

REMNANT IN *KOINONIA*

TOWARDS AN ADVENTIST VERSION OF COMMUNIO ECCLESIOLOGY



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A thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
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In memory of my father,
Radomir Lazić

SHORT ABSTRACT

REMNANT IN *KOINONIA*: TOWARDS AN ADVENTIST VERSION OF *COMMUNIO* ECCLESIOLOGY

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In the last two decades, Seventh-day Adventist scholars have been attempting to articulate a balanced and distinct ecclesiology, aimed at helping the denomination to retain its global unity, maintain its relevance and enable a more fruitful and meaningful interaction with others. No comprehensive account of the church has been developed yet, however.

This thesis is intended to facilitate a more rounded and systematically articulated concept of church from an Adventist perspective. Part I presents a thumbnail history of the denomination and considers the advantages and limitations of its standard claim to be the ‘remnant’, awaiting a pre-millennial *parousia*. Part II engages with the ideas of some of the ablest *communio* ecclesiologists of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries and considers their ecclesiological system, built around the concept of *koinonia*, while Part III examines ways in which their theoretical framework can assist the Adventist community to deal with practical ecclesial issues.

Four major proposals are made for deepening Adventist understanding of the nature of church. Whereas the formal structure of *communio* framework can help Adventists move beyond one-sided, single-metaphor communal self-descriptions, the

idea of the church as essentially a *koinonia* of believers in God can supplement their predominantly functionalist portrayal of the church as herald or messenger. Thirdly, the Adventist notion of truth can be enriched by viewing the community of believers not only as a messenger, but also as an organic part of divine revelation. This makes ecclesiology central to the theological enterprise, intrinsic to the grounding of theological claims and the interpretation of biblical texts. Finally, the development of a richer interpretation of the Spirit's activity in the church is seen as one of the key prerequisites for a fuller, more nuanced account of the church's participation in the life of the triune God. The highlighting of these four aspects, hitherto neglected or underdeveloped in Adventism, and the presentation of tentative solutions to its ongoing ecclesiological problems, form the principal contribution of this monograph.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

REMNANT IN *KOINONIA*: TOWARDS AN ADVENTIST VERSION OF *COMMUNIO ECCLESIOLOGY*

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Seventh-day Adventism is a relatively young Christian denomination. It began as the major surviving branch of the Millerite movement, which flourished during the 1840s, mainly in the north-eastern United States. Driven by strong eschatological expectations, the Seventh-day Adventist Church experienced rapid growth. As of the year 2015 the church had over 19 million members; according to a WCC report, it is now ‘probably the most widespread Protestant denomination in the world’. However, this remarkable growth has been accompanied by various internal and external tensions.

Increasingly, the denomination’s scholars have become aware that these tensions need to be addressed constructively if the church is to maintain its vitality and meet the challenges of the twenty-first century. It has become clear that a more thorough ecclesiological engagement is necessary if the Adventist community is to retain its global unity, maintain its relevance in the world at large and enable a more fruitful and meaningful interaction with others. In the last two decades, Adventist theologians have

been attempting to articulate a balanced and distinct ecclesiology, but this focus is relatively new and no comprehensive account of the church has been developed as yet.

This thesis is intended to facilitate this recent Adventist ecclesiological quest by proposing ways of reaching a more advanced concept of church. Since Adventist systematic theology – and specifically, ecclesiology – is still in the making, it cannot be claimed that this study provides a mature expression of what the church is. It proved impossible for me to acquire the necessary theoretical framework by looking into only existing Adventist publications. I therefore found it necessary to venture into the wider field of contemporary ecclesiology and engage with some of the most eminent Christian theologians of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The aim was to discern whether certain aspects of their ecclesiological synthesis could be used to enhance Adventist thinking about church.

The theoretical framework created by mainstream Christian *communio* ecclesologists proved to be particularly useful. It led me to claim that Adventists, like other Christians, could benefit from generating their own version of *communio* ecclesiology. I argue that Adventists might also accept the prevailing contemporary consensus that the ‘the church is the *communio* of the faithful’ as a formal theological principle, while, like other Christians, making additional specifications in line with their own distinctive theological heritage and priorities. The elements of overlap and difference will open up the possibility of intelligible, critical dialogue between Adventists and other Christians on ecclesiological matters.

Clearly, this process of engaging with non-Adventist authors in order to enhance the Adventist vision involves a judicious and eclectic process of discernment, both of the tradition and of the options arising in current debates. In spite of the inherent

complexity of this kind of supra-denominational engagement, my endeavour, during my research, has resulted, I submit, in the development of fruitful and ecclesiological enriching insights – at least from the standpoint of Adventist tradition.

Four major proposals for the advancement of the Adventist concept of church have emerged from this interaction with mainstream Christian *communio* authors. The highlighting of these four aspects neglected by Adventists, as well as the presentation of tentative solutions, form the principal contribution of the present monograph to the ongoing Adventist ecclesiological conversation.

The first proposal recommends a shift from the single-metaphor, *ad hoc* approach that has marked the denomination's remnant-based self-descriptions to a more balanced, comprehensive and systematically developed ecclesiological viewpoint that adopts the formal conceptual framework of *communio* ecclesiology. The second recommendation supplements the predominantly functionalist Adventist portrayal of church as herald or messenger with ontological definitions that present the church as essentially a *koinonia* of believers in God. The third submission enriches the Adventist propositional notion of truth by highlighting its relational, communal and personal dimensions. According to this enhanced understanding, the church is not merely a witness to the truth of divine revelation, but also an intrinsic part of it. This in turn makes ecclesiology central to the theological enterprise, intrinsic to the grounding of theological claims and the interpretation of biblical texts. Finally, none of these advancements would be possible without a clear understanding of the activity of the Spirit in the church. Arguably, the community work of the Spirit has been, and remains, one of the most neglected areas of Adventist remnant ecclesiology. By viewing the church through pneumatological lenses, it is claimed, Adventism can resist its

inherited tendency towards ecclesiological Christomonism and provide a fuller and more nuanced account of the church's participation in the life of the triune God.

In proposing these four modifications and enhancements, the present thesis stands as an important stepping-stone in the Adventist attempt to systematize and articulate its distinct theology of church. It is to be hoped that, by offering a critical analysis of the *status quo* concerning the ecclesial question, and by submitting potential ways of moving the Adventist remnant tradition forward, this study will stimulate other Adventist scholars to pursue this line of reasoning and articulate a more mature expression of the rich and multifaceted experience of the church that Adventists currently have. In order adequately to address the issues raised in this monograph, both in the Adventist and in the general Christian context, a collaborative, perhaps communal, academic effort is needed.

The argument of this thesis is developed over seven chapters that fit broadly into three major parts. PART ONE: CHURCH AS REMNANT sets the stage by offering a basic introductory statement of what Seventh-day Adventism is and why it currently needs an ecclesiology (Chapter I). It traces the history of explicitly and implicitly ecclesiological reflections among Adventists from the time of the denomination's inception to the present day (Chapter II) and highlights the inadequacies of its standardized conceptualization of the church as remnant (Chapter III).

PART TWO: CHURCH AS KOINONIA enhances the theoretical framework of Adventist remnant ecclesiology by exploring the possibility of developing an Adventist version of *communio* ecclesiology. It outlines what the various mainstream Christian *communio* ecclesiologies hold in common, in the expectation that this material, with appropriate adjustments, might contribute an ecclesiology that is genuinely Adventist.

Having highlighted the theological grounds for adopting the concept of *koinonia* as the prime ecclesiological qualifier, as well as offering a provisional explanation of how a system developed around this notion might work (Chapter IV), the thesis proceeds to clarify the nature and scope of God's involvement in the making of community (Chapter V). This ecclesially constitutive, Spirit-mediated activity of God in Christ is seen as a pivotal factor in determining the shape and orientation of believers' common participation in him.

PART THREE: REMNANT IN *KOINONIA* offers a brief demonstration of how the new theoretical framework of the Adventist remnant version of *communio* ecclesiology can assist the global Adventist community to address some of the most challenging practical issues that its members are currently facing in regard to church structure, ministry, mission, communal interpretation and reform (Chapter VI). It is hoped that the reader will be able to perceive the plausibility and usefulness of the proposed theoretical framework when it is applied successfully to the resolution – or, at least, to a richer theological interpretation – of some of the most divisive Adventist tensions. Chapter VII recapitulates the earlier chapters and suggests some ways forward.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

An academic endeavour such as my long journey towards a doctoral degree means the accumulation of numerous personal debts: spiritual, intellectual, emotional and financial. It is a pleasure to be able to acknowledge my debts here and to thank the many people who have supported me on my way. They illustrate unquestionably the fundamental claim of my thesis — that being human means being a person-in-communion.

First of all, I would like to thank my mother and father, Hajnalka and Radomir Lazić, who, through their love, support and example, inspired my journey towards a deeper understanding of the mystery of divine communion. Although my father, with whom I used to spend hours and hours discussing all my new insights and findings, did not live to see the last two years of my research and its completion, there is a strong conviction in my heart that our conversation about *koinonia* will continue one day, perhaps from an even more insightful, exciting and richer perspective.

Another person to whom I feel indebted is my wife, Kärt Lazić, whom I met during my doctoral studies. She has been very patient with me and willing to sacrifice a lot, especially during the final stage of my research when I had to be absent a lot, spending late hours in the office. She is able to understand my academic pressures and has been ready to engage in discussions with me, helping me to clarify my thoughts and express them in a more convincing way.

I should also like to express my deep gratitude to my supervisor, Dr Philip Endean, for his tireless and consistent support. He is exactly the adviser I needed in order to overcome the many obstacles that stood in the way of the completion of this

project. Our visions of theology and Christianity in general are quite different, and even conflicting at times, but, after long hours of conversing with him, I realized that there is no better path to a deeper self-understanding than a dialogue with somebody who can challenge the unquestioned assumptions that we hold about the world and stimulate fresh thinking. The spiritual and intellectual example that Dr Endean modelled in our interaction enabled me to grow and earned my highest admiration.

Many other people have been generous with their time, ideas and expertise, helping me to raise the level of my research. In particular, I thank Dr Fernando Canale, Dr Gunnar Pedersen and Dr Rölf Pohler for their intellectual criticism; it has significantly enhanced the content of my arguments. I also acknowledge the editorial role of Dr Margaret Whidden, who has helped me to express my ideas in more convincing, eloquent and English-friendly syntax.

During my studies, I often returned to my memories of the foundational experience of fellowship that I gained in my local Seventh-day Adventist community in Novi Sad, Serbia. During the time of war, in the midst of shooting and of bomb explosions, the church brought us a deep sense of hope, fulfilment and fearlessness; surrounded by turbulence and unrest, it stood as an oasis of peace. This experience sparked my love of exploring the mysteries of God revealed in the church. I wanted to show to my compatriots that true religion can never be behind brutal and inhumane crimes (as is often wrongly assumed) and that – when lived as it should be – it always brings healing and compassion, breaking ethnic, cultural, religious, racial, gender, national and all other kinds of barriers put up by human beings. In short, it creates harmony (*koinonia*) among people, uniting them with their Creator.

I hope that this thesis marks the beginning as much as the end of my academic effort to bring about a fuller *koinonia*. I warmly acknowledge the important role that my fellow-believers played in sparking my passion and extend my gratitude to my local church for being church.

Finally, I owe enormous gratitude to God for his daily provision, his revelations and guidance. It is my belief that, besides being the greatest source of my spiritual, emotional and intellectual energy, he is the One who moved more than twenty people in different parts of the world to simultaneously send their financial support, in the right amount, and with perfect timing, to secure my student place in Oxford. The journey that I went through was not without its ups and downs, but I learned that ‘God, who has called [us] into *koinonia* with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful’ to his promises and is always near (I Corinthians 1.9).

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INTRODUCTION

(I) THE CONTEXT OF THIS RESEARCH

With approximately nineteen million members, the Seventh-day Adventist church is among the most widespread Protestant denominations in the world.¹ The church's roots go back to the 1840s, to the Millerite movement which flourished at that time, mainly in the north-eastern United States.² Although it started as a movement whose members considered structural and explicitly ecclesiological issues secondary to the urgency of declaring their message, the church today – much larger than in its early years – needs to face questions related to its communal identity.

Increasingly, the denomination's scholars have become aware that a more thorough ecclesiological engagement is necessary if the Adventist community is to retain its global unity, maintain its relevance in the world at large, and participate in a more fruitful and meaningful interaction with others. During the last two decades, Adventist theologians have been working on articulating a balanced and distinctive ecclesiology. Since this focus is relatively recent, no comprehensive account of the church has yet been developed.

¹ I recognize that the word 'Adventist' can be fittingly employed to describe any Christians throughout history who have expected Christ's imminent return, and that the term is used in this way by a great number of modern scholars. However, in this study, 'Adventist' is used in many places as an abbreviation of 'Seventh-day Adventist'. This more limited use of the epithet designates the group of the believers who were known, from 1844 or 1845, as 'Sabbatarian Adventists', and who established their official organizational structure in 1863 as the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

² For a more detailed account of the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, including statistical data, see Chapter I.

(II) THE PURPOSE, METHOD AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS RESEARCH

This thesis is intended to facilitate this recent Adventist ecclesiological quest by proposing ways of reaching a more rounded and systematically articulated concept of church from an Adventist perspective. Since Adventist systematic theology – and specifically, ecclesiology – is still in the making, it has not been possible for me to work towards a mature expression of what the church is by consulting only the existing Adventist publications. I have therefore found it necessary to venture into the wider field of contemporary ecclesiology, and engage with the ideas of some of the most eminent Christian theologians of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The aim has been to discern whether certain aspects of their ecclesiological synthesis could be used to enhance Adventist thinking about church.

The most widespread and highly-acclaimed theoretical framework, known as *communio* ecclesiology, appears particularly useful for this purpose. Firstly, it offers resources for improving on conventional Adventist communal self-descriptions, which typically operate with just one dominant metaphor. Secondly, it complements the existing Adventist functional definition of the church as a herald, with an added emphasis on the ontological aspects. In other words, it proposes ways in which the Adventist ecclesial discourse, which has traditionally focused on *what the church does*, can be widened in order to also include reflections on *what the church is*. Thirdly, it enriches the Adventist notion of truth by viewing the community of believers not only as a messenger, but also as itself an organic part of divine revelation. This makes ecclesiology central to the theological enterprise, intrinsic to the grounding of theological claims and the interpretation of biblical texts. Finally, the recent focus by *communio* scholars on

developing a richer interpretation of the Spirit's activity in the church is one of the key prerequisites for a fuller, more nuanced Adventist account of the church's participation in the life of the triune God.

The highlighting of these four aspects of *communio* ecclesiology and their potential significance for Adventists, and the presentation of tentative solutions to some ecclesiological problems, form the principal contribution of this monograph. But this is not all that I would like to submit to Adventist scholars for further consideration. Adventists need to do more than adopt and modify certain isolated claims made by *communio* authors. If they are to articulate a more rounded and systematically developed concept of church, they should seek to create their own interpretation of ecclesial *koinonia*, in which they will analyse and develop more fully their idea of the church as remnant (hence, the title – 'Remnant in *koinonia*').

