgrounds, the increased effort necessary to create social solidarity and group identity, and the greater potential for internal conflict. Thus, internally homogeneous congregations more often provide what draws people to religious groups for a lower cost than do internally diverse congregations.[41]

Further,

> In the deregulated religious marketplace of the United States, the niche overlap effect implies that competition between religious groups drives them to be what they often do not want to be—homogeneous. This is because they must focus limited resources on a relatively unique niche and, as we have seen, because

---

[39] Ibid.

[40] Rock, *Protest & Progress: Black Seventh-day Adventist Leadership and the Push for Parity*, 177.

[41] Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith*, 145.

atypical members do not generally remain members. Therefore, because individual congregations, are situated within a marketplace of competing congregations, attempts at pluralism are often overridden by the homogenizing structural factors of niche edge and overlap effects. And this is in part why stated ideology or religious values regarding race often make little difference in the actual level of within-group heterogeneity.[42]

This is particularly pertinent to styles of worship. Hollancid suggests that "the attendance of Whites in White Seventh-day Adventist churches and Blacks in Black Seventh-day Adventist churches can be understood in terms of 'cultural' practice and notions of group identity… an attempt to engender communities of sameness, also connected to factors such as preference for particular worship or preaching styles."[43] The task of facilitating meaningful worship experiences for individuals with varying cultural backgrounds is challenging. In interviewing a Seventh-day Adventist pastor who has had extensive experience pastoring and carrying administrative roles in both homogeneous and multicultural contexts, he felt that the challenge was too great; that in trying to combine and involve multiple worship experiences and styles, no one was left truly happy.[44] It is this very challenge, however, that other perspectives view as valuable to spiritual growth. Martin Tel suggests that involving multiple cultures in worship can help prevent the experience itself from becoming the object of worship:

> Crossing cultures musically can … help us to name and remove idolatries. Trained church musicians in North America are no less susceptible to the mass culture than are other people. Though obviously many leaders are more influenced by popular culture, more conservatory and university degreed musicians are trained in the "institution of high art." Of course, high art is not a

---

[42] Ibid., 150.

[43] Cleran Hollancid, "Racial Segregation Practice in a Religious Context." *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 23, no.2 (2012): 123, https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1105&context=jats.

[44] Interview of pastor by Kara Johnsson, Washington, D.C., May 30, 2019.

sin. Elitism in "high art" is a sin, because it treats what is a limited good as if it were an ultimate good.[45]

There would appear to be significant spiritual value in practicing the discipline of humility in this way, as explored in chapter 4.

In practicing Cultural Hospitality, skilled leaders as well as prayerful consideration are also needed when working in complex cultural contexts. Kersten Bayt Priest and Robert J. Priest, who witnessed the attempt of a merger between two differing cultural congregations, express caution. They assert,

> Good intentions, pure hearts, and spiritual disciplines are not enough. To the extent that cultural differences are involved, sanctification is not what is at stake. One must not treat complex cultural and structural dynamics in purely moralistic and spiritual terms. Rather, one must acquire adequate social, historical, and cultural understandings as important preconditions underpinning any church-based initiative to bring African Americans and Euro-Americans together.[46]

The complexity of the challenges of intercultural relationships within church congregations are highlighted in this case study of a less than successful attempted church merger between an African American and White church during the 1990s in South Carolina. Priest et al. affirmed that both congregations had expressed a desire to move past racial divides and embody the unity of Christ. Yet, despite good intentions from both congregations, as the trial period for the merger developed, the African American congregation appeared to experience a much greater loss of ritual and cultural

---

[45] Martin Tel "Music: The 'Universal Language,'" *Making Room at the Table: An Invitation to Multicultural Worship*, ed. Brian K. Blount and Leonora Tubbs Tisdale (Louisville, KY: Westminister John Knox Press, 2001), 168.

[46] Kersten Bayt Priest and Robert J. Priest, "Divergent Worship Practices in the Sunday Morning Hour: Analysis of an 'Interracial' Church Merger Attempt," in *This Side of Heaven: Race, Ethnicity and Christian Faith*, ed. Robert J. Priest and Alvaro L. Nieves (Oxford Scholarship Online, Oct 2011), https://www-oxfordscholarship-com.georgefox.idm.oclc.org/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195310566.001.0001/acprof-9780195310566-chapter-18.

identity than that of the White congregation. When the trial period came to an end, Priest et al. reported that the White congregation was almost unanimous in their approval of the merger while the African American congregation, deeply divided with long-time members no longer attending church, voted against it.[47] In their post-analysis of the experience, Priest et al. cautioned that to successfully bring multiple cultures together, "worship leaders must have extensive training in diverse cultural worship traditions, must be able to celebrate the diverse musical aesthetics and embodied traditions of others, and must be able to coach their whole congregation in appreciating and practicing worship in alignment with people of other ethnic or racial groups."[48] They further asserted,

> Cultural flexibility, a willingness to learn and participate in other practices, and willingness to signal strong appreciation and affirmation of others and their practices are critical to racial reconciliation. Any insistence on united worship, if accompanied by cultural rigidity and ethnocentric judgment on either side, will result in conflict, hurt, dominance, exclusion, or social withdrawal. … Calls by white Americans for racial unity in congregational settings will be one-sided and even counterproductive if not matched by cultural sensitivity, respect, and a willingness to learn other practices and align with them, and if not matched by an equally deep concern that the church address the full range of problems (stigma, subordination, humiliation, pain, grief, exclusion, poverty) associated with race.[49]

Experiences such as this make one pause. The potential for great damage to be caused to congregations and individuals must not be taken lightly. The worship experience in particular, poses a significant and complex challenge in the call of Cultural Hospitality, particularly for traditionally homogeneous churches transitioning to

---

[47] Priest et al., "Divergent Worship Practices in the Sunday Morning Hour: Analysis of an 'Interracial' Church Merger Attempt."

[48] Ibid.

[49] Ibid.

multicultural congregations. The varying perspectives as well as experiences, suggest that

further work is needed in this area.

Ethnic Specific Congregations

The call and value of Cultural Hospitality does not necessarily dissolve the place

of ethnically specific church congregations. Associate Professor Peter T. Cha affirms the

need to critique the homogeneous church model for its tacit approval of segregation along

color lines, but he also cautions swinging the pendulum too far in the opposite direction.

He states,

> It would be … equally alarming if the pendulum were to swing in the other
> direction too extremely, categorically dismissing all homogeneous congregations
> as ones that are sustained by racist or ethnocentric impulses or are trapped in an
> outmoded model of ministry. In today's multicultural world, the Christian
> community needs to recognize the value of diversity as well as of unity, of ethnic
> congregations as well as of multicultural ones.[50]

This is particularly applicable to communities of first-generation immigrants. For these

men and women, their language needs, as well as the trauma that comes from leaving

their nations of origin and relocating to a completely new country can call for a culturally

specific congregation. In this context, these congregations can serve as spaces of

familiarity and edification in an otherwise very foreign existence. Cha asserts,

> One of the functions ethnic congregations serve …, is to help their members to
> deepen their understanding of their ethnic cultures and identities, to learn how to
> express their faith commitment using their own distinctive cultural symbols and
> signs. When and if God leads them to multiracial congregations, these individuals

---

[50] Peter T. Cha, "Constructing New Intergenerational Ties, Cultures, and Identities among Korean American Christians: A Congregational Case Study," in *This Side of Heaven: Race, Ethnicity and Christian Faith*, eds. Robert J. Priest and Alvaro L. Nieves (Oxford Scholarship Online, Oct 2011), accessed December 17, 2019, https://www-oxfordscholarship-com.georgefox.idm.oclc.org/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195310566.001.0001/acprof-9780195310566-chapter-17.

are prepared to contribute to a multicultural congregational life, bringing unique voices and gifts to the table.[51]

First generation ethnically-specific congregations have their own particular challenges however, as typically their second-generation children do not have the same needs as their first-generation parents. In his study of Korean immigrant churches, Cha observes that "one of the most difficult and painful challenges facing many of today's immigrant communities is generational and cultural conflicts between first-generation immigrants—those who were born and reared overseas—and their American-born second-generation children."[52] He also has found that many of their churches are not equipped to support these families as they themselves are experiencing similar conflicts within their own congregations. The conflicts often result in the second-generation experiencing loss of ownership and often leaving these churches.[53] Fong also speaks to this particular challenge that immigrant churches face, asserting that "ethnic churches are temporary. The need that they serve dissipates for each passing generation. At the same time, it is clear that their need ebbs and flows with the immigration quotient of any particular geographical vicinity."[54]

It would seem that the practice of Cultural Hospitality presents as a possible way of facing some of these challenges. In response to these challenges, Cha suggests that a posture of humility and openness is necessary.

---

[51] Cha, "Constructing New Intergenerational Ties, Cultures, and Identities among Korean American Christians: A Congregational Case Study."

[52] Cha, "Constructing New Intergenerational Ties, Cultures, and Identities among Korean American Christians: A Congregational Case Study."

[53] Ibid.

[54] Fong, *Racial Equality in the Church: A Critique of the Homogeneous Unit Principle in Light of a Practical Theology Perspective*, 152.

> A culture with which congregations must learn to engage is not static and fixed; it continually changes and evolves. An ethnic congregation that rigidly holds onto its traditional ethnic culture risks the possibility of being obsolete. Over time, culture changes as groups of individuals seek to make sense of the rapidly changing world in which they live.[55]

In a case study of Lakeshore Presbyterian Church in Chicago, Cha reflected on a positive demonstration of first-generation Korean elders practicing Cultural Hospitality with their second-generation members. Rather than insisting that they conform to the traditional service that the first-generation members valued, the elders sponsored a church plant within their own facility, orientated to second-generation Koreans. As first-generation members, they practiced humility by acknowledging and sharing their position of power within their congregation and practiced welcome through making space and valuing the culture of their second-generation members. Where many Korean churches are losing their second-generation members, Lakeshore is continuing to grow in large numbers.[56]

When interviewing members, Cha recorded one second generation member's perspective:

> This is why I come to this church, because the first-generation leaders and members affirm us and bless us … not trying to control us. Because they relate to us this way, we want to honor them and respect them. For many of us who grew up experiencing much pain and tension in our relationships with our parents and first-generation church leaders, coming to this church has been a very healing experience.[57]

In practicing Cultural Hospitality, Lakeshore is experiencing a growing membership, of second-generation immigrants accepting the gospel through their ministry, and even long-term security as their membership ages. The need for culturally specific

---

[55] Cha, "Constructing New Intergenerational Ties, Cultures, and Identities among Korean American Christians: A Congregational Case Study."

[56] Cha, "Constructing New Intergenerational Ties, Cultures, and Identities among Korean American Christians: A Congregational Case Study."

[57] Ibid.

congregations for first generation immigrants is apparent, but even in this context, the

practice of Cultural Hospitality continues to be valuable.

African American Congregations

The African American congregation has also served very specific needs within its

community here in the United States. Both Hollancid and Rock speak strongly to the

specific needs that the local African American church meets to this particular community.

Hollancid reflects:

> Church segregation, which developed later on (late nineteenth and twentieth centuries), was advocated by blacks who saw that increasing autonomy in religious practice was better suited to addressing their social life and conditions. This has come to influence the longstanding custom of black-white segregation also seen in religious practice today. Furthermore, today, the black church with a strong tradition of addressing social ills and injustice, is still largely seen as a rallying point and the epicenter (particularly within the black community) of the call for social justice and progress in America.[58]

In his interviews, Hollancid found that there were significant numbers of minority

members who saw their African American congregations as edifying and did not desire to

a multicultural congregation. He observes:

> Some have considered issues like desegregation as playing a crucial role in church - as well as the neighborhood and school, seeing that the time is "now" to address such issues, as a response is demanded from church people to act immediately and decisively. But on the other hand, others uphold racial segregation in church, counting it more as a means of edification and a strengthening of the bonds of friendship for those with similar preferences.[59]

---

[58] Hollancid, "Racial Segregation Practice in a Religious Context," 125.

[59] Ibid., 116.

Rock also challenges the idea of African American congregations moving towards

multicultural fellowship, particularly the idea of dismantling the regional conference

structure within the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

> They believe that similar or even greater good will accrue from dismantling or merging Black conferences, thus placing full confidence in the "melting pot" rather than the "flower garden" model of worship and association. But they need to keep in mind the following points. First, with the exception of what Eugene Robinson terms the "Transcendent Elite" the spiritual needs of all other segments of the Black community—the abandoned "left behind," the mainstream middle class, and the Newly Emergent—are, as a rule, most meaningfully met not by the liturgy of an alien culture but that which expresses the understandings and feelings inherent to the group in which they have been acculturated. Second, as proposed above, communities formed by such groups are most effectively served by indigenous leadership.[60]

The concern of not having one's cultural needs valued and met, of being ministered to by

"an alien culture" is understandable, particularly considering the experience that the

African American community has had within both Adventism and the wider community,

as explored in chapters one and two. These challenges clearly call for serious and

prayerful reflection by both leaders and members of congregations as they consider the

call of Cultural Hospitality within the African American context of the Seventh-day

Adventist Church.

Areas of the United States that are Less Diverse

It is also necessary to consider that even as the United States is clearly and rapidly

moving towards a non-majority cultural society, that there are areas that are slower in

their rate of diversity. In his study of the rapidly diversifying nation, Frey reveals that in

more rural areas, particularly in the inner areas of the United States, that there are still

---

[60] Rock, *Protest & Progress: Black Seventh-day Adventist Leadership and the Push for Parity*, 177.

areas with very few minorities present (see Appendix D). He qualifies, however, that though "the map shows large swathes of 'white counties'—where no racial minority is highly represented—many of these are small, less urban, and sparsely populated areas where the white population is stagnating … home to just 30% of the nation's residents."[61] Even so, for churches located within these areas, there is less opportunity for intercultural contact.

In reflecting on the practice of Cultural Hospitality, immense value, along with challenges and complexities, are apparent and deserve consideration, and in some cases, further research and exploration. Significant to the long-term mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the United States is the greater relevancy to its wider community that could potentially be facilitated by Cultural Hospitality. In step with this greater relevancy is the reach and impact that it also presents to the evangelistic potential for the denomination. Further, as the practice of Cultural Hospitality engenders greater diversity within congregations, these churches also experience the strengths that come from a diverse community. Along with these valuable results, are also significant challenges and complexities that the practice of Cultural Hospitality presents, particularly as it fosters multicultural congregations. It is apparent that not one model fits all, that there are congregations that are providing valuable ministry in their ethnic specific contexts and that in some areas of the United States, the population itself has lower diversity rates. Yet hospitality is something that can be applied to varying degrees. Further, in practicing it, greater understanding and skill will be developed in the areas of challenge.