This study might, therefore, be rightly considered one of the first inquiries into the possibility of an Adventist version of *communio* ecclesiology. Perhaps Adventists can accept the prevailing contemporary consensus that the 'the church is the *communio* of the faithful' as a formal theological principle, while at the same time, like other Christians, making additional specifications in line with their own distinctive theological heritage and priorities. Moreover, the elements of overlap and difference here will open up the possibility of meaningful and critical dialogue between Adventists and other Christians on ecclesiological matters. Such an enhanced ecclesiological perspective might in turn help the Adventist church to maintain its global unity and vitality in the twenty-first century, as well as to establish more fruitful and meaningful interactions, with other Christians and indeed with non-Christians.

(III) THE ECUMENICAL SETTING OF THIS RESEARCH

Any attempt to describe and categorize the core of the Seventh-day Adventist communal identity against the backdrop of wider Christianity is a complex and perplexing task. Customarily, various sociologists of religion and experts on nineteenth-century apocalyptic movements have endeavoured to define this religious denomination by examining the most exposed aspects of its communal life, namely its visible practices or public statements of faith, known otherwise as the Twenty-eight Fundamental Beliefs. While this kind of investigation is important, it does not reveal the cardinal allegiances of this particular community of believers. When a denomination is as misunderstood as Adventism often is, a much wider assessment is needed.³ In his doctoral thesis, Marko Lukic claims that if one is to really understand Adventism, one must move

beyond the surface of doctrinal conclusions and explore the most fundamental layers of a system, the theological and philosophical meta-structure and methods which are not only providing a support for the doctrinal end-product, but which brought those doctrines about in the first place.⁴

There are many merits in having work such as this done by somebody who has a finger on the pulse of this denomination and whose perspective is shaped by regular interaction with Adventist ‘members of all ranks, over a longer period of time, in a

³ Seventh-day Adventism is extremely difficult to categorize on the basis of traditional sociological taxonomies that make a distinction between a church, a sect and a denomination. This religious body – in different parts of the world and at different time periods, and also in the varied and often mutually conflicting attitudes that its members uphold – has manifested the characteristics of all three categories. I will therefore use these classifications in a rather loose manner when referring to this particular religious body. For a similar approach, see: Michael Pearson, *Millennial Dreams and Moral Dilemmas: Seventh-day Adventism and Contemporary Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 12–13.

⁴ Marko Lukic, 'The Anatomy of Dissension: The Study of the Early Adventist Paradigm from the Perspective of a Modified Kuhnian Theory of Paradigms and Paradigm Changes' (doctoral thesis, University of Wales, Lampeter Trinity Saint David, August 2011), p. 3.

variety of milieux'.⁵ At the same time, the downside of an insider's doing this kind of work is lack of objectivity. Subconscious efforts to vindicate the movement might result in biased conclusions and allow unquestioned assumptions to thrive and cloud one's assessment.

It is precisely to avoid these kinds of mental blindspot that I decided to conduct my doctoral research in a non-Adventist academic setting (the University of Oxford), supervised by a Catholic theologian (Dr Philip Endean), and engaging with the ideas of some of the most able twentieth and twenty-first century ecclesialogists, who did not have any significant prior exposure to Adventist values and subculture. I believe that my decision to work towards advancing the Adventist theology of church in a remarkably diverse (and even conflicting) academic context has contributed positively towards my intention to 'steer a middle course between the Scylla of special pleading and the Charybdis of cynicism'.⁶

(IV) THE STRUCTURE OF THIS RESEARCH

The argument of this thesis is developed over seven chapters that fit broadly into three major parts. PART ONE: CHURCH AS REMNANT sets the stage by offering a basic introductory statement of what Seventh-day Adventism is and why it currently needs an ecclesiology (Chapter I). It traces the history of explicitly and implicitly ecclesiological reflections among Adventists from the time of the denomination's inception to the present day (Chapter II), and highlights the inadequacies of its standardized conceptualization of the church as remnant (Chapter III).

⁵ Pearson, *Millennial Dreams*, p. 12.

⁶ Ibid.

PART TWO: CHURCH AS KOINONIA enhances the theoretical framework of Adventist remnant ecclesiology by exploring the possibility of developing an Adventist version of *communio* ecclesiology. It outlines what the various mainstream Christian *communio* ecclesiologies hold in common, in the expectation that this material, with appropriate adjustments, might contribute an ecclesiology that is genuinely Adventist. Having highlighted the theological grounds for adopting the concept of *koinonia* as the prime ecclesiological reference-point, as well as offering a provisional explanation of how a system developed around this notion might work (Chapter IV), the thesis proceeds to clarify the nature and scope of God's involvement in the making of community (Chapter V). This ecclesially constitutive, Spirit-mediated activity of God in Christ is seen as a pivotal factor in determining the shape and orientation of believers' common participation in him.

PART THREE: REMNANT IN KOINONIA offers a brief demonstration of how a new Adventist version of *communio* ecclesiology can assist the global Adventist community to address some of the most challenging practical issues that its members are currently facing as regards church structure, ministry, mission, communal interpretation and reform (Chapter VI). If the proposed theoretical framework can be applied successfully to the resolution – or, at least, to a richer theological interpretation – of some of the most divisive tensions in current Adventism, then the plausibility and usefulness of the framework is confirmed. Chapter VII recapitulates the earlier chapters and suggests some ways forward.

(V) THE LIMITATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH

This study does not and cannot claim to be comprehensive. It can only offer an initial and very tentative reflection on the subject-matter, a critical exposition of existing Adventist ecclesiology, and one initial suggestion regarding a way forward.

Since Adventists are only at the beginning of outlining their ecclesiology, the source material consists of relatively few solid and maturely developed theological explorations. Instead, we have to draw on occasional documents dealing with specific aspects of the concept of church in isolation.⁷ The Adventist material on the subject is so fragmentary and confused that a systematic discussion is (for the moment) impossible. This present study merely makes a beginning. Others will need to develop and supplement this work before a full Adventist ecclesiology becomes possible. For this a collaborative, perhaps communal, academic effort will be needed. If this preliminary study can stimulate such further work, it will have achieved a useful purpose.

⁷ In the Adventist case, these documents (including official statements of faith, theological articles, or sections of books) are usually written by representatives of the officially elected theological body of the Seventh-day Adventist church known as BRICOM (Biblical Research Institute Committee), or by mainstream, influential scholars within the movement who act in their own capacity when writing about a church-related issue. Given the remarkably high level of importance that a wide range of periodical literature has had in reflecting and shaping Adventists' attitudes, policies, values and behaviour, this kind of preliminary ecclesiological inquiry cannot be conducted without a general awareness of the way the concept of church has been portrayed within them. The following periodicals are especially important for shaping Adventist ecclesial thought and praxis: *The Adventist Review* (AR), *Spectrum*, *Review and Herald* (RH), *Andrews University Seminary Studies* (AUSS), *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* (JATS) and *Ministry*. Whether specifically or in passing, these publications contain some important discussions about the ecclesially related matters that are deemed relevant to the argument of the present thesis.

PART I

CHURCH AS REMNANT: SETTING THE STAGE

CHAPTER I

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISM AT A CROSSROADS

This chapter is a basic introductory statement of what Seventh-day Adventism is and why it currently needs an ecclesiology. By offering a brief overview of Adventism's origins and development, I hope to provide a general context for understanding the present problems and impasses that have necessitated a more robust and systematic articulation of the Adventist theology of church.

(I) ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF AN ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL IDENTITY

Modern Seventh-day Adventism is a major surviving branch of the Millerite movement, which flourished during the 1840s in North America.¹ Energized by the Second Great

¹ For a detailed bibliographic overview of the most significant studies that explore the influence of the Millerite movement on the formation of Seventh-day Adventism, see: Jeff Crocombe, "'A Feast of Reason': The Roots of William Miller's Biblical Interpretation and Its Influence on the Seventh-day Adventist Church" (doctoral thesis, The University of Queensland, Australia, 2011), pp. 2-50; Russell J. Staples, 'Adventism', in *The Variety of American Evangelicalism*, ed. by Donald W. Dayton and Robert K. Johnson (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991). A brief exposition of the basic teachings and characteristics of Millerism can be found in: Everett N. Dick, 'The Millerite Movement, 1830-1945', in *Adventism in America: A History*, ed. by Gary Land (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986).

Awakening, Adventism began as a trans-denominational, Protestant movement, nourished by apocalyptic thought, cast in a premillennialist mould, and infused with a passion for retrieving various aspects of Biblical faith that had been lost throughout church history.² Its formative years (1840s–1880s) were marked by major developments.³ However, the discovery and subsequent refinement and consolidation of the movement’s unique doctrinal system were the greatest achievements of this early period.⁴

Following the spiritual lead of Joseph Bates and of James and Ellen White, who were regarded as the principal co-founders of the movement, the small group of Sabbatarian Adventists survived the confusion and disarray that accompanied the failure of William Miller’s predictions about the coming of Christ on October 22, 1844.⁵ After a painful period of soul-searching and intense Bible study, they managed to

² The basic facts are available in Gary Land, *Historical Dictionary of the Seventh-day Adventists* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2005); George R. Knight, *A Brief History of Seventh-day Adventists* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2004); Richard W. Schwarz and Floyd Greenleaf, *Light Bearers: A History of the Seventh-day Adventist Church* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2000); LeRoy Edwin Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1954).

³ These include: (1) the emergence of leading personalities; (2) the broadening of mission awareness; (3) the rapid growth rate and geographical expansion; (4) the consolidation of publishing work; (5) the choosing of a denominational name; (6) the establishing of a more efficient organizational structure; (7) the beginning of the definition and integration of lifestyle principles; and (8) incorporation of health, educational, and other reforms into its mission. For further details, see: Alberto R. Timm, *The Sanctuary and the Three Angels’ Messages: Integrating Factors in the Development of Seventh-day Adventist Doctrines* (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventist Theological Society Publications, 2002), p. 215.

⁴ George R. Knight, *A Search for Identity: The Development of Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2000), pp. 55–87; Everett N. Dick, *William Miller and the Advent Crisis* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1994).

⁵ William Miller, a Baptist layman, began his preaching in the 1830s. By that time the northern-American revivalists’ hopes for ushering in a long-awaited millennium by means of social and political reforms were rapidly fading away. The economic depression of 1837 and the social controversy surrounding the issue of slavery greatly contributed to this. The widespread popularity of the Millerite message seems to have lain in its promise that the perfect world, the utopian age, was still within reach. It will come, but not in the way the majority of Miller’s contemporaries expected. It will be preceded and inaugurated by the premillennial *parousia* of Christ. The belief that Christ’s coming is only a few years away gave special urgency to his preaching. It sounded particularly appealing to those who were disappointed by the failure of the human effort to bring paradise to a

recover their fascination with the Millerite premillennial eschatological conviction, which emphasized the imminent, visible, and literal advent of Christ.⁶

Albeit in a modified form, this conviction subsequently became one of the main impulses of the Seventh-day Adventist theological vision, which is correctly described as apocalyptic in orientation. Early Sabbatarian Adventists soon came to see themselves as the only true successors of pre-Disappointment Millerite Adventism.⁷ Unlike the Spiritualizers,⁸ they continued to believe in a literal Advent; and in contrast to the Albany Adventists,⁹ they remained faithful to Miller's principles of prophetic

suffering Earth. From 1840 onwards, an obscure, regional Millerite movement was transformed into a widespread, national campaign. Richard L. Rogers, 'Millennialism and American Culture: The Adventist Movement', *Comparative Social Research*, 13 (1991), 110; Laura Lee Vance, *Seventh-day Adventism in Crisis: Gender and Sectarian Change in an Emerging Religion* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1999), pp. 13-20. Detailed studies of Millerism are provided by Ronald L. Numbers and Jonathan M. Butler, *The Disappointed: Millerism and Millenarianism in the Nineteenth Century* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987); Robert Kievan Whalen, 'Millenarianism and Millennialism in America, 1790-1880' (doctoral thesis, State University of New York, 1972); David Tallmadge Arthur, '"Come out of Babylon": A Study of Millerite Separatism and Denominationalism, 1840-1865' (doctoral thesis, University of Rochester, 1970); Ernest Robert Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

⁶ Knight, *Identity*, p. 215.

⁷ Various historical surveys affirm the fact that between 1844 and 1848 three major strands of post-Millerite Adventism evolved: the Sabbatarian Adventists, the Albany Adventists and the Spiritualizers. See George R. Knight, *Millennial Fever and the End of the World: A Study of Millerite Adventism* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1993), pp. 245-325.

⁸ This post-Millerite strand held that both the event and the time predicted by the Millerites had been correct. They, however, interpreted the event of Christ's Advent in highly spiritual terms. According to this group, Christ had indeed returned on 22 October 1844; he had come 'into their hearts'. That was the Second Coming. This group instigated considerable fanaticism. With their diversity, individuality, and lack of organization, the Spiritualizers failed to form any permanent religious bodies. They 'eventually gravitated to other "isms", more stable Adventist groups, or were absorbed back into the larger culture'. George R. Knight, *The Fat Lady and the Kingdom: Adventist Mission Confronts the Challenges of Institutionalism and Secularization* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1995), pp. 129-30.

⁹ Adherents of the post-Millerite strand tried to distance themselves from the Spiritualizers and formed their own organization at Albany, New York, in May 1845. They adopted the congregational structure. William Miller, along with Joshua V. Himes and Josiah Litch (Miller's chief lieutenants) were considered to be the main proponents of this version of Adventism, which later gave birth to four different denominations — the Church of God in Oregon, Illinois (1850s), the American Evangelical Conference (1858), the Advent Christians (1860), and the Life and Advent Union (1863). See *Ibid.*, p. 130.

interpretation.¹⁰ After a thorough study of Scripture, using Miller's concordance approach, Sabbatarian Adventists concluded that Miller had been correct about the time he identified in his preaching, but wrong about the event.¹¹

In other words, according to those early Adventists, something of importance had happened on October 22, 1844, as fulfilment of the prophecy of the 2,300 days in Daniel 8.14 that deals with the cleansing of the sanctuary. This important event, however, was not itself the Second Advent.¹² In contrast to Miller, they claimed that the sanctuary referred to in Daniel 8.14 was God's heavenly temple, rather than an earthly one. Thus, following the inner logic of their reinterpretation of Miller's views, they came to the conclusion that on 22 October 1844 Christ had actually entered a new phase of his heavenly mediatory ministry.¹³ In doing so, he had ushered in a new stage in the unfolding cosmic story of redemption.¹⁴

Adventists believed that their discovery of the new movement by Christ had radical implications for all aspects of our Christian existence.¹⁵ The vision of the new movement of Christ became, one might say, the *Punctum Archimedis* of Adventist thinking. It resolved the mystery of the October 1844 disappointment and provided an insight that could ground the rediscovery of other facets of biblical faith, facets which,

¹⁰ Crocombe, 'A Feast of Reason', pp. 173–204; William Miller, 'Rules of Interpretation', *The Midnight Cry*, 17 November 1842, p. 4; 'William Miller's Principles of Biblical Interpretation', <www.biblical-investigations.com/files/Documents/William_Miller_s_Rules_of_Biblical_Interpretation.pdf> [accessed 04/04/2016].

¹¹ Knight, *Identity*, p. 57.

¹² Knight, *A Brief History*, pp. 29–30.

¹³ Knight, *Identity*, pp. 63–64.

¹⁴ Since this belief represents a central, and, arguably, a distinctive aspect of Adventist theological identity, it will be treated in greater detail in the next section of the current chapter.