---

[61] William H. Frey, "Six Maps that reveal America's Expanding Racial Diversity: A Pre-2020 Census Look at the Wide Dispersal of the Nation's Hispanic, Asian and Black Populations," *Brookings Institution*, September 5, 2019, https://www.brookings.edu/research/americas-racial-diversity-in-six-maps/.

CHAPTER 6:

CONCLUSION

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has given diligent effort in taking "the gospel to every nation, tribe, kindred and tongue" throughout their history. Birthed relatively recently during the Great Awakening of the 1800s, yet with now over 18 million members and a presence in more than 200 countries, God has clearly blessed these efforts. Along with numerical growth, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has also contributed to the communities in which it has ministered through extensive educational institutions, healthcare systems, publishing entities, and relief agencies. Its recent nomination as the most diverse denomination within the United States gives incredible potential for the Seventh-day Adventist Church to take a significant role in facilitating much-needed racial reconciliation and healing within this nation. Yet thus far, it has fallen short of embracing this potential.

Birthed in the United States, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has tragically shared a history of racial prejudice with its nation of heritage, leaving wounds and shame that continue to haunt its present structure and relationships. Early leadership included many individuals who were socially aware and avidly worked within the abolitionist movement of the antebellum years, yet its apocalyptic focus served to set a DNA that precluded meaningful involvement in working to establish racial equity within its community. As the denomination developed, concern for racial reconciliation was overshadowed by a prevailing zeal in sharing a unique apocalyptic message of Christ's immanent return along with distinctive interpretations of the seventh day Sabbath and soul sleep. With uncanny similarity to the church growth movement HUP philosophy of

recent decades, the governing leaders of the young denomination were concerned that racial mixing would impede evangelistic efforts within the White community and so even when presented with opportunity to develop racially integrated congregations, they intentionally rejected these models. As time went by, the racial divides within the denomination deepened. Calls from the African American community for equity and inclusion were met with a segregated structure of Regional and White Conferences, giving space for leadership but not relationship. Shamefully, the segregation of the wider community during the Jim Crow era was also perpetuated by the denomination; its White churches and institutions denied admittance to Blacks, even precluding them from eating in the cafeteria of their world headquarters. It was not until the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that Seventh-day Adventist institutions within the United States such as hospitals, schools, universities, and churches, opened their doors to all. This tragic history casts a long shadow that continues to be felt within the denomination today.

With great need, however, comes great opportunity for the work of God, and the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the United States is poised to now *embody* the gospel that they took to "every nation, kindred and tongue." As lived out in the life of Jesus, the Word who became flesh, and developed within the early church, the gospel was not only a gift of reconciliation with God, but a gift of reconciliation for humanity. It was not just an opportunity to enter the kingdom of heaven when Christ returns, but to live it now. Part of the mystery that the apostle Paul spoke so often of was the miracle of those who were once divided (Jews and Gentiles) becoming reconciled in Christ (Eph 3). This reconciliation is not one of uniformity but of unity. Differences of gender and culture are not dismantled but unified.

The diversity that exists within the different cultures and ethnicities of the world are part of a much larger intentional mosaic of diversity, established by God from creation. Its intentionality and blessing, witnessed in the creation week (Gen 1), is developed throughout the Old and New Testaments. Within the story of the Tower of Babel, one witnesses an attempt at homogenizing and centralizing humanity, yet God redirected them through the multiplication of languages, something that would have naturally occurred had they followed his initial instructions to move out and fill the earth (Gen 11). In His life on earth, Jesus continually uplifted those who were different, outside of the accepted social strata of the day. Through both personal interaction, and the characters that he used in his teaching, he pointed to the value in *all* individuals, along with their included place at his table. At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was displayed through a multitude of languages (Acts 2:1–11), again pointing to God's heart for unified diversity rather than uniformity. Finally, John the Revelator's vision of the throne room in heaven includes a multitude of people from every nation, tribe, people and tongue, suggesting that even in heaven, unified cultural diversity will continue to be a valued reality (Rev 7:9).

Along with the theology of diversity, the value and necessity of hospitality is also a theme that can be equally traced throughout the breadth of biblical scripture. It is the intersection of these two theologies that give a suggested opportunity for the Seventh-day Adventist Church to move forward in the area of racial reconciliation and unity; an opportunity to practice Cultural Hospitality as a step in embodying the Gospel. Biblical hospitality is the practice of "loving the other." It was a practice that the patriarch Abraham was praised for when he personally welcomed and provided for angels in the

guise of strangers, at his camp (Heb 31:2, Gen 18), a practice that God gave to the children of Israel as part of their laws (Lev 19:33–34), and in the New Testament, a necessary character trait of any leader within the early church (Tit 1:8, 1 Tim 5:10).

Far from being an optional "extra" for those who want to "go the extra mile" in their Christian walk, its practice is a central tenant of the gospel. It draws its legitimacy and instruction from the hospitality that God has extended to humanity through Christ. When applied to the cultural context of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the United States, it serves to both challenge and encourage. The challenge is great; love of the "cultural other" is not optional if one takes the name of Christ. Love of the "cultural other" challenges the current segregated status of our congregations and institutions. Love of the "cultural other" calls for more than acknowledgement, more than equity even, it calls for love. And love is not abstract, it is tangible, embodied, *practiced*.

Gleaned from extensive work that has been contributed over the years in the area of Biblical Hospitality, the suggested practice of Cultural Hospitality is a framework of three practices: humility, welcome, and empathy. Each individually significant on their own, when practiced together, they provide a scaffolding that facilitates growth in unified cultural diversity. The practice of humility provides foundational awareness and posture that supports the practice of welcome. The practice of welcome, making space for the "cultural other" within one's community, worship experience, and leadership, in turn facilitates a growth in meaningful relationships. These meaningful relationships in turn, enable the practice of empathy. Practicing empathy leads to repentance and lament, and a personal stake in, and concern, for issues of justice.

The practice of humility is grounded in an awareness of our own identity as found in Christ, an identity of initial marginalization that has been transformed by the welcome of the God of the Universe, a God who modeled the practice of humility towards us. The practice of humility calls for an acknowledgement of, and sharing of power, which though applicable to all, is particularly of value to the White culture within the United States. This cultural group has historically held the dominant cultural space, often without fully being aware of it. A Europeanization of Christianity has been cultivated for generations and needs to be balanced with the blessing and contribution of other cultural perspectives. By humbly acknowledging this place of privilege and power, the dominant cultural group is then able to practice welcome.

The practice of welcome not only describes the initial act of welcoming the "cultural other," but also the recognition of their value and the creation of space for them. The practice of welcome within Cultural Hospitality calls for intentional inclusion of those from other cultures by individuals of the dominant culture and an intentional recasting of social relations. A powerful tool for facilitating this inclusion that is found extensively within biblical scripture, is the sharing of meals; simple and accessible in its facilitation, it effectively breaks down divides between people, including those of differing cultures. Another significant aspect of practicing welcome, is that of extending recognition, both in the worship experiences and through leadership. This can be challenging; it often involves change and a relinquishing of power by the dominant cultural group. Making space for different styles of worship can feel uncomfortable and confronting even. However, in the biblical framework, blessing accompanies surrender,

"in giving away one's life, one gains new life as well."[1] Further, when one gives space and power to those who are different, it opens one up to become a learner. It provides opportunity to see God through differing cultural lenses than one's own. It gives space for God to move and lead in ways that are wider and deeper than the familiar and known. And without practicing recognition, the practice of Cultural Hospitality remains token at best, lacking power and its transformational potential.

The third practice of Cultural Hospitality is the practice of empathy. This practice is one that builds upon the meaningful relationships established by the practices of humility and welcome. Within these intercultural relationships, the "cultural other" becomes known in all their joy, sorrow, and complexity, leading to the practice of empathy. It is in this practice of empathy that "love of the other" is given a powerfully transformational platform. This is significant, particularly for a denomination that is part of such a racialized society as the United States. The need for empathy both within congregations and the wider community is great. Due to the homogeneous communities that many belong to, there can often be little meaningful interracial contact between members of the denomination and therefore limited empathy is experienced. As empathy is practiced this reality is shifted, the life of the "cultural other," including the injustices that they experience, become known on a personal level.

This practice of empathy leads to repentance and lament, a personal stake in, and concern, for issues of justice. For the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the United States, this means listening to and lamenting the injustice that many minority cultures have experienced, not only in the wider community, but as explored in chapters one and two,

---

[1] Amy G. Oden, ed. *And You Welcomed Me: A Sourcebook on Hospitality in Early Christianity* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2001), 133.

within the denomination itself and particularly towards the African American community. Great injustice has been committed and there are wounds that are far from healed. As we practice empathy we acknowledge and lament the pain and injustice experienced. Much of it cannot be undone, but it can be acknowledged and lamented. Apology, particularly on a corporate level, can and should, be made in order for the process of healing to take place. Further, in practicing empathy, the historical distance that the Seventh-day Adventist Church has held with issues of social justice is also challenged. In practicing empathy, an understanding of God's heart for the oppressed becomes more than abstract theology; the practice of empathy leads one to understand on a relational level that social justice is not a distraction from the gospel, but an integral part of living it.[2]

Implementing the practice of Cultural Hospitality is not without its challenges, yet the gospel calls for the Seventh-day Adventist Church to embrace this calling. In doing so, it will not only enjoy a much fuller expression of the Kingdom of Heaven, but its practice also presents significant value in the areas of retention and evangelism. A reality that is fast eclipsing the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the United States is the increasing multicultural nature of its community, both within its own demographics and the wider context that the church seeks to minister. Demographer Frey points to racial diversity as "the most defining and impactful characteristic of the millennial generation."[3] In practicing Cultural Hospitality, its churches will be far better positioned to reach and

---

[2] Bruce W. Fong, Racial Equality in the Church: A Critique of the Homogeneous Unit Principle in Light of a Practical Theology Perspective (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1996), 83.

[3] William H. Frey, "Diversity Defines the Millennial Generation," *Brookings Institution*, June 28, 2016, https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2016/06/28/diversity-defines-the-millennial-generation/.
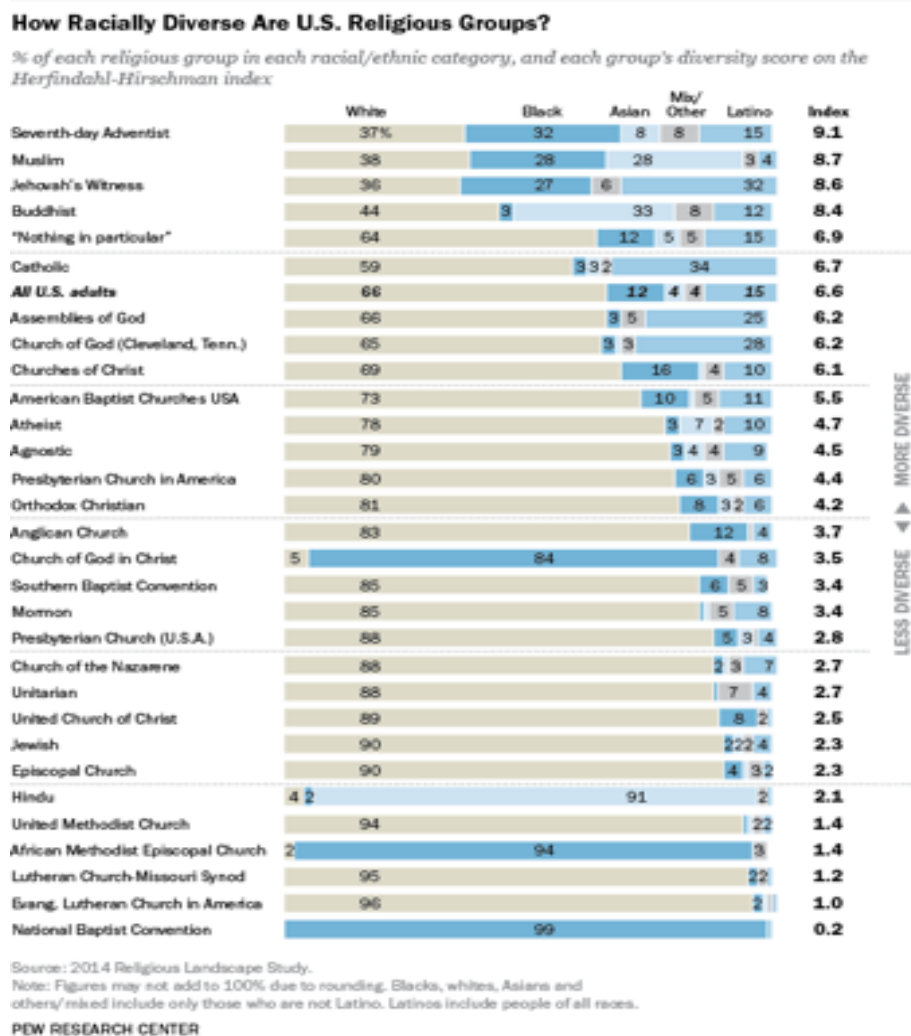
include within their congregations this demographic. Further, in embracing the call of Cultural Hospitality and becoming increasingly involved with issues of Social Justice, the Seventh-day Adventist Church would further increase its relevance to a demographic that has increasingly regarded religion as irrelevant to their context. This cultural and spiritual change within the denomination would in turn greatly enhance current evangelistic efforts. In embodying the gospel of peace through the practice of Cultural Hospitality, allowing God to bring together what the world has struggled to do, the church would serve as a powerful witness.

As the Seventh-day Adventist Church practices Cultural Hospitality, the growth of multicultural congregations would seem natural and valuable, yet this does not negate the value and need of ethnically homogenous congregations in certain contexts. For first-generation immigrants, ethnically specific congregations serve to support them both linguistically and culturally as they work through the trauma of relocating to a new and very different country and culture from what they have known. African American churches have also served a unique need within their historical context in the United States, providing congregating space, support, and impetus in their ongoing fight for racial equity and justice. There are also areas of the country that are slower in diversifying, limiting the opportunity of interracial contact. Within these congregations, a multicultural congregation may not be of as much value or even possible, however, this does not preclude the practice of Cultural Hospitality, just the nature and extent of it. A significant value of Cultural Hospitality is that it is contextually applicable and valuable for multiple contexts.

The immense value of Cultural Hospitality calls the Seventh-day Adventist Church to balance their historical focus of preparing the world for Christ's second coming, with the call of living out His kingdom now. An understanding of God's heart for all, his own example as he took on flesh, along with an understanding of the centrality and significance of biblical hospitality, contends that practicing love for the "cultural other" is an imperative, not an option, in order to enjoy the unified diversity that God envisions for his church. The practice of Cultural Hospitality would be a positive step in this journey that God has for His people.