¹⁵ Knight, *Identity*, pp. 58–66.

according to the Adventist believers, had been overshadowed and gradually lost throughout the history of Christianity.¹⁶

As early as 1848, the group of Sabbatarian Adventists had discovered the basic contours of their unique theological identity.¹⁷ It established itself around five key beliefs, which have been referred to since then by the members of the Adventist movement as the five ‘doctrinal landmarks’¹⁸ or ‘pillars’ of their faith.¹⁹ These involved (1) a continued belief in the premillennial, personal and visible Second Advent of Christ;²⁰ (2) Christ’s two-fold ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, with special emphasis on the second phase that these Adventists were convinced began on 22 October 1844;²¹ (3) the perpetuity of spiritual gifts, including the gift of prophecy, as manifested in the person and writings of Ellen G. White;²² (4) the sanctity and end-time importance of the

¹⁶ Alberto R. Timm, 'Seventh-day Adventist Ecclesiology, 1844-2001: A Brief Historical Overview', in *Pensar La Iglesia Hoy: Hacia Una Eclesiología Adventista*, ed. by Gerard A. Klingbeil, Martin G. Klingbeil, and Miguel Ángel Núñez (Libertador, San Martín, Argentina: Editorial universidad Adventista del Plata, 2002), p. 287. For a brief discussion of how exactly the dilemma of 1844 was resolved, see: Knight, *A Brief History*, pp. 30-34.

¹⁷ The six Sabbath Conferences of 1848 in New England and in New York State contributed greatly to the articulation of the doctrinal pillars of the emerging movement. The principal leaders of those conferences were Joseph Bates (1792–1872), James White (1821–1881) and Hiram Edson (1806–1882). For a brief exposition of the key theological foundations of early Sabbatarian Adventism, see: Hans K. LaRondelle, 'Prophetic Basis of Adventism', *Adventist Review*, June 1 - July 20 (1989) <https://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/sites/default/files/pdf/Prophetic%20Basis%20Adventism_0.pdf> [accessed 07/01/2016]; Timm, 'Adventist Ecclesiology, 1844-2001', p. 288.

¹⁸ LaRondelle, 'Prophetic Basis of Adventism', p. 2.

¹⁹ These five fundamentals are listed in Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: Messenger to the Remnant* (Washington, DC: Board of Trustees of Ellen G. White Publish., 1954), p. 40. Schwarz and Greenleaf, on the other hand, talk about eight fundamentals (adding to the above-presented list the beliefs about the timing of the seven last plagues, the duty to proclaim the three Angels' message from Revelation 14.6–12, and the final, complete extinction of the wicked after the millennium). See, Schwarz and Greenleaf, *Light Bearers*, pp. 66–67.

²⁰ V. Norskov Olsen and Godfrey Trygve Anderson, *The Advent Hope in Scripture and History* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1987), pp. 152–90; Froom, *Our Fathers*, 4, pp. 427–1204.

²¹ This new phase was understood as the first stage of the eschatological 'Day of the Lord' – a pre-Advent 'investigative judgement'. See Frank B. Holbrook, *Doctrine of the Sanctuary: A Historical Survey (1845-1863)* (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1989), pp. 119–57. As mentioned, this aspect of Adventist belief system will be described in more detail in the next section of the current chapter.

²² For a more detailed study of the Adventist acceptance of Ellen G. (Harmon) White's prophetic gift, see: *Ellen Harmon White: American Prophet*, ed. by Terrie Dopp Aamodt, Gary Land, and Ronald L.

seventh-day Sabbath and the law of God;²³ and (5) the conditional immortality of the human soul as well as the final annihilation of the wicked.²⁴ These five doctrines are considered to be ideas, central to Christianity, that had been overlooked or disregarded by the wider Christian church, but which the Adventist group was now restoring.²⁵

During the subsequent period, which encompassed almost two decades of intensive study of Scripture by the founders of Sabbatarian Adventism, the five distinct beliefs ceased to exist as merely isolated units or as a list of discrete doctrines. They were gradually refined and integrated into a reasonably coherent system and became a united whole, within which each aspect related to the others.²⁶ Sabbatarian Adventists saw in this newly constructed theological synthesis their unique contribution to the larger Christian world. It not only set the Sabbatarians apart from other Millerites but also from other Christians in general. In so doing, it provided 'the answer to the question of

Numbers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); George R. Knight, *Anticipating the Advent: A Brief History of Seventh-day Adventists* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1993), p. 28; Delbert W. Baker, *The Unknown Prophet* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1987); L. E. Froom, *Movement of Destiny* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald Publishing Association, 1971), pp. 101-32; Froom, *Our Fathers*, 4, pp. 964-1016.

²³ J. N. Andrews and L. R. Conradi, *History of the Sabbath and the First Day of the Week* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1912), pp. 760-81; Froom, *Our Fathers*, 4, pp. 941-63; Coffman Carl, 'The Practice of Beginning the Sabbath in America', *AUSS*, 3 (1965), 9-17; Raymond Cottrell, 'The Sabbath in the New World', in *The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, ed. by Kenneth A. Strand (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1982); Sigve Tonstad, *The Lost Meaning of the Seventh Day* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2009).

²⁴ D. M. Canright, *History of the Doctrine of the Immortality of the Soul* (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press, 1971); Cosmas Rubencamp, 'Immortality and Seventh-day Adventist Eschatology' (doctoral thesis, The Catholic University of America, 1968); Moses Corliss Crouse, 'A Study of the Doctrine of Conditional Immortality in Nineteenth Century America with Special Reference to the Contributions of Charles F. Hudson and John H. Pettingell' (doctoral thesis, Northwestern University, 1953). This belief is followed by the teaching about the bodily resurrection and reunification of the faithful on the day of the Second Advent.

²⁵ In his study of the key factors that contributed to the development of the early Adventist theological system Alberto Timm divides these five doctrinal landmarks into two major categories. The first one comprises 'eschatological doctrines' derived from the historical fulfilment of specific end-time prophecies in Scripture, while the second category involves the so-called 'historical doctrines' of Scripture. Timm, *The Sanctuary and the Three Angels' Messages*, p. 16.

²⁶ Perhaps one of the most insightful analyses of the doctrinal development of Adventism to date is offered by Rolf Pöhler, *Continuity and Change in Adventist Teaching: A Case Study in Doctrinal Development* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2000).

what was Adventist in Adventism'²⁷ and established a solid theological foundation for Seventh-day Adventists' identity and mission.²⁸

One might question the extravagant claims regarding the originality of Adventists' theological thinking, especially since at least three of the five major, distinctive Sabbatarian Adventist doctrines were inherited from other Christians.²⁹ Recent scholarly studies have confirmed that there is greater continuity between Adventism and other religious movements than has generally been acknowledged.³⁰ For instance, it is now generally recognized that Adventism draws heavily on theological insights that stem from various streams of the Reformation heritage.³¹ These include: (1) the idea of a magisterial Reformation, incorporating the concept of salvation by grace and the notion of the authority of Scripture;³² (2) the radical (Anabaptist) mentality that advocated the separation of State and Church, the baptism of adults by immersion, a radical application of the *sola scriptura* principle, and return to the purity and simplicity of primitive Christianity;³³ (3) a Restorationist spirit that insisted on moving away from

²⁷ Knight, *Identity*, p. 74.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

²⁹ The insistence on the perpetuity of God's law and the Seventh-day Sabbath is, for example, inherited from the Seventh-day Baptists; emphasis on Christ's Second Coming stems from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Second Advent awakening, and the conditional immortality of the soul from George Storrs and the Christian Connection. The basic chronological settings related to the cleansing of the sanctuary in Daniel 8.14 come from the Millerites, who were much indebted to early nineteenth-century English-speaking Protestant views on the subject. Likewise, the Sabbatarian Adventist expositions of the three angels' messages of Revelation 14.6–12 reflected the basic Millerite time-setting for these messages. See Timm, *The Sanctuary and the Three Angels' Messages*, p. 472.

³⁰ Knight, *Identity*, pp. 29–38.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

³² G. R. Evans, *The Language and Logic of the Bible: The Road to Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 128–38; Robert M. Grant, *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible* (New York: Macmillan, 1966); Roland Herbert Bainton, 'The Bible in the Reformation', in *The Cambridge History of the Bible: The West from the Reformation to the Present Day*, ed. by L. Greenslade (1963).

³³ Knight, *Identity*, pp. 30–31; Nathan O. Hatch, 'The Christian Movement and the Demand for a Theology of the People', *JAH*, 67 (1980), 559–60; Richard T. Hughes and Leonard C. Allen, *Illusions of Innocence: Protestant Primitivism in America, 1630–1875* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1988),

all credal and traditional formulations and restoring lost truths before the *Parousia*;³⁴ (4) the Wesleyan emphasis on sanctification;³⁵ and (5) a Puritan vision of Sabbath observance,³⁶ Christ's priestly ministry,³⁷ and whole-life covenantal faithfulness.³⁸ To this list should be added (6) the Millerite premillennial eschatological conviction, which emphasized the imminent, visual and literal advent of Christ.³⁹

One can also see the influence of the Enlightenment heritage. In this connection it is claimed that: (1) Deism gave Adventist reflection a rationalistic/intellectualist spin;⁴⁰ (2) the Baconian method provided tools for an inductive and systematic biblical

p. 85; Nathan O. Hatch, *Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991), pp. 68–81.

³⁴ Pöhler, *Continuity and Change*, pp. 27–30; George Huntston Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), pp. xxiii–xxxi; Woodrow W. Whidden, Jerry Moon, and John W. Reeve, *The Trinity: Understanding God's Love, His Plan of Salvation, and Christian Relationships* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2002), p. 188; Mark A. Noll, 'Rethinking Restorationism: A Review Article', *Reformed Journal*, 39 (1989), 15–21.

³⁵ George R. Knight, *The Pharisee's Guide to Perfect Holiness: A Study of Sin and Salvation* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1992), pp. 163–66; Gunnar Pedersen, 'The Soteriology of Ellen G. White Compared with the Lutheran Formula of Concord: A Study of the Adventist Doctrine of the Final Judgment of the Saints and Their Justification before God' (doctoral thesis, Andrews University, 1995); Woodrow W. Whidden, 'Adventist Theology: The Wesleyan Connection', <<https://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/materials/adventist-heritage/adventist-theology-wesleyan-connection>> [accessed 11/01/2016].

³⁶ Richard L. Greaves, 'The Origins of English Sabbatarian Thought', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 21 (1981); Keith L. Sprunger, 'English and Dutch Sabbatarianism and the Development of Puritan Social Theology (1600–1660)', *Church History*, 50 (1982); Richard Müller, 'Adventisten – Sabbath – Reformation: Geht Das Ruhetagsverständnis Der Adventisten Bis Auf Die Zeit Der Reformation Zurück?' (doctoral dissertation, Gleeup, 1979); Daniel Liechty, *Sabbatarianism in the Sixteenth Century: A Page in the History of the Radical Reformation* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1993).

³⁷ B. W. Ball, *The English Connection: The Puritan Roots of Seventh-day Adventist Belief* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1981).

³⁸ Daniel Neal, *The History of the Puritans: From the Reformation in 1517 to the Revolution in 1688* (Westmead, England: Gregg International, 1970); John Spurr, *English Puritanism* (London: Macmillan, 1998); William Ames, 'The Preface before the English Puritanism', in *Several Treaties of Worship and Ceremonies*, ed. by William Bradshaw (London, 1660); John Owen, *Exercitations Concerning the Name, Original, Nature, Use, and Continuance of a Day of Sacred Rest* (London, England: Nathaniel Ponder, 1671), pp. 58–59.

³⁹ P. G. Damsteege, *Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977), pp. 3–100; George R. Knight, *William Miller and the Rise of Adventism* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2010).

⁴⁰ Steen R. Rasmussen, 'Roots of the Prophetic Hermeneutics of William Miller' (master's thesis, Newbold College, 1983), pp. 16–63; David Arnold Dean, 'Echoes of the Midnight Cry: The Millerite Heritage in the Apologetics of the Advent Christian Denomination, 1860–1960' (doctoral thesis, Westminster Theological Seminary, 1976).

study:⁴¹ (3) the common-sense mindset simplified the approach to Scripture and made it accessible to ‘common’ and uneducated people,⁴² and (4) the spirit of radical democracy of the Jacksonian era encouraged laypeople to take leadership initiatives.⁴³

It seems that the first group of influences primarily determined the content and basic theological outlook of the future Seventh-day Adventist movement, while the second group shaped the way its scholars approached the task of interpreting Scripture and developing a theological system. Thus, while the Reformation legacy encouraged the birth of the first Adventist doctrines (What do they believe?), the enlightenment heritage left a decisive mark on the theological method employed by the church (How do they do theology or read Scripture?).⁴⁴

However, while resemblances to other religious and cultural movements can definitely be attested,⁴⁵ a closer investigation reveals that on rising from the ashes of the Millerite movement in 1844, Sabbatarian Adventism took a distinctive theological route

⁴¹ William Miller, *William Miller's Apology and Defence* (Boston, MA: J. V. Himes, 1845), p. 6; Dick, 'Adventism in America', p. 1; Knight, *Identity*, p. 36; Alden Thompson, *Inspiration: Hard Questions, Honest Answers* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1991), p. 260.

⁴² Knight, *Identity*, p. 36. This is clearly the influence of eighteenth-century Scottish common sense philosophy. See, Samuel Fleischacker, 'The Impact on America: Scottish Philosophy and the American Founding', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Scottish Enlightenment*, ed. by Alexander Broadie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

⁴³ Vance, *Adventism in Crisis*, p. 14; Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln* (New York: Norton, 2009).

⁴⁴ It is against the backdrop of this tension between originality of revelation and continuities in influence that the current thesis can be better understood. It aims to purify the tradition of some Enlightenment reduction — especially in regard to the nature of truth and the way one gains access to it.

⁴⁵ Because Seventh-day Adventism developed in the United States and then spread rapidly to other parts of the world, it was often compared in scholarly literature with other nineteenth-century movements, especially the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Christian Science. Arthur N. Patrick, 'Contextualising Recent Tensions in Seventh-day Adventism: 'A Constant Process of Struggle and Rebirth?', *Journal of Religious History*, 34 (2010), 5. There is an abundance of literature in this field. See, for example, Philip Barlow, 'Book Review Essay: Jan Shipps and the Mainstream of Mormon Studies', *Church History*, 73 (2004), 412–26; Jan Shipps, 'From Peoplehood to Church Membership: Mormonism's Trajectory since World War II', *Church History*, 76 (2007), 241–61; Andrew Holden, *Jehovah's Witnesses: Portrait of a Contemporary Religious Movement* (London and New Work: Routledge, 2002); Rennie B. Schoepflin, *Christian Science on Trial: Religious Healing in America* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003).

– one that separated it from other similar nineteenth-century religious movements and enabled it to find its own unique voice and message. This departure is facilitated in particular by the new focus that Adventists brought to Christ’s entry into the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary. According to them, this event signalled the beginning of a new era in the cosmic story of redemption. This particular approach to the Bible, interpreting its entire content from the hermeneutical perspective of this unique pre-Advent event, acted as one of the main catalysts for the movement’s mission to the world, both Christian and non-Christian.