APPENDIX A:

HOW RACIALLLY DIVERSE ARE U.S. RELIGIOUS GROUPS?

How Racially Diverse Are U.S. Religious Groups?

% of each religious group in each racial/ethnic category, and each group's diversity score on the Herfindahl-Hirschman index

	White	Black	Asian	Mix/ Other	Latino	Index
Seventh-day Adventist	37%	32	8	8	15	9.1
Muslim	38	28	28	3	4	8.7
Jehovah's Witness	36	27	6		32	8.6
Buddhist	44	3	33	8	12	8.4
"Nothing in particular"	64		12	5 5	15	6.9
Catholic	59	3 3	2		34	6.7
All U.S. adults	66		12	4 4	15	6.6
Assemblies of God	66		3 5		25	6.2
Church of God (Cleveland, Tenn.)	65		3 3		28	6.2
Churches of Christ	69		16	4	10	6.1
American Baptist Churches USA	73		10	5	11	5.5
Atheist	78		3	7 2	10	4.7
Agnostic	79		3 4	4	9	4.5
Presbyterian Church in America	80		6 3	5	6	4.4
Orthodox Christian	81		8	3 2	6	4.2
Anglican Church	83			12	4	3.7
Church of God in Christ	5	84			4 8	3.5
Southern Baptist Convention	85			6 5 3		3.4
Mormon	85			5	8	3.4
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)	88			5 3 4		2.8
Church of the Nazarene	88			2 3	7	2.7
Unitarian	88			7	4	2.7
United Church of Christ	89			8	2	2.5
Jewish	90			2 2 2	4	2.3
Episcopal Church	90			4	3 2	2.3
Hindu	4 2		91		2	2.1
United Methodist Church	94				2 2	1.4
African Methodist Episcopal Church	2	94			3	1.4
Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod	95				2 2	1.2
Evang. Lutheran Church in America	96				2	1.0
National Baptist Convention		99				0.2

MORE DIVERSE ▲ ▼ LESS DIVERSE

Source: 2014 Religious Landscape Study.
Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding. Blacks, whites, Asians and others/mixed include only those who are not Latino. Latinos include people of all races.
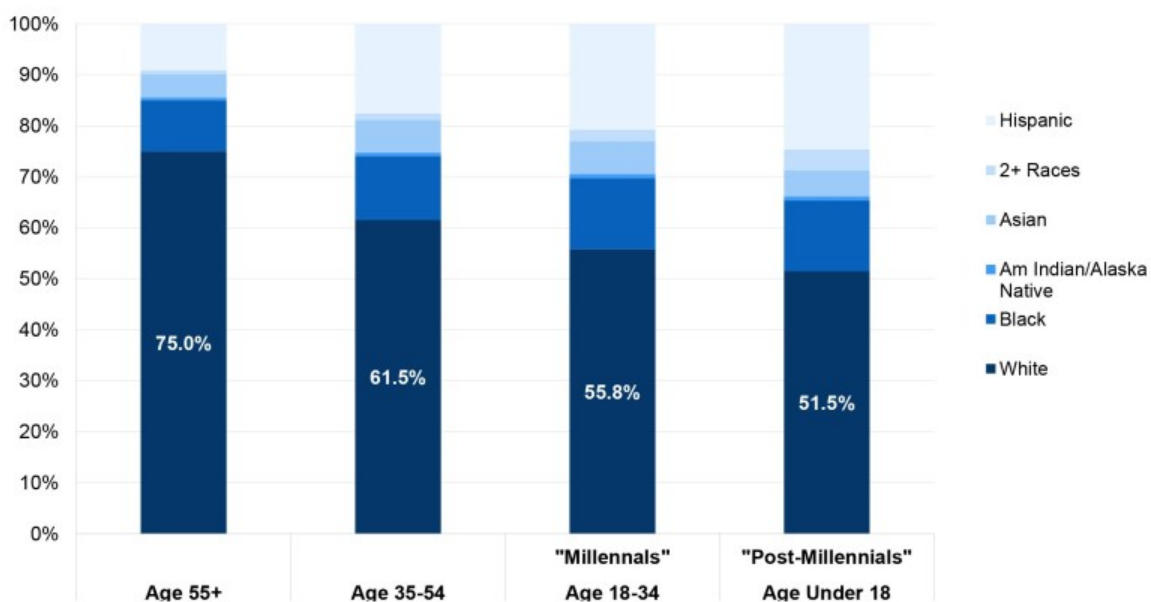
PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Michael Lipka, "The Most and Least Racially Diverse U.S. Religious Groups," Pew Research Center, July 27, 2015, https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/07/27/the-most-and-least-racially-diverse-u-s-religious-groups/.

APPENDIX B:

US RACE-ETHNIC PROFILES FOR AGE GROUPS, 2015

Figure 1: US Race-Ethnic Profiles for Age Groups, 2015

Source: William H Frey analysis of Census Bureau Estimates released June 23, 2016
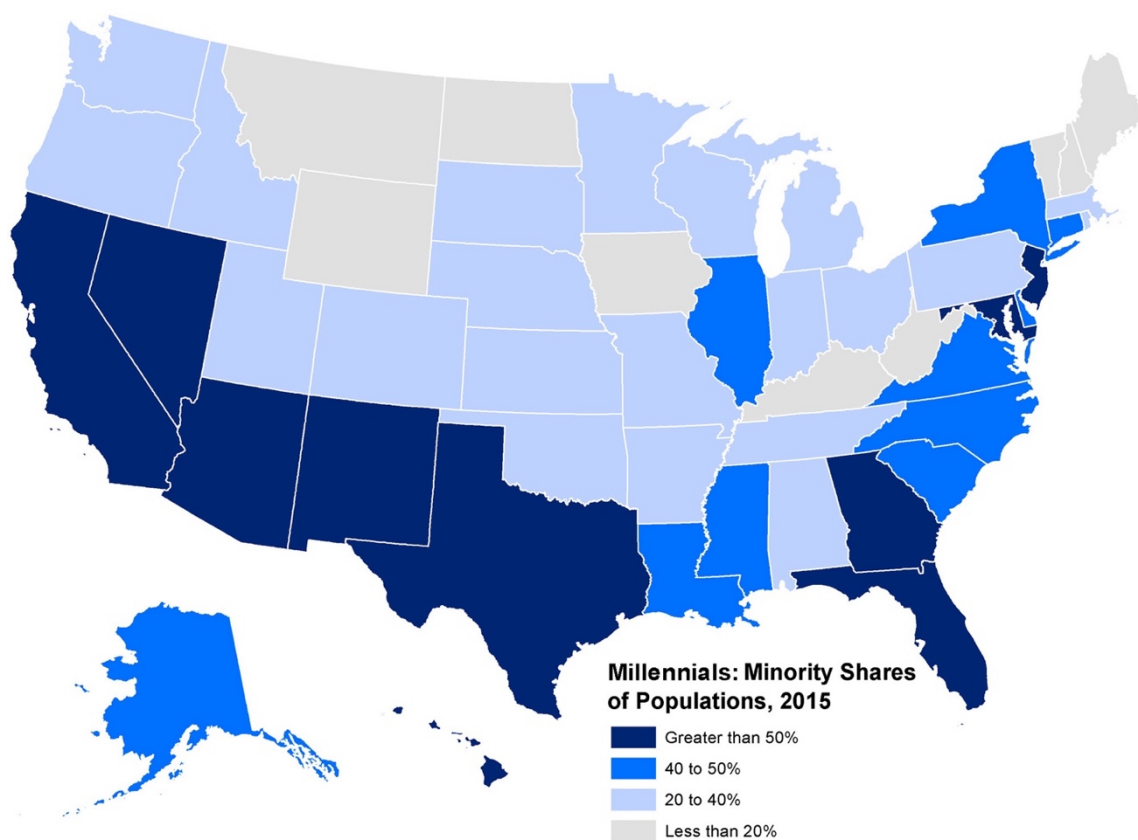
B | Metropolitan Policy Program
at BROOKINGS

William H. Frey, "Diversity Defines the Millennial Generation," *Brookings Institution*, June 28, 2016, https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2016/06/28/diversity-defines-the-millennial-generation/.

APPENDIX C:

MILLENNIALS: MINORITY SHARES OF STATE POPULATIONS, 2015

Map 1. Millennials: Minority Shares of State Populations, 2015

Millennials: Minority Shares of Populations, 2015

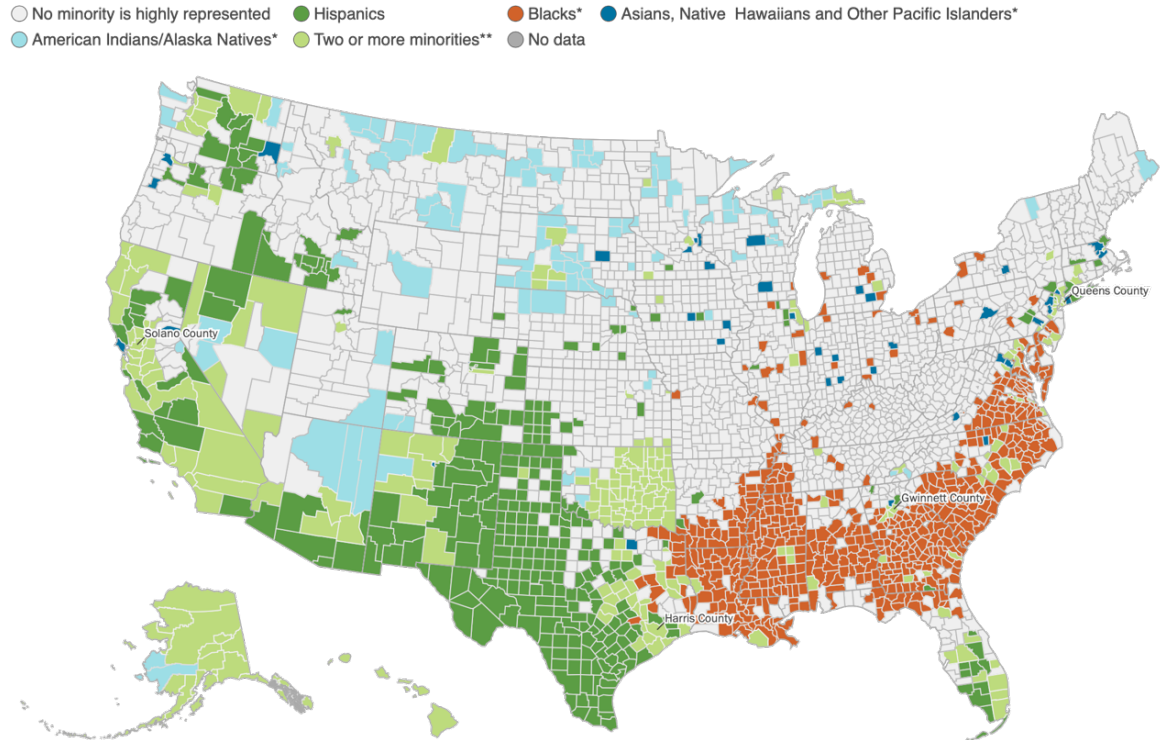- Greater than 50%
- 40 to 50%
- 20 to 40%
- Less than 20%

B | **Metropolitan Policy Program**
at BROOKINGS

William H. Frey, "Diversity Defines the Millennial Generation," *Brookings Institution*, June 28, 2016, https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2016/06/28/diversity-defines-the-millennial-generation/.

APPENDIX D:

WHERE RACE-ETHNIC MINORITY GROUPS ARE HIGHLY REPRESENTED

BY COUNTY

William H. Frey, "Six Maps that Reveal America's Expanding Racial Diversity: A pre-2020 census look at the wide dispersal of the nation's Hispanic, Asian and Black Populations," *Brookings Institution*, September 5, 2019, https://www.brookings.edu/research/americas-racial-diversity-in-six-maps/.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anderson, David A. *Multicultural Ministry.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004.

Anderson, G. T. "Sectarianism and Organization 1846–1864." In *Adventism in America,* edited by G. Land, G. T. Anderson, & W. F. Norwood. Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998.

Baker, Benjamin. *African American Seventh-day Adventist Timeline 1900-1944*. Black SDA History. Accessed May 30, 2019. http://www.blacksdahistory.org/1900-1944.html.

Baker, Benjamin ed. "Counsels on Blacks: A Comprehensive Compilation of Ellen G. White's Statements on Black People." Black SDA History. Accessed May 1, 2019. http://www.blacksdahistory.org/files/125793452.pdf.

Baker, Benjamin ed. "Shall the Four Freedoms Function Among Seventh-day Adventists?" Black SDA History. Accessed May 1, 2019. http://www.blacksdahistory.org/files/128590723.pdf.

Baker, Delbert W. "Regional Conferences: 50 Years of Progress." *Adventist Review* (November 1995): 12. http://www.blacksdahistory.org/files/101748135.pdf.

Barclay, John M. G. "Neither Jew Nor Greek." In *Ethnicity and the Bible*, edited by Mark G. Brett. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill Academic Publishers, Inc, 1996.

Bates, Joseph. *The Autobiography of Elder Joseph Bates.* Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press, 1868. https://egwwritings.org/?ref=en_AJB.261.2&para=1086.1050.

Blount, Brian K. "The Apocolypse of Worship: A House of Prayer for All Nations." In *Making Room at the Table: An Invitation to Multicultural Worship*, edited by Brian K. Blount and Leonora Tubbs Tisdale. Louisville, KY: Westminister John Knox Press, 2001.

Branson, Mark Lau, and Juan F. Martinez. *Churches, Cultures & Leadership: A Practical Theology of Congregations and Ethnicities.* Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011. Kindle.

Branson, Roy. "The Crisis of the Nineties," Oakwood University Goldmine. Accessed September 5, 2019. http://www.oakwood.edu/additional_sites/goldmine/hdoc/blacksda/champ/champ3.htm.

Branson, Roy. "Ellen G. White: Racist or Champion of Equality?" Oakwood University Goldmine. Accessed September 5, 2019. http://www.oakwood.edu/additional_sites/goldmine/hdoc/blacksda/champ/index.html.

Brueggemann, Walter. *Tenacious Solidarity: Biblical Provocations on Race, Religion, Climate, and the Economy.* Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2018.

Carroll, Archie B. and Ann K. Buchholtz. *Business and Society: Ethics, Sustainability, and Stakeholder Management.* Mason, OH: South-Western Cengage Learning, 2012.