While the particulars of this hermeneutical approach, its grounds and bearings, will be examined further in the next section of the current chapter, for now it is important to stress that the uniqueness of the early Adventist message and its contribution to general Christian theology should not be reduced to a few isolated doctrines.⁴⁶ Instead, as the founders of Sabbatarian Adventism often acknowledged, their theological uniqueness can be best perceived ‘in the overall setting of their integrated system of doctrines’.⁴⁷ Uriah Smith, for instance, stated in 1858 that

the present truth is harmonious in all its parts; its links are all connected; the bearing of all its portions upon each other are like clock-work; but break out one

⁴⁶ A closer analysis reveals that, in spite of some doctrinal resemblances to other Christian beliefs, the originality of the Sabbatarian Adventist doctrinal system can be seen at the level of the unique components of the system. For instance, one might argue that the uniqueness of the Adventist theological system comprised teachings related to integrating factors such as (1) the understanding of the cleansing of the sanctuary (Dan. 8.14) as a pre-advent investigative judgement of the saints in the heavenly sanctuary, (2) the equation of ‘the hour of his judgement’ (Rev. 14.7) with the post-1844 pre-advent cleansing of the sanctuary, and (3) the view that the mission of the third angel (Rev. 14.9–12) would be fulfilled by Sabbatarian Adventism. Included in this list were also the Sabbatarian Adventists’ distinctive doctrines of (1) Christ’s two-phase heavenly ministry and (2) the modern manifestation of the gift of prophecy in the person and writings of Ellen G. White. See Timm, *The Sanctuary and the Three Angels’ Messages*, pp. 472–73.

⁴⁷ Alberto R. Timm, ‘The Uniqueness of the Seventh-day Adventist Message’, *Workshop of the Ellen G. White Estate in Binfield, England* (Newbold College of Higher Education: Roy Graham Library, 1995), p. 2.

cog, and the work is stopped; break one link, and the chain is broken; let down one stitch and we may unravel the whole.⁴⁸

Ellen White also expressed this kind of profound sensitivity to a harmonious conceptual whole, to which various distinctive beliefs of Adventism actively contributed. For instance, in 1894 she wrote:

The truth for this time is broad in its outlines, far reaching, embracing many doctrines; but these doctrines are not detached items, which mean little; they are united by golden threads, forming a complete whole, with Christ as the living centre.⁴⁹

Alberto Timm, a well-known Adventist theologian and an expert in the history of Adventist doctrinal development, further articulates connections that Ellen White simply left implicit in this paragraph. Supported by his doctoral research on the major integrating factors in the Adventist doctrinal system, Timm argues that Ellen White is right when claiming that the uniqueness of the Seventh-day Adventist message is found in the overall system formed, not only by (1) all doctrinal components of that message, but also by (2) the interconnections between those components and (3) a 'living centre' – Christ. In other words, Timm concludes, 'the whole of the Seventh-day Adventist message is far broader and richer than the simple sum of its parts.'⁵⁰

While the doctrinal components and the Christ-centred framework are generally treated as given, several proposals have been made by contemporary Adventist authors as to just how the theological connections are to be made.⁵¹ Alberto Timm has convincingly argued the case for seeing the sanctuary of Daniel 8.14 and the three

⁴⁸ Uriah Smith, 'Are the Seven Last Plagues in the Future', *RH*, 7 January 1858, p. 72.

⁴⁹ Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1986), p. 87.

⁵⁰ Timm, 'The Uniqueness of the Seventh-day Adventist Message', p. 3.

⁵¹ For a list of some of the dominant integrative proposals within Adventism, see: Rolf J. Pöhler, 'Does Adventist Theology Have, or Need, a Unifying Center?', in *Christ, Salvation, and the Eschaton*, ed. by

angels' messages of Revelation 14.6–12 as key prophetic elements that integrated the major doctrinal components of the early Seventh-day Adventist belief system.⁵² While the sanctuary typology unified Adventist doctrinal components 'theological-historically', the three angels' messages combined them 'historical-theologically'.⁵³ In other words, while the sanctuary vision proved to be useful in providing the basic conceptual framework for situating and linking various doctrinal insights of early Sabbatarian Adventism, the appropriation of the three angels' message from Revelation 14 helped the movement's adherents to see how this framework relates to the unfolding divine initiative in history, especially as it applied to the early Adventists' own time and mission.

For this reason, Timm expands Ellen White's statement (quoted above) by adding that in the period when a distinct Adventist theological system was being formed, the two focal points (the sanctuary and the messages of the three angels)⁵⁴ became the 'linkages' between the doctrinal pillars of the new church (the Sabbath, the Second Coming, Christ's twofold ministry, the state of the dead, and spiritual gifts) and Christ (the 'living centre'), and were placed within an end-time framework.⁵⁵ The system formed in this way became the Adventists' message, and represented the catalyst for their ever-expanding mission of preparing the world for the soon coming of Christ.⁵⁶

Daniel Heinz, J. Moskala, and Peter M. van Bemmelen (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2009), pp. 205–20.

⁵² While the sanctuary motif is explained in greater detail in the next section of Chapter I, a brief presentation of Adventist understanding of the content of the three angels' messages is offered in Chapter II.

⁵³ Timm, *The Sanctuary and the Three Angels' Messages: Integrating Factors in the Development of Seventh-day Adventist Doctrines*, pp. 473–76.

⁵⁴ George Knight shares Timm's opinion that these two elements of the Adventist belief system represent the focal points around which the entire corpus of Adventist convictions revolves. See: Knight, *Identity*, pp. 74–75.

⁵⁵ Timm, 'The Uniqueness of the Seventh-day Adventist Message', p. 3.

⁵⁶ Knight, *Identity*, pp. 86, 74–75.

A dream recounted by William Miller, reminiscent of the biblical theme of the wheat and the tares, provides a helpful symbolic expression of the Adventist theological project. According to Miller's description of the dream that he had in December 1847, God gave him a casket filled with precious stones and coins, arranged in perfect order. Then people went into a room scattering the pieces, replacing them with counterfeit stones and rubbish, and destroying the casket. As the dream developed, God came back, separated the rubbish from the precious stones and metal, and put them in perfect order into another casket, much more beautiful than the first one. In Miller's interpretation, the 'casket' was the whole corpus of God's truth; the 'precious stones and coins' were individual doctrines; the 'scattering' was the process of erosion of that truth during history; the final cleansing of the stones was the restoration of old truths and the discovery of them in the right place within the proper doctrinal system.⁵⁷

In the light of this vivid imagery, one can begin to appreciate the profound passion that early Sabbatarian Adventists felt towards their prime theological task, which mainly consisted of restoring the fullness of the long-forgotten scriptural truth — 'the truth [that] has come to [them] as a system'.⁵⁸ That said, it seems necessary to complement this general description of Adventism's origins and doctrinal development with a more detailed exploration of the most fundamental theological insight of Adventism — one that distinguishes Adventism from all other forms of Christianity, and that, according to the words of Ellen White, 'opened to view a complete system of

⁵⁷ Sylvester Bliss, *Memoirs of William Miller: Generally Known as a Lecturer on the Prophecies, and the Second Coming of Christ* (Boston, MA: J. V. Himes, 1853), pp. 361–64. This dream was later adopted by the main figures among Adventist pioneers as an explanation of their experience and restoration-aimed theological project. See Joseph Bates, *A Vindication of the Seventh-day Sabbath, and the Commandments of God: With a Further History of God's Peculiar People from 1847 to 1848* (New Bedford, MA: Benjamin Lindsey, 1848), pp. 189–94; James White, 'Brother Miller's Dream', *The Present Truth*, May 1850.

⁵⁸ S. N. Haskell, 'The Sanctuary', *RH*, 27 October 1904, p. 8.

truth, connected and harmonious, showing that God's hand had directed the great Advent movement and revealing present duty as it brought to light the position and work of His people'.⁵⁹

(II) THE ADVENTIST QUEST FOR TRUTH: CHRIST IN THE SANCTUARY AS THE MAIN HERMENEUTICAL HORIZON

From its beginnings Adventism depended on a new sense of what Christian truth was, and one can understand Adventist theology and identity only in the light of Adventists' continual quest for truth.⁶⁰ However, it must be pointed out that the particular angle from which the members of this movement approach the truth has traditionally been predominantly logocentric.⁶¹ This logocentricity manifests itself in two sets of convictions, one about Christ as the embodied Word of God, the other about Scripture as the written Word of God.⁶² Like other Christians, Adventists view these two aspects of *logos* as intertwined: Scripture in its entirety points to Christ, and Christ gives

⁵⁹ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1888), p. 423.

⁶⁰ Ministerial Association of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe: A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines* (Washington, DC: Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1988), p. vii.

⁶¹ See, for example, the way in which some prominent Adventist scholars today explain the principle of *sola-tota-prima scriptura*: R. Norman Gulley, *Systematic Theology: Prologomena* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2003); Fernando L. Canale, *Basic Elements of Christian Theology: Scripture Replacing Tradition* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Lithotech, 2005). These two authors represent the majority Adventist position on the ways in which the written and embodied Word of God should function in the process of divine self-revelation.

⁶² Wiklander offers a concise overview of what a traditional Adventist concept of truth consists of and what kind of an attitude the truth-seeking person should have towards it. This article expresses some of the main tenets of Adventist logocentric understanding of truth. Bertil Wiklander, 'The Truth as It Is in Jesus', *Ministry*, (1996) <<https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/1996/02/the-truth-as-it-is-in-jesus>> [accessed 12/01/2016]. Wiklander's article elaborates on previous statements made by one of the General Conference Committees: Ministerial Association, *Adventists Believe*, p. vii.

meaning to Scripture.⁶³ What distinguishes Adventists is the specific emphasis they place on the revelation of the sanctuary in this interplay.⁶⁴

LIGHT IN THE SHADOWS

Fernando Canale, a well-known Argentinian Adventist theologian who has for many years taught systematic theology at Andrews University in Michigan, explains that by combining their historicist system of interpretation with their conviction about the typological nature of the Old Testament Jewish cultic system (the structure of the temple, its priestly staff, sacrifices, activities, and so on) early Adventists discovered the ultimate heuristic vision that undergirded all their subsequent theological endeavours.⁶⁵

They concluded that the sanctuary doctrine can function as the most comprehensive motif in Scripture and, as such, should play a decisive role in guiding biblical interpretation and the formation of theological thought.⁶⁶ This macro-hermeneutical perspective provided the Adventist pioneers with the lenses through which to view the meaning and the structure of an unfolding biblical narrative. According to Canale, the adoption of this system of interpretation was precisely the

⁶³ Allison is an example among many other non-Adventist, evangelical Christians who hold the same logocentric understanding of truth. See, his discussion about how exactly the embodied and the written Word of God facilitate the church's truth-seeking enterprise. See, Gregg R. Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers: The Doctrine of the Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), pp. 110–17.

⁶⁴ In a series of articles Fernando Canale explains the role of the sanctuary as the main heuristic vision of Adventist hermeneutics. According to Canale, the vision of Christ in the sanctuary (along with the system of truths emerging from it) represents the most fundamental interpretative perspective that distinguishes Adventism from other Christian traditions. Fernando L. Canale, 'From Vision to System: Finishing the Task of Adventist Theology – Part 1: Historical Review', *JATS*, 15 (2004); Fernando L. Canale, 'From Vision to System: Finishing the Task of Adventist Biblical and Systematic Theologies – Part 2', *JATS*, 16 (2005); Fernando L. Canale, 'From Vision to System: Finishing the Task of Adventist Theology – Part 3: Sanctuary and Hermeneutics', *JATS*, 17 (2006).

⁶⁵ In this regard, Canale seems to be in a close agreement with Ellen White's statement: White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 423; Fernando L. Canale, 'Philosophical Foundations and the Biblical Sanctuary', *AUSS*, 36 (1998).

⁶⁶ Canale, 'From Vision to System: Part 1', pp. 5–39.

point at which Adventist theology diverged from the other Protestant and traditional Christian hermeneutical approaches. As the overarching and pervasive interpretative paradigm in Adventist theology in general, the sanctuary doctrine calls for special attention if one aspires to address ecclesiological issues from and within the Adventist perspective.⁶⁷

In interpreting the sanctuary as a typological tool through which God revealed to His people the nature and the order of major salvific actions by his Son in human history – a history that has been divided, accordingly, into various successive stages – Adventists agree with the commonly accepted Christian interpretation that the entire Jewish ceremonial system points to the past, present and future aspects of the salvific work of the promised Messiah.⁶⁸ However, they would claim that the mainstream Christian traditions have not been consistent in tracing the entire typological prefiguration inherent in the annual Jewish feasts and temple services.⁶⁹

In general, Christ's death and resurrection, and his inauguration as a cosmic High Priest and King during the time of Pentecost, are interpreted by Christians as fulfilment of the four spring festivals: Passover, Unleavened Bread, First Fruits, and the

⁶⁷ Adventist literature that deals with the issue of sanctuary from a biblical, historical or systematic perspective is abundant. See an extended list of the most important Adventist publications repeatedly quoted by contemporary Adventist scholars: Richard M. Davidson, 'Sanctuary Doctrine', <<https://www.andrews.edu/sem/inministry/uploads/2015coursesyllabi/2015thst695swurdavidson.pdf>> [accessed 12/01/2016].

⁶⁸ Frank B. Holbrook, *The Atoning Priesthood of Jesus Christ* (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventist Theological Society Publications, 1996); Roy Adams, *The Sanctuary Doctrine: Understanding the Heart of Adventist Theology* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1993); Ellen G. White, *Christ in His Sanctuary* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1969).

⁶⁹ For a basic overview of the traditional Adventist understanding of the sanctuary-related types, see: Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, 'Israelite Festivals and the Christian Church', *Biblical Research Institute Release*, (2005) <<https://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/sites/default/files/pdf/Release%203.pdf>> [accessed 12/01/2016]; Richard M. Davidson, 'A Study of Hermeneutical *Typos* Structures' (doctoral thesis, Andrews University Press, 1981).

Feast of Weeks.⁷⁰ Adventist scholars argue that similar typical meaning should be applied also to the autumn festivals. They point to Bible texts that show that Christ's work was not finished at his accession to the heavenly throne. There is still more to come, more than just the Second Advent of Christ.⁷¹

Hence, according to Adventists, the three remaining Jewish autumn festivals, known as the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*), and the Feast of Tabernacles (*Sukkoth*) symbolize various phases of Christ's post-ascension activity. The first autumn feast is initiated with a blast of trumpets and has the goal of reminding people that God is the Creator and Judge of the world.⁷² The trumpets summoned ancient Israel to prepare for the coming of the Day of Judgement, *Yom Kippur*. This type, according to Adventists, was fulfilled in the great revivals that reached their climax in the Millerite proclamations during the pre-1844 period.⁷³

Adventists believe that the specific timing of the great Day of Atonement, or *Yom Kippur*, is announced in Daniel 8.14.⁷⁴ Every year, ten days after the Jewish New Year (*Rosh Hashanah*), the High Priest enters the Most Holy place of the sanctuary in order to

⁷⁰ Samuele Bacchiocchi, *God's Festivals in Scripture and History: The Spring Festivals (Part 1)* (Berrien Springs, MI: Biblical Perspectives, 2001); Rodríguez, 'Israelite Festivals', pp. 1-6.

⁷¹ Describing the traditional Adventist interpretation, Bacchiocchi argues: 'The founders of the Adventist church understood that the Spring Festivals were types which were fulfilled in connection with the first Advent of Christ, and the that Fall Festivals are also types that find their fulfilment in the events related to the Second Advent.' Samuele Bacchiocchi, *God's Festivals in Scripture and History: The Fall Festivals (Part 2)* (Berrien Springs, MI: Biblical Perspectives, 2001), p. 16. 'In like manner', Ellen G. White wrote, 'the types which relate to the second advent [Fall Feasts] must be fulfilled at the time pointed out in the symbolic service'. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 339. It should be noted, however, that Bacchiocchi, who is himself an Adventist, differs in his interpretation from the majority view in Adventism. He tends towards a more literalist interpretation that argues that the present-day church, following the lead of God's people in Old Testament times, should endeavour to keep the feasts (in a modified form) as part of believers' present walk with God.