Cha, Peter T. "Constructing New Intergenerational Ties, Cultures, and Identities among Korean American Christians: A Congregational Case Study," *This Side of Heaven: Race, Ethnicity, and Christian Faith* (Oxford Scholarship Online, Oct 2011). https://www-oxfordscholarship-com.georgefox.idm.oclc.org/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195310566.001.0001/acprof-9780195310566-chapter-17.

Chan, Frank. "Biblical Materials for a Theology of Cultural Diversity: A Proposal." In *Understanding Diversity: Theological Views on Diversity*, edited by Annie N. Mundeke. Dubuque: Kendall / Hunt Publications, 2005.

Christerson et al., *Against All Odds: The Struggle for Racial Integration in Religious Organizations*. Accessed April 17, 2018. eBook Collection EBSCOhost.

Cleveland, Christena. *Disunity in Christ: Uncovering the Hidden Forces that Keep Us Apart.* Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2013.

Cohn, D'Vera. "Future immigration will change the face of America by 2065." Pew Research Center. October 5, 2015. http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/10/05/future-immigration-will-change-the-face-of-america-by-2065/.

Deames, Matthew D. "Inviting and Encouraging Racial, Cultural, Ethnic, and Generational Diversity within Ecclesial Community." DMin diss., George Fox University, 2012. http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/dmin/25. 13.

Dederen, Raoul. *Handbook of Seventh-Day Adventist Theology*. Electronic ed. Vol. 12. Commentary Reference Series. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2001.

DeYmaz, Mark. *Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church: Mandate, Commitments, and Practices of a Diverse Congregation*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons Inc., 2007.

DeYoung, Curtiss Paul. *Coming Together in the 21ˢᵗ Century.* Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2009.

Dick, Everett N. "The Millerite Movement 1830–1845." In *Adventism in America*, edited by Gary Land, Godfrey T. Anderson, and Wm. Frederick Norwood. Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998.

Dickerson, Brenda. "Iconic Adventist Church Celebrates 125 Years, Apologizes to People of Color." *Adventist Review.* Accessed November 24, 2019. https://www.adventistreview.org/church-news/story14243-iconic-adventist-church-celebrates-125-years-apologizes-to-people-of-color.

Dodge, Julie A., ""But I Wouldn't Do That": Teaching Cultural Empathy." DMin diss, George Fox University, 2016. https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/dmin/127.

Duty, Ronald W. *Talking Together as Christians Cross-culturally: A Field Guide, rev. ed.* Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2009. https://wordandworld.luthersem.edu/content/pdfs/24-2_Loehe/24-2_Wilson.pdf.

Emerson. Michael O., and George Yancey, *Transcending Racial Barriers: Towards a Mutual Obligations Approach.* Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Fisher, Holly, "Oakwood College Students' Quest for Social Justice Before and During the Civil Rights Era." *The Journal of African American History* 88, no. 2 (Spring, 2003): 11. ProQuest.

Fong, Bruce W. *Racial Equality in the Church: A Critique of the Homogeneous Unit Principle in Light of a Practical Theology Perspective*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1996.

Fretheim, Terrence E. *Creation, Fall and Flood.* Minneapolis, MN: Ausburg Publishing House, 1969.

Frey, William, H. "Diversity Defines the Millennial Generation," *Brookings Institution*, June 28, 2016. https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2016/06/28/diversity-defines-the-millennial-generation/.

Frey, William H. "Six Maps that Reveal America's Expanding Racial Diversity: A Pre-2020 Census Look at the Wide Dispersal of the Nation's Hispanic, Asian and Black Populations," *Brookings Institution*, September 5, 2019. https://www.brookings.edu/research/americas-racial-diversity-in-six-maps/.

Garcia-Johnson, Oscar. *The Mestizola Community of the Spirit.* Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2009.

Garvin, Shannon Frances. "Hospitality and The Kingdom of God: Our Invitation to Join the Work of Restoration" DMin dissertation, George Fox University, 2016. http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/dmin/149.

Graham, Ricardo B. "Black Seventh-day Adventists and Racial Reconciliation." In *Perspectives: Black Seventh-day Adventists Face the Twenty-first Century*, edited by Calvin Rock. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1996.

Graybill, Ronald D. "The Abolitionist Millerite Connection." In *The Disappointed: Millerism and Millenarianism in the Nineteenth Century*, edited by Ronald L. Numbers and Jonathan M. Butler. Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 1993.

Haloviak, Bert. "Impact of SDA Eschatological Assumptions on Certain Issues of Social Policy." Race Summit Workshop, October 27, 1999. http://www.blacksdahistory.org/files/118422186.pdf.

Hayes, Richard B. *The Moral Vision of the New Testament.* San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996.

Hobbs, T. Raymond. "Hospitality in the First Testament and the 'Teleological Fallacy,'" *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, no. 95 (2001).

Hollancid, Cleran. "Seventh-Day Adventists and 'Race' Relations in the U.S.: The Case of Black-White Structural Segregation." DMin diss., Western Michigan University, 2016. https://www.scholarworks.wmich.edu/dissertations/1419.

Hollancid, Cleran. "Racial Segregation Practice in a Religious Context." *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 23, no. 2 (2012): 60. https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1105&context=jats.

"It is Time." Andrews University. Accessed November 28, 2019. https://www.andrews.edu/diversity/itistime/.

Jipp, Joshua W. *Saved by Faith and Hospitality.* Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2017.

Jones, Ezra Earl. *Strategies for New Churches.* New York: Harper & Row, 1976.

Jones, Gerald Hansel. "A Model for Multicultural Worship Developed at the Fallbrook Seventh-day Adventist Church." Andrews University, 2013. https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dmin/63.

Kidder, Joseph. "Research shows that relationships are the best form of evangelism" in Adventist News Network. Accessed December 1, 2019. https://news.adventist.org/en/all-commentaries/commentary/go/-/research-shows-that-relationships-are-the-best-form-of-evangelism/.

Knight, George. *Millennial Fever and the End of the World: A Study of Millerite Adventism.* Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1993.

Koenig, John. *New Testament Hospitality: Partnership with Strangers as Promise and Mission.* Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1985.

Krznarik, Roman. *Empathy: A Handbook for Revolution*. London: Ebury Publishing, 2014.

Land, Gary. "Coping with Change 1961–1980." In *Adventism in America,* edited by Gary Land, Godfrey T. Anderson, & Wm. Frederick Norwood. Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998.

Lee, Dorothy A. "The Faith of the Canaanite Woman (Mt 15:21–28): Narrative, Theology, Ministry." *Journal of Anglican Studies* 13, no. 1 (May 1, 2015). EBSCOhost.

Lee, H. L. & Sahlin, M. *Brad: Visionary Spiritual Leadership.* Lincoln, NE: Center for Creative Ministry, 2005.

Lee, Sang Hyun. "Worship on the Edge: Liminality and the Korean American Context." In *Making Room at the Table: An Invitation to Multicultural Worship*, edited by Brian K. Blount and Leonora Tubbs Tisdale. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001.

Lipka, Michael. "The Most and Lease Racially Diverse Religious Groups." Pew Research Center. July 27, 2015. https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/07/27/the-most-and-least-racially-diverse-u-s-religious-groups/.

London, Samuel G. *Seventh-day Adventists and the Civil Rights Movement.* Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2009.

McGavran, Donald A. *Understanding Church Growth*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990.

Malina, Bruce J. *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology.* Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993.

Martin, L.R. "Old Testament foundations for Christian hospitality," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 35, no. 1 (2014): Art. #752. http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/ve.v35i1.752.

Moltmann, Jurgen. *The Gospel of Liberation*, tr. H. Wayne Pipkin. Waco, TX: Word Books, 1973.

Morgan, Douglas. "Adventism and America's Original Sin Part 3." Against the Wall. June 22, 2018. https://againstthewall.org/blog/2018/6/22/adventism-and-americas-original-sin-part-3.

Morgan, Douglas. "Adventism and America's Original Sin Part 5," *Against the Wall*, June 9, 2019. https://againstthewall.org/blog/2019/6/09/adventism-americas-original-sin-part-5.

Morgan, Douglas. "Adventism and America's Original Sin Part 6," *Against the Wall*, June 23, 2019. https://againstthewall.org/blog/2019/6/23/adventism-americas-original-sin-part-6.

Morris, John Michael. "McGavran on McGavran: What Did He Really Teach?" In *The Southern Baptist Journal of Missions and Evangelism*, edited by George H. Martin, vol 2 (Fall 2016). https://sbts-wordpress-uploads.s3.amazonaws.com/sbts/uploads/sites/8/2012/08/SBJME-2-Final-1.pdf.

Morse, MaryKate. *Making Room for Leadership, Power, Space and Influence*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008.

Muthiah, Robert. *The Priesthood of All Believers in the Twenty-First Century*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2009.

Neill, Stephen. *Call to Mission*. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1970.

Nguyen, Vanthanh, "Dismantling Cultural Boundaries: Missiological Implications of Acts 10:1-11:18." *Missiology: An International Review* 40, no. 4 (Oct 2012). https://journals-sagepub-com.georgefox.idm.oclc.org/doi/pdf/10.1177/009182961204000406.

Nichol, F. D. *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*. Vol 5. Washington, DC.: Review and Herald, 1956.

"North American Division," Official website of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Accessed April 30, 2019. https://www.adventist.org/en/world-church/north-american/.

Nouwen, Henry J. M. *Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975.

Oden, Amy G. ed. *And You Welcomed Me: A Sourcebook on Hospitality in Early Christianity*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2001.

Official Website of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. "Seventh-day Adventist World Statistics 2014." Accessed April 30, 2019. https://www.adventist.org/en/information/statistics/article/go/-/seventh-day-adventist-world-church-statistics-2014.

Official Website of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. "North American Division." Accessed April 30, 2019, https://www.adventist.org/en/world-church/north-american/.

Peeters, Maria C. W., Jan de Jonge and Toon W. Taris, eds. *An Introduction to Contemporary Work Psychology.* Chichester, WS: Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2014.

Pohl, Christine D. *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition.* Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1999. Kindle.

Pohl, Christine D. "Responding to Strangers: Insights from the Christian Tradition," *Studies in Christian Ethics* 19, no. 1 (2006).

Priest, Kersten Bayt, and Robert J. Priest, "Divergent Worship Practices in the Sunday Morning Hour: Analysis of an "Interracial" Church Merger Attempt," *This Side of Heaven: Race, Ethnicity and Christian Faith* (Oxford Scholarship Online, Oct 2011). https://www-oxfordscholarship-com.georgefox.idm.oclc.org/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195310566.001.0001/acprof-9780195310566-chapter-18.

Rad, Gerhard Von. *Genesis.* Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1972.

Rah, Soong Chan. *Many Colors: Cultural Intelligence for a Changing World.* Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2010.

Rah, Soong Chan. *The Next Evangelicalism: Releasing the Church from Western Cultural Captivity.* Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2009.

Rah, Soong Chan. *Prophetic Lament: A Call for Justice in Troubled Times.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015.

Rainer, Thom S. *The Book of Church Growth: History, Theology, and Principles.* Nashville: Broadman, 1993.

"Regions," Southern California Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Accessed April 30, 2019. https://scc.adventist.org/regions.

Reynolds, Thomas E. "Welcoming without Reserve? A Case in Christian Hospitality," *Theology Today* 63, no. 2 (2006).

Rice, Richard. *Reign of God: An Introduction to Christian Theology from a Seventh-day Adventist Perspective*. 2nd Edition. Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1997.

Rock, Calvin B. *Protest & Progress: Black Seventh-day Adventist Leadership and the Push for Parity*. Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2018.

Russell, Letty M., J. Shannon Clarkson, and Kate M. Ott, *Just Hospitality: God's Welcome in a World of Difference*, 1st ed. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009.

Scriven, K. J. "How to Create Multiethnic Worship Environments in Your Church" Exponential Multiethnic Worship Kit. Podcast.

Sequeira, Aubrey M., Harry Kumar and Venkatesh Gopalakrishnan. "Caste and Church Growth: An Assessment of Donald McGavran's Church Growth Principles from An Indian Perspective," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Missions and Evangelism*, edited by George H. Martin 2, (Fall 2016). https://sbts-wordpress-uploads.s3.amazonaws.com/sbts/uploads/sites/8/2012/08/SBJME-2-Final-1.pdf.

"Seventh-day Adventist World Statistics 2014," Official Website of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Accessed April 30, 2019. https://www.adventist.org/en/information/statistics/article/go/-/seventh-day-adventist-world-church-statistics-2014.

Shuler, J. L. "Evangelistic Objectives and Techniques: Approach to Seventh-day Adventist Evangelism," Ministry Magazine, Oct 1950. https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/1950/10/approach-to-seventh-day-adventist-evangelism.

Smith, Anthony. "Practicing Pentecost: Discovering the Kingdom of God amid Racial Fragmentation." In *An Emergent Manifesto of Hope,* edited by Doug Pagitt and Tony Jones. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007.

Soal, Alexander D., and Desmond Henry. "The Reversal of Babel: Questioning the Early Church's Understanding of the Gift of the Holy Spirit in Acts as a Reversal of the Curse of Babel," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 39 (Aug 2018). https://verbumetecclesia.org.za/index.php/ve/article/view/1842/3502.

Southern California Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. "Regions." Accessed April 30, 2019. https://scc.adventist.org/regions.

"Statistics," The Official website of the Seventh-day Adventist World Church. Accessed September 5, 2019. https://www.adventist.org/en/information/statistics/article/go/-/seventh-day-adventist-world-church-statistics-2016-2017/.

Steenwyk, Mark Van. *The Unkingdom of God: Embracing the Subversive Power of Repentance.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013.

Tel, Martin. "Music: The "Universal Language." In *Making Room at the Table: An Invitation to Multicultural Worship*, edited by Brian K. Blount and Leonora Tubbs Tisdale. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001.

Volf, Miroslav. *Exclusion & Embrace.* Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996.

Wagner, C. Peter. *Our Kind of People: The Ethical Dimensions of Church Growth in America.* Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1979.

Wahlen, Clinton. "Peter's Vision and Conflicting Definitions of Purity." *New Testament Studies*, 5, no. 4 (Oct. 2005). ProQuest.

White, Ellen G. "Our Duty to the Colored People," Black SDA History, ed. Benjamin Baker. Accessed September 5, 2019. http://blacksdahistory.org/New_Custom_1.html.

White, Ellen G. *Selected Messages*, vol. 2. Washington, D.C: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1958.

Wilson, H. S. "Multicultural Christian Community – A Bouquet of Multiple Flowers." *Word & World* 24, no. 2 (Spring 2004). https://wordandworld.luthersem.edu/content/pdfs/24-2_Loehe/24-2_Wilson.pdf.

Winter, Miriam Therese. *Eucharist with a Small "e."* Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005.

Woodley, Randy. *Living in Color: Embracing God's Passion for Ethnic Diversity.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004.