⁷² Richard M. Davidson, 'Sanctuary Typology', in *Symposium on Revelation*, ed. by Frank B. Holbrook (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1992).

⁷³ Rodríguez, 'Israelite Festivals', pp. 4-8.

⁷⁴ Arnold V. Wallenkampf, *The Sanctuary and the Atonement: Biblical, Historical, and Theological Studies* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1981); Ministerial Association, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, pp. 312-31.

cleanse the entire sanctuary building from the blood (sin) that has been accumulated during the daily sacrifices throughout the year. Although this day, typifying the day of the Last Judgement, is approached by Jews with a humble and prayerful heart and is preceded by repenting and fasting, it culminates in an atmosphere of utmost joy and freedom. On that occasion, God cleanses his covenant people, removes all the barriers that have stood between them, and accepts them back into the reality of his holy presence and its transformative influence.⁷⁵

The results of the great eschatological judgement of the Day of Atonement are envisioned during the last autumn feast, the Feast of Tabernacles. This annual holy season represents the end of the harvest of salvation, when all the nations of the world will come to worship God, bringing their praises for everything that he has done.⁷⁶

THE DAY OF ATONEMENT AND THE ESCHATOLOGICAL JUDGEMENT

Adventists summarize the essence of the *Yom Kippur* in the Hebrew term *nišdaq*, and see it as a cosmic act of God that transpired in 1844 and is going to reach its climax in Christ's Second Coming.⁷⁷ This association is based on Daniel 8.14, which claims that 'Unto 2300 evening-mornings, then shall the sanctuary be *nišdaq*'.⁷⁸ A brief survey of the Old Testament use of the Hebrew word *nišdaq* reveals a wide range of different

⁷⁵ Alberto R. Treiyer, 'The Day of Atonement as Related to the Contamination and Purification of the Sanctuary', in *The Seventy Weeks, Leviticus, and the Nature of Prophecy*, ed. by Frank B. Holbrook (1986), pp. 198-258.

⁷⁶ Rodríguez, 'Israelite Festivals', pp. 7-8.

⁷⁷ Alberto R. Treiyer, *The Day of Atonement and the Heavenly Sanctuary: From the Pentateuch to Revelation* (Siloam Springs, AR: Creation Enterprises International, 1992); Ministerial Association of Seventh-day Adventists, 'Seventh-day Adventists Believe: A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines', (1888) <<http://www.sdanet.org/atissue/books/27/27-23.htm>> [accessed 13/01/2016].

⁷⁸ For a standard Adventist interpretation, see: Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, 'The Sanctuary and Its Cleansing', *Adventist Review*, September 1994.

meanings. Along with the basic notion of being ‘made right/just’, the verb's extended meanings can all be clustered around three basic ideas – to restore, to cleanse and to vindicate. These three layers of meaning can apply to relational, cultic and legal contexts.⁷⁹

Understood relationally, *nišdaq* conveys the notion of being renewed or ‘put right’ or ‘restored to the rightful place/relationship’. It involves an act of bringing something into ‘the conformity to a norm’ or fulfilling the demands/requirements set within a covenant relationship between God and man.⁸⁰ In its cultic sense, *nišdaq* refers to the divine act of purifying or cleansing, especially as seen during the Day of Atonement. By the liberating act of *nišdaq*, God finally eradicates people’s past and present sins (*hatta’t*), transgressions (*peša*), and iniquities (*awôn*).⁸¹ In the legal sense, the root of the verb *nišdaq* signifies the forensic act of justification, victory and vindication. God, the heavenly judge, defends both his covenant people and himself from the false accusations of the enemy (Satan and his angels), and brings back justice and peace to his kingdom. The fallen people who have been restored to a right relationship with God and cleansed from their guilt are declared righteous before the whole universe and forever vindicated.⁸²

⁷⁹ Richard M. Davidson, 'The Meaning of *Nišdaq* in Daniel 8.14', *ATS*, 7 (1996), 107–19. According to Davidson's study, no single English word can capture the breadth of meaning implied by the original Hebrew term *nišdaq*. The three dimensions and theological overtones of this concept closely overlap and ‘embrace each other in meaning’. Although there is a distinction between them, they should not be entirely separated in any attempt to describe the divine act in human history by which he restores, cleanses and vindicates his people. *Ibid.*, pp. 117–18.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

⁸¹ Niels-Erik Andreasen, 'Translation of *Nišdaq/Katharisthesetai* in Daniel 8:14', in *Symposium on Daniel*, ed. by Frank B. Holbrook (1986).

⁸² Davidson, 'Nišdaq', pp. 112–14.

This understanding of *Yom Kippur* led Adventists to develop their unique teaching concerning a three-fold eschatological judgement.⁸³ Based on their reading of the books of Daniel and Revelation, Adventists have concluded that the Bible reveals that three major phases make up the final eschatological judgement.⁸⁴ The first phase in this sequence is the pre-Advent investigative judgement, which commenced in 1844;⁸⁵ the second is subsequent to the return of Jesus Christ in the clouds of heaven and may be referred to as the post-Advent millennial judgement (or millennial judgement);⁸⁶ and the last and final phase is the postmillennial executive judgement.⁸⁷

Such a close look at the Adventist doctrine of the eschatological judgement brings us back to the centrality of the figure and function of Christ, who is the main actor in

⁸³ William H. Shea, *Selected Studies on Prophetic Interpretation* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1982); Marvin Moore, *The Case for the Investigative Judgment: Its Biblical Foundations* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2010).

⁸⁴ Gerhard F. Hasel, 'Divine Judgment', in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. by Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2000), pp. 833–48.

⁸⁵ The first part of the universal Last Judgement has God the Father as judge ('the ancient of days' from Dan 9.13,22) and Christ as defence advocate (the 'son of man' from Dan 7.13). It takes place in the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary and includes the totality of God's professed people, both true and false believers. This is so because the judgement must 'begin with the household of God' (I Pet. 4.17), Adventists argue. The main purpose of investigative judgement is to (1) vindicate God's true believers before the intelligences of the universe, (2) defend them from the satanic forces on earth, (3) decide who will inherit the future kingdom, and (3) vindicate God, who has been accused by Satan and his followers of being a capricious, non-caring, distant and judgemental ruler of the universe. *Ibid.*, pp. 833–46; Shea, *Selected Studies on Prophetic Interpretation*, 1, pp. 1–29; Gerhard Pfandl, 'The Pre-Advent Judgment: Fact or Fiction', Biblical Research Institute, <<https://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/sites/default/files/pdf/Pre-Adv%202.pdf>> [accessed 13/01/2016].

⁸⁶ In the second, millennial phase of the Last Judgement, both Christ and the saints are the judges. The millennial judgement goes beyond human beings. It also judges the fallen angels, who were thrown to earth with Satan. The purpose of this judgement is to: (1) determine the punishment deserved, (2) explain why the names of the lost are not in 'the book of life', and again, (3) to vindicate God's character and his righteous ways. All the saints will have an opportunity to answer for themselves the question of why the lost are indeed lost. See, Hasel, 'Divine Judgment', pp. 846–47.

⁸⁷ The postmillennial executive judgement is the final phase of the universal divine judgement. It deals with the final result of sin and separation from God. Its primary purpose is to eradicate sin, death and sinners from the universe; this also includes the originator of sin, Satan, who will carry the responsibility for all his wrongdoings. After the problem of evil has been undone, God will

each of the stages of the cosmic drama described in Scripture. The entire story revolves around his mission to restore, cleanse and vindicate his people and bring back the entire universe to its initial undefiled condition.⁸⁸

It is immensely important to understand how tightly Adventist theology ties together Christ, the sanctuary and Scripture in its search for truth. While Christ's person and actions are made accessible to today's community of believers through the written Word – and specifically, in this context, its sanctuary-based account of Christ's actions as sacrifice as well as High Priest – it is also true that the resulting enhanced understanding of Christ and his mission shapes, in turn, the hermeneutic of this very written Word. This interplay is the framework in which Adventists not only discover the 'present truth' but also their very identity and mission. That said, it becomes important to explore in more detail the relationship between the sanctuary doctrine and hermeneutics.

ADVENTIST REINTERPRETATION OF THE BIBLICAL STORYLINE

Viewing the Bible as the ultimate gateway to understanding the story of Christ, scholars within the Adventist movement have referred to the Bible and the Bible only as 'the final norm of truth, the foundational and absolute source of authority, the ultimate court of appeal, in all areas of doctrine and practice'.⁸⁹ Even when discussing differences

create 'new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells'. This will be the eternal abode of all the redeemed. Ibid., pp. 847–48.

⁸⁸ Frank B. Holbrook, 'Light in the Shadows: An Overview of the Doctrine of the Sanctuary', (1984) <<https://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/sites/default/files/pdf/lightintheshadows.pdf>> [accessed 13/01/2016]; Morris Venden, *Never without an Intercessor: The Good News About the Judgment* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1996).

⁸⁹ Richard M. Davidson, 'The Role of the Church in the Interpretation of Scripture', in *Message, Mission and Unity of the Church*, ed. by Ángel Manuel Rodríguez (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2013), p. 323. The pivotal role of the Bible for Adventist faith and praxis is

of opinion in theology, the majority of Adventists declare themselves 'a people of the Book' and believe that in the Bible 'God has spoken to humanity in terms intelligible to all, yet transmitted within our language and experience'.⁹⁰

As the Bible contains the witness of the Spirit to the supreme Revelation of God – the incarnate Word – it is not merely a testimony of revelation, but revelation itself. Therein lies its value and authority, according to Adventists. Dederen explains that, by accepting the authority of the Scripture, Adventists are

bowing not before the authority of the book, but before Christ's authority, for the only authoritative Christ we know is the Christ of the apostles. While they are 'the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms,' the Scriptures are only a means to an end, that of bringing each believer under the supreme Lordship of Christ.⁹¹

In their attempt to be faithful to the revelation of God in Scripture, Adventists, like all other post-Apostolic generations of Christ's followers, have had to wrestle with the issue of correct interpretation. Gradually, they have realized that it is not enough to elevate the Bible as their final authority in matters of faith and life, and to expect that by doing that the meaning of its content will be immediately clear to everyone. Faithfulness to the written revelation of God, they have learned, requires one to engage in a long and often rather painful process of gradual discernment, a process that needs to happen in the context of community. This, in turn, necessitates the establishment of the procedures of interpretation that are not (or not straightforwardly) present in the text.

evidenced by the fact that a statement on the Bible heads the official statement of the church's fundamental beliefs. After the preamble, which affirms 'the Bible as their only creed', the first article of Adventist faith deals with the nature and role of the Bible in divine Self-communication. See: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, '28 Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church', (2015) <<https://www.adventist.org/fileadmin/adventist.org/files/articles/official-statements/28Beliefs-Web.pdf>> [accessed 13/01/2016].

⁹⁰ *A Symposium on Biblical Hermeneutics*, ed. by M. Gordon Hyde (Washington, DC: The Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1974), p. iv.

In this regard, the sanctuary doctrine has had immense effects on determining the way Adventists read the Bible. This is especially true regarding its division of God's plan of salvation into specific stages, as illustrated by its cultic typology. Adventists would, therefore, concur with N. T. Wright's observation that Scripture 'can best be described as *story*'⁹² which 'has a shape and a goal that must be observed and to which appropriate response must be made'.⁹³ This understanding shapes both their hermeneutics and their ecclesiology.

Based on their interpretation of the sanctuary, Adventists claim that the overarching story of the Bible unfolds in seven successive stages or 'acts': (1) Creation; (2) the Fall; (3) the Promise and the People (Israel); (4) the Fulfilment in Jesus; (5) the Fulfilment and the People (church); (6) the Day of the Lord; and (7) the New Creation. Each of these stages is discernible because of major transitional events, or divine salvific actions, which advance the grand narrative of the Bible from Creation to New Creation. Thus, the entire Scripture can be read in the light of such division.⁹⁴ The New Testament witness forms the beginning of the fifth stage. Although describing only

⁹¹ Raoul Dederen, 'The Church: Authority and Unity', *Ministry*, (1995) <https://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/sites/default/files/pdf/churchauthority_0.pdf> [accessed 13/01/2016] (p. 3).

⁹² N. T. Wright, *Scripture and the Authority of God* (London: SPCK, 2005), p. 19.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20; N. T. Wright, 'How Can the Bible Be Authoritative? (the Laing Lecture for 1989)', *Vox Evangelica*, 21 (1991).

⁹⁴ Among Adventist scholars, Jan Barna and Gunnar Pedersen have made great efforts to develop this seven-fold interpretative scheme for the biblical narrative. See Jan Barna, 'The Grand Story', *Ministry*, March 2012; Gunnar Pedersen, 'The Bible as "Story": A Methodological Opportunity', in *Exploring the Frontiers of Faith*, ed. by Børge Schantz and Reinder Bruinsma (Lueneburg, Germany: Advent-Verlag, 2009); Gunnar Pedersen and Jan Barna, 'Towards a Biblical Theology Method: A Seven-Stage Theistic Narrative Methodology', *Tyndale Fellowship Annual Conference in Cambridge, England*, (2011) <http://www.academia.edu/11462847/Towards_a_Biblical_Theology_Method_A_7stage_Theistic_Narrative_Methodology> [accessed 13/01/2016]. In their scheme, 1844 represents the beginning of the Day of the Lord (God's universal eschatological judgement), which itself is further divided into three sub-stages: pre-Advent judgement, millennial judgement, and post-millennial judgement.

the first 'scene' in the fifth 'act', it also provides some hints as to how the story is supposed to end.⁹⁵

While there are many unresolved hermeneutical issues that remain to be addressed by the current and future generations of Adventists (see Chapter VI), the members of this movement have remained firm over years in their conviction that Bible should be allowed to play a central role in both identifying the stage at which the cosmic story is currently stationed (metaphysics) and in determining what kind of response is appropriate for and expected of the people of God (ecclesiology). Even today, the majority of the members of this movement continue to live under the assumption that by introducing Old and New Testament sanctuary typology as part of his Self-revelation, God has provided some basic guidelines on how the community of his followers should live in reaction to what Christ is doing at any given stage of the ongoing cosmic story of redemption.

THE ROLE OF GOD'S PEOPLE IN THE SIXTH STAGE OF THE COSMIC STORY OF REDEMPTION

There is a prevailing consensus among Adventists that the role of God's people is to participate in Christ's historically unfolding mission by responding with their entire lives in an appropriate way to each stage of his cosmic ministry. Adventists believe that their movement was brought to existence in fulfilment of the prophecy that coincides with the beginning of the first stage of the threefold sixth 'act' – the Day of Atonement that is soon to reach its culmination in the Second Advent of Christ.⁹⁶ They see

⁹⁵ Wright, 'How Can the Bible Be Authoritative?', p. 19.

⁹⁶ Pedersen and Barna, 'Towards a Biblical Theology Method', p. 16.

themselves as personifying or heralding the Three Angels' Message of Revelation 14, which is to be proclaimed immediately prior to Christ's second coming (see Chapter II). While living in the pre-Advent phase of the sixth stage of the biblical storyline, their role is to witness to the new, multifaceted, restorative work (*nişdaq*) of Christ that commenced in the heavenly realm and is soon to be extended to transform the inhabitants of the earth and the earth itself. The effects of the initiated restoration will be fully realized only in the event of the *parousia*. However, the results of Christ's restorative work can still be traced in the life of his pilgrim people, who form the fellowship of Jesus Christ. The effects of Christ's cosmic work can be seen in three major areas of the church's life.

The first area includes the renewal of the right disposition in believers' hearts (*orthopathy*). This is expressed in an attitude of complete openness and submission to continual divine revelations and guidance.⁹⁷ This kind of reform is often referred to in Adventist circles as an attitude of worship and faithfulness to the 'present truth' of God, and is linked to the First Angel's message in Revelation 14.6.

Secondly, this openness enables the church to receive new light, reflected in the church's belief (*orthodoxy*). Here the church embarks on a journey of restoration of truth, which has been 'cast down to the ground' (Daniel 8.12). The church is called to distinguish divine truth from human accretions and distortions that have been accumulated over the centuries. The truth, according to Adventists, is to be restored and preached to the people of all nations, tribes and languages one more time before the kingdom of God eventually comes into being. Since the church has been in a

⁹⁷ Adventists would claim that the way believers respond to the truth of divine revelation that is made known to them reveals something about their inner dispositions and attitudes towards God himself.

'Babylonian captivity' for many years, the restoration of the right faith represents, for Adventists, a gradual process of re-discovery that does not happen overnight but involves many years of diligent private and corporate Bible study (the defining characteristic of a logocentric community). As a result of this process, Adventists believe that they have already come to a fuller understanding of the nature of Sabbath rest, the Second Coming, Christ's twofold ministry, the state of the dead, spiritual gifts, the sanctuary, the Three Angels' Message and some other biblical teachings. However, the journey of rediscovery of the forgotten truths of the Bible is to be continued until the day of *parousia*.⁹⁸ Therefore, this passion for understanding and embodying the truth of divine revelation represents one of the most prominent factors that shape Adventist communal life.

Finally, following doctrinal reform comes the corresponding transformation of believers' lives (*orthopraxy*). In this regard, Adventists have insisted, not only on keeping the commandments of God (the Decalogue, with particular attention to the fourth commandment) and living in obedience to known truth, but also on valuing the maintenance of a healthy lifestyle (that is, the 'Health Message').⁹⁹ This involves, among other things, adherence to the principles of moderation in everything, simplicity (avoiding excessive jewellery and overly expensive clothes, for instance), abstinence from harmful substances (alcohol, narcotics and the likes), and a reformed diet.¹⁰⁰ It is

⁹⁸ Fernando Canale, 'On Being the Remnant', *JATS*, 41 (2013).

⁹⁹ John Skrzypaszek, 'The Heart of the Seventh-day Adventist Health Message', *Ministry*, (2014) <<https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/2014/12/the-heart-of-the-Seventh-day-adventist-health-message>> [accessed 13/01/2016]; George W. Reid, 'Health and Healing', in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. by Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2000).

¹⁰⁰ There is a strong movement towards various forms of vegetarianism within Adventism. This encourages going back, as far as possible, to the prelapsarian diet. See the official statement: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 'Living a Healthful Life', <<https://www.adventist.org/en/vitality/health/>> [accessed 13/01/2016].

emphasized that the restoration of the right lifestyle includes, not only morality on the part of human beings, but also their physical, social, emotional and spiritual lives. By this, Adventists are trying to be faithful to their holistic view of human nature, in which the various aspects of a human being cannot be treated in isolation from each other, but instead function as inseparable parts of one interwoven whole.¹⁰¹

At the end of the current stage of the Day of the Lord, Adventist claim, God will advance the work of restoration (again, *nişdaq*) further than in any other period of human history. This will be done through the special outpouring of his Spirit, which is often referred to in Adventism as 'the latter rain'.¹⁰² This final outpouring of the Spirit, which comes as a result of Christ's new cosmic mediatorial work, has the purpose of providing a faithful global witness to the manifold wisdom of God who is about to put things right with the coming of his Son.¹⁰³ The church, thus, becomes instrumental in sharing the message of the 'present truth' to the world.

In the light of what has been said so far, it can be argued that it is impossible to comprehend or discuss the issue of Adventist self-understanding and distinctive theology without addressing the core features constituting the Adventist hermeneutical horizon: its Christ-centred theological outlook, sanctuary-based interpretative scheme, and the foundational role of Scripture in giving access to those features and explaining them. It is within this general framework that Adventists operate when discovering and organizing their communal life in God while pursuing a fuller understanding of the truth.

¹⁰¹ Jonathan Oey Kuntaraf and Kathleen Liwidjaja-Kuntaraf, 'Emphasizing the Wholeness of Man', *JATS*, 19 (2008) <<http://www.atsjats.org/publication/view/340>> [accessed 13/01/2016].

¹⁰² See, for instance, the promise from the Book of Joel 2.28, 29.

¹⁰³ Ángel Manuel Rodríguez 'Images of the Holy Spirit (Latter Rain)', <<https://adventistbiblicalresearch.org/materials/holy-spirit/images-holy-spirit-latter-rain>> [accessed 13/01/2016].

(III) THE NEED FOR AN ADVENTIST ECCLESIOLOGY

Driven by strong eschatological expectations and the high vision of its 'last days' prophetic mandate, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has experienced rapid geographical expansion and membership growth.¹⁰⁴ By the year 2015 the Church had over 19 million members and 25 million weekly attendees in 216 out of the 237 countries and areas recognized by the United Nations.¹⁰⁵ As of 2007, the denomination was the twelfth-largest religious body in the world, and the sixth-largest highly international religious body;¹⁰⁶ according to World Council of Churches' report, it is 'probably the most widespread Protestant denomination' in the world.¹⁰⁷ The world headquarters of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is based in Silver Spring, MD, USA, and is known as the 'General Conference'. The lower levels in the structure comprise 13 divisions, 119 unions and 626 conferences. Together these operate 78,810 churches, 7,804 schools, 700 hospitals, 21 food industries, 76 publishing and media centres, as well as a humanitarian aid organization known as the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA).¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ Currently the growth rate of the Seventh-day Adventist church is over one million every year, with new members joining it at a rate of one every 35 seconds. Globally, the church is doubling in size every 12 years. See General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 'The World Church', (2014) <http://www.adventist.org.my/The_World_Church.htm> [accessed 13/01/2016].

¹⁰⁵ For the official statistics, see Statistics and Research – General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Office of Archives, 'Seventh-day Adventist World Church Statistics 2014', <<https://www.adventist.org/en/information/statistics/article/go/-/Seventh-day-adventist-world-church-statistics-2014>> [accessed 14/01/2016]. By January 2016, the Adventist church should have had just over 20.5 million baptized members, assuming that the growth rate has stayed relatively unchanged over the last two years.

¹⁰⁶ 'Largest Religious Bodies', (2010) <http://www.adherents.com/adh_rb.html> [accessed 13/01/2016].

¹⁰⁷ For the official WCC statement about the Seventh-day Adventist Church, see: World Council of Churches, 'Seventh-day Adventist Church', <<https://www.oikoumene.org/en/church-families/Seventh-day-adventist-church>> [accessed 13/01/2016].

¹⁰⁸ For more information, see: Statistics Office of Archives, and Research – General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventist Church Yearbook 2015* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2015), <<http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB2015.pdf>> [accessed 13/01/2016].

However, this remarkable growth has been accompanied by various internal and external tensions. These need to be addressed constructively if the movement is to maintain its vitality and face the challenges of the twenty-first century successfully. Increasingly, the denomination is challenged (1) to retain its unity, which has been threatened from within by theological polarizations, (2) to maintain its relevance in a world that has changed significantly since the inception of the movement, and (3) to clarify its interaction with other Christian and non-Christian communities.¹⁰⁹ Given that these three needs of the global Adventist church are recognized by the Biblical Research Institute Committee of the General Conference (BRICOM)¹¹⁰ – a leading theological body of the Seventh-day Adventist Church – as the primary reasons for the recent resurgence of Adventist interest in ecclesiology, their further exposition is necessary in order to set the context for the current study.

OVERCOMING POLARIZATION

Even though Seventh-day Adventism started as a united movement, it has gradually grown into a complex, multifaceted and polarized church.¹¹¹ In the 1880s, forty years of insisting on the aspects of Adventist theology that separated it from other Christian traditions initiated a harsh pendulum reaction and the first signs of polarization. One

¹⁰⁹ *Toward a Theology of the Remnant: Studies in Adventist Ecclesiology*, ed. by Ángel Manuel Rodríguez (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2009), pp. 18–19.

¹¹⁰ The Biblical Research Institute (BRI) is usually led by five or six Adventist theologians working at Adventist headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland. BRI directs a much larger body of Adventist scholars known as the Biblical Research Institute Committee (BRICOM), which consists of around forty theologians worldwide. Another scholarly body that is directed by BRI is the Biblical Research Institute Science Council (BRISCO), which has the assigned task of investigating the relationship between religion and science. For the official website, see <www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org>.

¹¹¹ Keneth H. Wood, 'The Mother of Us All: Mainstream Adventism', *Adventist Today*, 1994, pp. 4–5; Madelynn Jones-Haldeman, 'Progressive Adventism: Dragging the Church Forward', *Adventist Today*, 1994, pp. 9–11; Ralph Larson, 'Historic Adventism: Remembering to Trust and Obey', *Adventist*

of the ablest Adventist historians, George Knight, offers a very vivid retrospective interpretation of this conflict. He claims that the underlying cause of this theological skirmish was the shift in the basic question that Adventists were asking when defining their religious identity. According to him, '[t]he tectonic plate of the old question "What is Adventist in Adventism?"' clashed with 'the tectonic plate of the new question "What is Christian in Adventism?"'¹¹²

The debate revolved around the question of how best to combine the distinct eschatological vision of early Adventism and the soteriological convictions that it held in common with other Protestant Christians. An urgent need was recognized by a growing number of Adventist leaders – the need for a more mature and rounded articulation of Adventist theological identity that would, besides its standard insistence on divergence, acknowledge its continuity with other Christian traditions.¹¹³

Suddenly, following these growing pro-evangelical (soteriological) impulses, the denomination was faced with a new theological emphasis, a new vocabulary, and a new question as to its religious identity. Though institutional schism was averted in 1888, this conflict marked the appearance in Adventism of various noticeable strands.¹¹⁴ Over the next half century, the differences between these strands became more and more prominent. Consequently, at some time in the 1960s, scholars began to deem it

Today, pp. 12–14; Michelle Rader, David VanDenburgh, and Larry Christoffel, 'Evangelical Adventism: Clinging to the Old Rugged Cross', *Adventist Today*, 1994, pp. 6–8.

¹¹² George R. Knight, 'Adventist Theology 1844 to 1994', *Ministry*, August 1994, pp. 4–5.

¹¹³ Knight, *Identity*, pp. 125–26.

¹¹⁴ In the following hundred years, two major proposals were developed in order to face this growing eschatological-soteriological conundrum. While M. L. Andreasen's proposal (1930s) situated the radical version of the Wesleyan soteriological position within the larger Adventist eschatological framework, Desmond Ford's attempt (1980s) dismissed the distinctive Adventist eschatology and embraced the classical Lutheran forensic description of Christ's work of atonement. Both theological solutions to the 1888 dilemma can be listed among the crucial factors that contributed to a theological divide within the movement. More information can be found in: Knight, *Identity*; Schwarz and Greenleaf, *Light Bearers*.

appropriate to talk about clearly differentiated ‘reversionist’,¹¹⁵ ‘revisionist’,¹¹⁶ and ‘mainstream’ Adventist theological approaches. Even today, this divide remains. When asked to interpret the doctrinal developments during the 1880s, some (‘reversionists’) are prone to see them as unfortunate departures from the original eschatological vision of early Adventism, while others (‘revisionists’) embrace the changes as necessary steps in the movement’s theological maturation that brought Adventism closer to other Christians, modified its previous sectarian attitudes and views, and renewed it by introducing a more experiential, Christ-centred soteriology.

Along with this eschatological-soteriological conflict, other features that have contributed to the polarization of the church include an increasing tendency towards academic specialization (compartmentalization) and institutional pragmatism, the emergence of various independent ministries and dissentient groups, and more recently, issues stemming from the church’s social and cultural diversity. These factors, among many others, have increased theological pluralism within the Adventist community and weakened its unity of faith and life.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ The first group of ‘reversionists’, often known as ‘historical Adventists’, did their best to return to and finish the unfinished theological project of the early Adventist pioneers. In its extreme form the reversionist group was characterized by recurring attempts to form ‘the remnant within the remnant’, which means warning God’s people of ongoing apostasy. It was consequently not rare to see the emergence of numerous organizations and ‘independent ministries’ that assumed the prophetic role of reforming the ‘fallen’ Adventist church, which had departed from the distinct pillars of the early Adventist faith. Patrick, ‘Contextualising Recent Tensions’, p. 285.

¹¹⁶ The ‘revisionists’ (better known as ‘progressives’) felt that some aspects of the theological framework within which their ancestors had operated were lacking and required further qualification. In their attempt to update the movement by bringing in fresh insights, the evangelically oriented progressive group launched the process of ‘protestantization’ or ‘Christianization’ of Adventist identity. The result was that the ‘revisionist’ stream often gravitated toward more ecumenical, charismatic, progressive and cultural types of Adventism that tended to lessen the distinctiveness of the Adventist theological identity. See Fernando L. Canale, ‘The Eclipse of Scripture and the Protestantization of the Adventist Mind – Part 1: The Assumed Compatibility of Adventism with Evangelical Theology and Ministerial Practices’, *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 21 (2010); Patrick, ‘Contextualising Recent Tensions’, p. 285.

¹¹⁷ Timm, ‘The Uniqueness’; Timm, ‘Adventist Ecclesiology, 1844–2001’, p. 301.

Today Adventism – now a multimillion-strong, global church – stands at a pivotal crossroad in its history, torn between two major forces – centrifugal and centripetal. The first pulls the movement towards its theological and experiential centre (mainstream Adventism), whereas the second (generated by the revisionist and reversionist epicentres of Adventist thinking) threatens to obfuscate the overall uniqueness of Adventist identity and further fragment the community of believers.¹¹⁸

Hope for future reinvigoration and unification of the movement can be witnessed in proposals from the mainstream strand of Adventism, which considers Seventh-day Adventism at its best when safeguarding the tension between the Adventist and Evangelical poles of its theological identity. Although these systematic attempts at reintegration began only in the 1980s and are still in progress, the results can already be seen in a new wave of fresh and enriched understandings, especially in regard to the movement's interpretation of its distinct doctrinal landmarks and their interrelationship.¹¹⁹

While a more thorough systematic treatment of certain unresolved (mostly soteriological) issues from the past has been the top priority for constructive dialogues amongst mainstream Adventist theologians so far, recent official statements and publications indicate a gradual shift from soteriological to ecclesiological concerns.¹²⁰ A parallel could be drawn between this shift and a similar theological development that has taken place within general Christian theology in the past centuries. The Christian

¹¹⁸ William G. Johnsson, *The Fragmenting of Adventism* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1995); Patrick, 'Contextualising Recent Tensions', pp. 272–88; Guy Fritz, 'Contemporary Adventism and the Crisis of Belief', *Spectrum*, 9 (1971), 28–31; Jack W. Provonsha, *A Remnant in Crisis* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1993), pp. 7, 166.

¹¹⁹ Patrick, 'Contextualising Recent Tensions'; Knight, *Identity*, pp. 160–97.

church first addressed those areas in which it faced controversy and/or had to deal with what it considered 'heresy'. It took many centuries before ecclesiology became a major theological concern in the church.¹²¹

In its theological maturation the Adventist movement followed the same course: questions related to God and his salvific acts preceded a more detailed elaboration about the nature of the human agencies that, in response to the divine initiative, formed the community of believers called 'church'.¹²² However, once ecclesiological concerns became central to Adventist interest, divergent interpretations of the nature and role of the church began to be produced by various fractions of the Adventist movement. These conflicting perspectives have affected the general mood among its members and created a sense of crisis, more complex and extensive than at any other period that the denomination has experienced so far.¹²³

The current Adventist ecclesial quest seems to be driven by the fact that, confounding the expectations and hopes of the Adventist pioneers, Jesus has not returned yet. George Knight believes this very delay to have 'mothered every problem currently faced by Seventh-day Adventists'.¹²⁴ As time continues to pass, the members of the church are more acutely faced with the question 'How is one to live while expecting Christ to come?' Or, 'what is the community of believers supposed to *be* or *do* while waiting for the Second Advent?'

¹²⁰ Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, 'General Introduction', in *Toward a Theology of the Remnant: Studies in Adventist Ecclesiology*, ed. by Ángel Manuel Rodríguez (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2009), p. 17.

¹²¹ Reinder Bruinsma, *The Body of Christ* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2009), p. 11; Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical & Global Perspectives* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), pp. 9-11.

¹²² Bruinsma, *The Body of Christ*, p. 11.

¹²³ These ecclesial controversies, which proved to be quite traumatic for a number of Adventists, involved issues of theology, authority, and the identity of the Seventh-day Adventist church. See Pöhler, *Continuity and Change*, pp. 13-14.

This 'delay' of Christ's Advent, along with the pressures that have come as a result of the church's territorial and numeric growth, leads to a sense of ambivalence in regard to the denomination's mission as a herald of the Second Advent and raises other questions about the nature of church:¹²⁵ What is the nature and structure of ecclesial authority? How does the church take part in the organic process of divine revelation in history? What of God's salvific activity outside the church? How should we worship? How do we balance charisma and institution, local and universal church? What form should Adventist mission among other Christians and non-Christians take?

Along with these frequently disputed questions there are also those that are listed by Reinder Bruinsma in his recent book *The Body of Christ*:

If we need the church, where is the church? Do we find it in all these separate Christian traditions, or only in the one segment that has 'the truth'? And, if it is only in one denomination or movement, which one? [...] What kind of church organization has the best credentials? Should the local churches have total autonomy? Or is a hierarchical national, or even global, structure more in harmony with biblical principles? How do the roles of the 'clergy' and of the 'laity' relate? And what about the ordination of women to church offices and pastoral ministry? How can, or should, church discipline function in today's world? How do parachurch entities fit into a biblical concept of church? How must the concept of a 'remnant' be defined?¹²⁶

Bruinsma is at one with many other theologians who lament the fact that 'ecclesiology is still seriously neglected or, at least, underemphasized' within the Adventist tradition.¹²⁷ Due to the particular nature of the challenges the movement presently

¹²⁴ Knight, *Adventist Mission*, p. 7.

¹²⁵ Knight correctly explains that time 'can have a corrosive effect on identity. That is especially true for groups expecting the soon-coming of Christ. The passage of time raises questions and presents problems and challenges that never had to be faced by movement's founders.' *Ibid.*, p. 156.

¹²⁶ Bruinsma, *The Body of Christ*, p. 12.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

faces, he emphasizes that today ‘we can no longer afford to downplay the importance of this area of systematic theology’.¹²⁸ According to him,

[...] the study of ecclesiology is not only a fascinating theological exercise, but of enormous practical significance for the Christian church in general, and, in particular, for the Seventh-day Adventist Church, its self-understanding, its ministry and mission.¹²⁹

Rodríguez rightly states that the process of diversification is a natural tendency in movements that are experiencing fast growth. Global expansion always brings with it increased national, ethnic, social and cultural diversity. This element of diversity cannot and should not be suppressed in an attempt to articulate ways in which a particular group of people unites ‘with the Risen Lord from whom it derives its life’.¹³⁰ On the other hand, although there is space for ‘legitimate diversity’, such diversity has its limits. It must not compromise specific biblical beliefs that provide the grounds for members’ ‘bond of unity in Christ’.¹³¹ These elements, which include ‘a distinctive body of beliefs’ and a ‘particular lifestyle’ and ‘worldview’, have their place in Adventist ecclesiological reflection.¹³² While constantly analysed within the context of the movement’s diversity, they should be allowed to have an important role in contributing to the visible manifestation of the global and local unity of Adventist members.¹³³

The present crisis of Adventist identity necessitates ecclesiological reflection that provides a more systematic and comprehensive account of the nature of the church than is currently available – one that respects the genetic core of Adventist theological

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid., p. 12.

¹³⁰ Rodríguez, ‘Toward a Theology of the Remnant’, p. 18.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid., p. 18.

identity while addressing the current challenges that stand in the way of attaining a more mature level of ecclesial self-understanding.

Surely, as with any new constructive attempt, there is a significant risk that such a serious theological work will only increase polarization and aggravate crises because it comes in conflict with the partially immature answers of early Adventism. Blinded by the unquestioned assumptions that they inherited from their predecessors, adherents of some backward-moving strands of the church might lack understanding of why certain aspects of their existent ecclesiology will need to be modified (or even completely abandoned) in order for Adventism to reach a more mature ecclesial self-understanding. To avoid such misunderstanding and to produce a more compelling argument, it is wise to start a constructive ecclesiological reflection with an analysis of the existing theology of church (Chapter II), and then — upon identifying its inherent strengths and weaknesses (Chapter III) — proceed by suggesting some ways of moving forward (Chapter IV-VII).

MAINTAINING RELEVANCE

Another factor that necessitates a more substantive ecclesiological engagement is the increasing need for Adventism to maintain ‘its vitality and relevance in a world that has changed significantly since the inception of the movement’.¹³⁴ Adventist identity is not static; it exists in time and is subject to constant fluctuations. Change cannot be avoided. It is present not only within the church but also in the world in which the

¹³⁴ Ibid.

church exists and seeks to minister.¹³⁵ Hence, in order to survive with integrity in this whirlwind of change and satisfy a significant need within society and in the lives of its members, the Adventist movement needs to be constantly engaged in investigating 'ever anew its relevance to the world and its identity in Christ'.¹³⁶

In faithfulness to its calling, the Adventist church, which sees itself as 'a part of this changed and changing world and claims to exist for the world',¹³⁷ must face enormous tasks, both familiar and unfamiliar. Firstly, it must 'renew, reassemble and revitalize its people', who might have become stale and inflexible while following traditional forms and routines that have lost their true meaning and purpose in the contemporary setting.¹³⁸ In its attempt 'to establish anew its relationship to the inheritance received from its spiritual progenitors',¹³⁹ the new generation of Adventist believers must be vigilant in distinguishing permanent and continuing elements from changing and transient features in Adventist theological heritage. This process of reinvigoration of its doctrinal foundations will unavoidably raise some difficult questions and suspicions, such as:

[C]an, or should, these traditions be modified and adapted to new situations? Must they perhaps even be discarded and replaced by new beliefs? Is change necessary for the growth and advancement of the church, or rather does it constitute an impediment to it, threatening its very existence and self-identity?¹⁴⁰

¹³⁵ Hans Küng, *The Church* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1978), pp. 3-4; Knight, *Adventist Mission*, pp. 156-57.

¹³⁶ Jürgen Moltmann, 'Christian Theology and Its Problem Today', *Reformed World*, 32 (1973), 6, 5-16.

¹³⁷ Küng, *The Church*, p. 3.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

¹³⁹ Rolf Pöhler, 'Change in Seventh-day Adventist Theology: A Study of the Problem of Doctrinal Development' (doctoral thesis, Andrews University, 1995), p. 4.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

Are doctrinal adaptations and revisions irreconcilable with the concept of an eternal and revealed truth?¹⁴¹ Of course, there will always be those who will resist any type of change (reversionists), or those who welcome it as yet another opportunity for growth (revisionists). In spite of the possible risks involved, Adventists must face the issue of doctrinal change in thoughtful and responsible ways ‘if they want to provide reliable answers to the questions raised by the [current] crises of change’.¹⁴²

Secondly, in order to strengthen its influence, the Adventist church must learn how to communicate its message in places that were once Christian but are now largely secular, to people, both educated and uneducated, who are estranged from the Christian worldview and lifestyle.¹⁴³ While, at the moment, this task seems reasonably easy in countries such as Brazil and Mexico, which are now among the main Christian nations in the world, it is becoming increasingly challenging in the United States, Australia and Europe, where church membership has decreased significantly under the influence of growing secularism and postmodernism.¹⁴⁴ New forms and a new ‘packaging’ of the communication and transmission of faith are needed if the Adventist message is to have optimum appeal to the twenty-first-century person, who often knows very little about the basics of the Christian faith.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹ This widespread Christian concern is voiced by: Gregory Baum, *Faith and Doctrine: A Contemporary View* (Paramus, NJ: Newman Press, 1969), p. 9.

¹⁴² Pöhler, 'Change', p. 6.

¹⁴³ Küng, *The Church*, p. 4.

¹⁴⁴ For some comments regarding recent trends and developments in global Christianity, see: Bruinsma, *The Body of Christ*, pp. 12–18; David B. Barrett, George Thomas Kurian, and Todd M. Johnson, *World Christian Encyclopedia: A Comparative Survey of Churches and Religions in the Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 3; Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

¹⁴⁵ For a good example of more recent Adventist attempts to make the church’s fundamental beliefs more appealing to the contemporary mind, see: *Experiencing a Joy: 42 Bible Talks*, ed. by Miroslav Pujic and Sarah K. Asaftei (Stanborough Park, Watford, Herts: Stanborough Press, 2010).

Thirdly, in order to maintain its identity in a world faced by wave after mega-wave of change, Adventism needs to engage constructively with the postmodern mentality in its various forms.¹⁴⁶ The shift from modernity to postmodernity has immensely and irreversibly affected the way people think, choose, and act. Many claim to live by a spirituality that is highly suspicious of ‘the church’. ‘They are not so sure whether believers actually need organized religion with all the baggage it supposedly brings along. So the decisive question for many is: Do we still need the church?’¹⁴⁷

This global trend, which has taken all the traditional churches by surprise and found them inadequately equipped to respond to it, is becoming known as ‘a churchless spirituality’.¹⁴⁸ It describes those who have left communities of faith and yet remain believers.¹⁴⁹ Shaped by the prevailing consumerist mentality, they ‘pick and choose what to believe in and [what] should shape their religion, while defining their own brand of truth’.¹⁵⁰ Being led by their tastes and personal preferences, which become the only valid moral standard, they oppose the styles of worship and any global consensus or tradition that no longer ‘suits’ them. It is not difficult to see how this anti-institutional, individualistic tendency ‘has laid a powerful time bomb under the traditional ecclesiastical structures’.¹⁵¹ The results have been drastic. Looking at this new postmodern development, Bruinsma remarks that

¹⁴⁶ Bruinsma, *The Body of Christ*, p. 14.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 11–12.

¹⁴⁸ George Barna, *Churchless: Understanding Today's Unchurched and How to Connect with Them* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2014); Mary Tuomi Hammond, *The Church and the Dechurched: Mending a Damaged Faith* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2001).

¹⁴⁹ Alan Jamieson, *A Churchless Faith: Faith Journeys Beyond the Churches* (London: SPCK, 2002); Brian Sanders, *Life after Church: God's Call to Disillusioned Christians* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007).

¹⁵⁰ Bruinsma, *The Body of Christ*, p. 15.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

Millions of former church members have left their churches, because they no longer feel at home in a setting that continues to demand adherence to a set of doctrines they no longer consider relevant. The church no longer provides for the kind of spirituality they are looking for. Organized religion in its traditional forms no longer 'works' for them.¹⁵²

This tendency towards 'churchless spirituality' does not necessarily undermine their understanding of the value of communion with other believers. The church leavers often seek out like-minded 'travellers', forming spontaneous groups; however, they avoid more permanent social and institutional commitments.¹⁵³ Although they may seem to be longing for independence, the foundational human need for belonging and community still underlies their spiritual quest.¹⁵⁴ Thus, if any constructive conversation is to occur between church members and church leavers, it should primarily revolve around their common quest for fulfilment through authentic relationality.

'Churchless spirituality' is also affecting Adventist church dynamics. Are members to ignore it, fight against it, escape from it? Or, are they to engage with this phenomenon constructively, interpreting this new, emerging challenge as an opportunity to deepen and strengthen their faith and manifest more completely the church's multidimensional relational nature? This trend may well be seen as a wake-up call to church members who cling to traditions, reminding them that something fundamental is missing; perhaps the church has lost something of its essence without even noticing it.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Alan Jamieson, Jenny McIntosh, and Adrienne Thompson, *Church Leavers: Faith Journeys Five Years On* (London: SPCK, 2006).

¹⁵⁴ Leonardo Boff, *Ecclesiology: The Base Communities Reinvent the Church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), p. 1.

¹⁵⁵ Jimmy Long, *Generating Hope: A Strategy for Reaching the Postmodern Generation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), pp. 19-35. For my theological evaluation of this individualistic contemporary trend, as well as for some suggestions on how a present-day Adventist church could engage with it constructively, see: Tihomir Lazić, 'Churchless Spirituality: Recovering the Essence of Community', Postgraduate Seminar on Developing Biblical Ecclesiology (unpublished public

There is another postmodern ecclesiological development of significance for Adventist theologians: the emerging church.¹⁵⁶ While this movement (or ‘conversation’) epitomizes current ecclesiological concerns, it may well turn out to be one of the most influential factors in shaping the ecclesiological practice of the future.¹⁵⁷ Since it is a relatively recent trend, there is an inevitable lack of the historical distance required to predict the possible shapes and directions in which this ‘new situation’ could unfold. This global phenomenon can be interpreted as a response to the postmodern shift.¹⁵⁸ For the Adventist church to be able to address, engage with and relate to such shifts in the perception of the nature of church, it must first develop its own understanding of community. This may require the church to adjust its methods, language, liturgy, organizational structures, and doctrines to meet significant needs within society and in the lives of its members. Such reflection might promote the denomination’s survival, strengthen its influence, and enhance its mission as an end-time prophetic movement.

In addition to the phenomena of churchless spirituality and the emergent church movement, contemporary Christianity needs to address other problems and opportunities, including issues arising from pluralism, globalism, scientific and technological advancements, the rapid expansion of social networks, and media

lecture, Newbold College of Higher Education in Binfield, England, 2009). This material is available from tlazic@newbold.ac.uk.

¹⁵⁶ Phylis Tickle, *The Great Emergence: How Christianity Is Changing and Why* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Press, 2008). There is an ongoing debate over how this ‘movement’ or ‘conversation’ should be labelled; options include emergent, emerging, emergant, reemergent, re:emergent, and [re]mergent.

¹⁵⁷ Matt Jenson and David E. Wilhite, *The Church* (London: T.& T. Clark, 2010), p. 96.

¹⁵⁸ Eddie Gibbs and Ryan K. Bolger, *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005); Ray S. Anderson, *An Emergent Theology for Emerging Churches* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006); D. A. Carson, *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church: Understanding a Movement and Its Implications* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005); Dan Kimball, *The Emerging Church: Vintage Christianity for New Generations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003); Doug Paggitt, *Church Re-Imagined: The Spiritual Formation of People in Communities of Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2005); *An Emergent Manifesto of Hope*, ed. by Doug

communication. In this context, it seems relevant to quote Hans Küng's observation that

[t]he Church cannot face these problems and use these opportunities if it is a prisoner of its own theories and prejudices, its own forms and laws, rather than being a prisoner of its Lord. As the prisoner of the Lord it is truly free, ready and willing to serve the constantly new requirements, needs and aspirations of mankind.¹⁵⁹

This comment introduces an important qualification for the church to consider when searching for relevance. As they engage in the affairs of the present-day world for the sake of service, Adventists should not let 'present' needs shape their theological outlook entirely. This applies equally to the ways of relating to change that focus almost exclusively on the 'past' or 'future'. The Adventist movement should be careful not to embrace the type of relevance 'that has lost its metaphysical foundation, its biblical roots and the supernatural'. 'Lasting Christian relevance', Knight argues, 'must be rooted in the transcendental and in God's great acts in the history of His people'.¹⁶⁰

In short, Adventism needs to address a range of new social and cultural challenges (such as individualism, secularism, globalism, institutionalism and pluralism) if the movement is to experience reinvigoration and flourish in the twenty-first century.¹⁶¹ So, instead of trying to escape, mindlessly consent to, ignore, or aggressively fight every impulse towards change, the members should learn how to engage critically with newly emerging challenges and to see in them an opportunity to become stronger

Pagitt and Tony Jones (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2006); Dan Kimball, *Emerging Worship: Creating Worship Gatherings for New Generations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004).

¹⁵⁹ Hans Küng, *The Church* (New York, Sheed and Ward, 1968), p. 4.

¹⁶⁰ Knight, *Adventist Mission*, pp. 158–59. Although I am using the insights from Küng and Knight side by side, I do recognize that these two authors have quite different approaches to the issue of relevancy. This comparative analysis, while worth undertaking, falls beyond the scope of the current thesis.

¹⁶¹ Pöhler, 'Change', pp. 296–99.

and to achieve a more complete manifestation of the church's multidimensional relational nature. It is argued in this thesis that by maintaining its openness and flexibility, the movement will not only survive but will experience further growth and adaptation in the twenty-first century.

For the sake of maintaining its well-being and vitality, Adventism should be careful not to follow blindly the example of those Christian denominations that view the church and its structures merely as a seed, capable of development and evolution only along predetermined lines. This model is inadequate and leads to the fossilization and sterilization of ecclesial routines. As a result, the church community is rendered barren, stale and inanimate. Instead, Adventists should choose to follow the developmental model rooted in an alternative biological image — that of a microorganism, 'capable of rapid mutation and adaptation in response to changing environments, while still maintaining continuity with its earlier forms'.¹⁶² The precise form that this adaptation is to take within the movement — what is to remain and what is to change — remains to be addressed in future ecclesiological reflections.

RELATING TO OTHERS

The third reason why an Adventist ecclesiology is needed is for the improvement of relations with other Christian and non-Christian communities.¹⁶³ At the moment, tensions mark the way Adventists relate to others as well as the way others relate to

¹⁶² These two analogies (seed and microorganism) are borrowed from: Alister E. McGrath, *Christianity's Dangerous Idea: The Protestant Revolution - History from the Sixteenth Century to the Twenty-First* (New York: HarperOne, 2007), p. 4. Although a full manifestation of this dynamic model might largely be only wishful thinking, an unattainable ideal, there is value in highlighting this ideal as a goal towards which the community should strive. In the absence of an intentional effort to keep this dynamic vision alive, an alternative model will automatically hijack the development processes of the Adventist community, leading it to extinction.

Adventism.¹⁶⁴ There exist many misconceptions and prejudices on both sides. These could be better addressed if Adventist communal identity was formulated in a clear and systematic manner and grounded in a broader vision – a vision different from the separatist approach of early Adventism growing out of their ‘shut-door’ mentality.¹⁶⁵ An improved ecclesiological framework could also provide Adventists with a better vantage point from which to come to understand others.

Firstly, then, it is proposed that in order for Adventist ecclesiologists to clarify the nature of church in relation to the world, they will need to place discussions about Adventist identity in the framework of the wider mission of God in the world. The church needs to discover its role in divine work in the domains of world religions, and of ecumenism, as well as in other aspects of life, such as society at large, politics and the environment (see Chapter V).

An enhanced ecclesiology would call Adventists to move beyond their exclusivist and often sectarian attitudes towards others. Hence, instead of emphasizing an isolated community which defines itself as different from the others, a sustainable Adventist ecclesiology must stress the universality that is also embedded within the concept of the remnant – a universality that views the church as the vanguard of a movement towards

¹⁶³ Rodríguez, 'Toward a Theology of the Remnant', p. 19.

¹⁶⁴ See, for example, Stefan Höschele, *Interchurch and Inteerfaith Relations: Seventh-day Adventist Statements and Documents* (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Peter Lang, 2010); Reinder Bruinsma, *Seventh-day Adventist Attitudes toward Roman Catholicism, 1844–1965* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1994).

¹⁶⁵ The term ‘shut-door’ is a common phrase used by Adventist scholars to describe the first four years of Sabbatarian Adventist history during which the group believed that the ‘door of mercy’ had been closed to anyone outside the movement, and that there was, thereby, no point in evangelizing in the world any longer. Ellen White, among others, was instrumental in helping the movement to overcome this crude theological mistake. For more details, see: Damsteege, *Foundations*, pp. 155–63. Over the years, Adventism has managed to move a long way from this kind of separatist reasoning. However, there are still some general sectarian attitudes and views in the community that need to be revised so that the movement will be able to engage in a more meaningful interaction with other Christians and non-Christians. Hence the need for further ecclesiological reflection.

recognition that God is all in all. Such a shift would enable Adventist self-understanding to be widened to the extent of grounding its own particularity in universality.

This kind of more inclusive theological language and framework would also better correspond to the standards in those segments of contemporary society in which core values are shaped by the ideals of radical inclusiveness, equality, cross-cultural sensitivity, inter-confessional cooperation and conversation, and an appreciation of mutual differences, openness and solidarity. While taking this into consideration, it is important to note that any Christian theology needs to be universal in its scope – not only to meet the demands of the modern world, but primarily to respond to the biblical doctrine of creation, which describes God as God of *all*.

Such a change in Adventists' attitude towards others would help them avoid creating and maintaining perceptions of others that are little more than caricatures. It would also open the denomination to getting more learning experiences from outside its own group of believers. The focus would then be expanded to include discerning God's will and activity outside their current visible structures.

Secondly, an enhanced ecclesiological perspective should be seen as a necessity in transmitting the Adventist community's true theological commitments to others. This would enable them to challenge some of the general misconceptions about Adventism which have often resulted from attempts to classify the church in terms of its religious language and doctrines – the most exposed elements of their belief system. Thus, explaining the most fundamental layers of the system – the theological and

philosophical meta-structure that originated from and supported its doctrines – becomes essential if Adventism wants to make itself understood.¹⁶⁶

An attempt to formulate an Adventist approach to ecclesiology promises benefits both for Adventists and non-Adventists. If this dissertation can set on a new footing the conversations between Adventism and mainstream Christian traditions, it may provide resources for other traditions to use in order to revisit and enhance their own current theologies of the church. However, before suggesting possible ways of overcoming the current impasses and seeking a more fully fledged Adventist understanding of the nature of the church, it is necessary to revisit the dominant Adventist discourse on ecclesiology from the time of the movement's inception to the present day.

¹⁶⁶ Lukic, 'The Anatomy of Dissension', p. 3.

CHAPTER II

ADVENTIST REMNANT ECCLESIOLOGY: A BRIEF HISTORICAL AND BIBLIOGRAPHICAL SURVEY

Since its beginnings, the Seventh-day Adventist search for truth and distinct theological identity has always also been implicitly a search for an ecclesiology. At the outset of this chapter dealing with Adventist ecclesiology – past and current – it needs to be re-emphasized that only in recent decades – as it has perceived the need to maintain its own global unity, to provide a relevant message for the world at large, and to understand more fully its distinctive position within global Christianity – has the movement begun to develop more thorough and coherent treatments of issues related to the nature of the church.¹ Whereas mainstream Christianity produced a considerable body of ecclesiology in the twentieth century, Adventist ecclesiological literature has been scarce and fragmentary, often responsive only to immediate crises. As an exception, the specific subject discussed on the following pages has been quite extensively developed in Adventist theological writing. It is therefore appropriate to use

¹ For instance, see: Rodríguez, *Toward a Theology of the Remnant: Studies in Adventist Ecclesiology; Message, Mission and Unity of the Church*, ed. by Ángel Manuel Rodríguez (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2013).

it as a starting point from which to address more comprehensive ecclesiological concerns.

While the previous chapter provided a fairly broad-ranging account of the framework of Adventist theology and an argument on behalf of a general need for a more fully developed ecclesiology, the current chapter goes on to present the ecclesiological concerns in more specific terms, addressing the most dominant ecclesial concept shaping Adventist thought – the remnant. The first two sections offer a selective overview of the key ecclesiological reflections that have informed Adventist self-understanding from the time of the movement's inception to the present day (the period from 1844 to 2016). The focus is on clarifying the movement's appropriation of the biblical concept of the remnant, its central ecclesiological self-designation (section I), as well as on other fundamental motifs that have appeared throughout years as integral segments of Adventist remnant outlook (section II).

The third section explores the ways in which Adventists have translated their remnant theology into the domain of church praxis, especially as it pertains to the formation of church structure. The primary aim of this section is to uncover the underlying theological rationale and modes of reasoning that governed the process of routinization of Adventist communal life.

Finally, the last section offers a selective bibliographical overview of some of the most recent denominational publications that have contributed to the further consolidation and refinement of the traditional Adventist remnant-based ecclesiological discourse. Hopefully, in the light of this historical and bibliographical survey of Adventist ecclesiological literature, it will become possible to identify the key areas of

Adventist ecclesiology where further reflection could lead to a more balanced and comprehensive vision of church.

(I) ADVENTISM AS GOD’S END-TIME REMNANT CHURCH

The affiliates of this relatively young apocalyptic movement have customarily seen themselves as God’s end-time remnant ‘arising at the providential time for reformation and revival to prepare a people for the second advent of Christ Jesus’.² They have believed that their divine credentials as the ‘remnant church’ are to be found specifically ‘in the promise of the coming of Elijah before the terrible judgment day in Mal 4 and in the call of the three angels’ message of Rev 14 for revival of true worship of the Creator and readiness for the judgment day’.³

THE CONCEPT OF REMNANT

Since the biblical concept of the remnant assumes a central place in Adventist identity, message and mission, it has been treated almost exhaustively in a number of studies.⁴ It is proposed that the Scriptures always associate this ecclesiological motif with life-and-

² Hyde, *A Symposium on Biblical Hermeneutics*, p. 225. For an introductory exposition of Adventist teaching about the remnant and its mission, see: Hans K. LaRondelle, 'The Remnant and the Three Angels' Message', in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. by Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000).

³ Hyde, *A Symposium on Biblical Hermeneutics*, p. 225. The denomination’s Fundamental Belief no. 13 is entitled ‘The Remnant and Its Mission’. See ‘Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists’, in Office of Archives, *Seventh-day Adventist Church Yearbook 2015*.

⁴ An extensive survey and discussion of earlier literature may be found in Stefan Höschele, 'The Remnant Concept in Early Adventism: From Apocalyptic Antisectarianism to an Eschatological Denominational Ecclesiology', *AUSS*, 51 (2013); Gideon Duran Ondap, 'Diversity in the Remnant Concept in the History of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (1841-1931)' (master's thesis, Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, 2003); Passmore Hachalinga, 'Seventh-day Adventism and the Remnant Idea: A Critical and Analytical Study of the Seventh-day Adventist Ecclesiological Self-Understanding' (master's thesis, University of South Africa, 1998); Gerhard F. Hasel, *The*

death problems; it becomes relevant in the face of acute existential concerns.⁵ When faced with ‘mortal threat’, a certain group (such as the family, the tribe, or the nation) would raise the question of whether life would be wiped out or whether some, a remnant, would survive to preserve human existence.⁶ Hence, the remnant, referring to a ‘group that escaped a catastrophe that threatened its survival’, becomes a sign of hope. It represents the potential to preserve the lives of a particular group of human beings. In them (the survivors) the possibility for restoration remains real.⁷ Gradually, this broad, non-religious use of the term has been extended to encompass the reality closely related to God’s salvific acts in history.⁸ Rodríguez aptly summarizes the theological content of the term by claiming that

[t]he remnant became the centre or nucleus of God’s true people, through whom God’s redemptive work will succeed in spite of threats, obstacles, and opposition. Situations arise in history that would oppose God’s sovereign purpose, threatening His people and the realization of His plans for the human race, but God has always preserved a remnant through which His willingness to save the human race from extinction was to be fulfilled. For this ‘believing minority’ there is a future, and through it, a future for the human race.⁹

Since the core of the remnant concept is tied so intimately to God’s redemptive actions, Adventists have logically claimed that this concept is ‘deeply connected to the person of Christ’.¹⁰ According to them, since Christ is God’s ultimate instrument for the

Remnant: The History and Theology of the Remnant Idea from Genesis to Isaiah (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1980).

⁵ Rodríguez, ‘God’s End-Time Remnant’, p. 201.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 201–02. Rodríguez derives his interpretation from Gerhard F. Hasel, ‘Remnant’, in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. by Geoffrey William Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988).

⁷ Rodríguez, ‘God’s End-Time Remnant’, p. 202; R. E. Clements, ‘Ša’ar’, in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. by G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004); Noel Scott Rabinowitz, ‘Remnant and Restoration as a Paradigm of Matthew’s Theology of Israel’ (doctoral thesis, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2004).

⁸ Rodríguez, ‘God’s End-Time Remnant’, pp. 201–02.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 202.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

preservation of the human race from extinction, he can be regarded as the truest 'remnant'.¹¹ 'In Him we finally find a person who was absolutely faithful to God under the most difficult circumstances and who was able to overcome the forces of evil'.¹² Hence, it is by virtue of their union with Christ that the remnant people of God are constituted. They not only owe their existence to Christ, but also participate in his victory over evil.¹³ The faithful remnant people have joined him

in the realization of the divine plan for the preservation of the human race and, empowered by the Spirit, they participate in His mission. It has been through Christ that God has preserved the remnant and used it to His glory.¹⁴

Adventist scholars have also recognized an additional layer of meaning inherent in this rich scriptural concept (or type). This is its eschatological connotation.¹⁵ While God has always had 'a remnant through which He has fulfilled His purposes for humanity', Adventists believe that Revelation 12-14 predicts the gradual emergence of the visible end-time/eschatological remnant, that will have till then been, so to speak, 'underground'.¹⁶ Its appearance is closely linked to Christ's newly assumed judicial role (in 1844) in the sixth stage of the biblical narrative and is placed 'at the close of the cosmic conflict, shortly before the return of the Lord in glory (12.17)'.¹⁷

¹¹ Ibid. The close connection between Christ and his eschatological remnant is also pointed out by Ekkehardt Mueller, 'The End Time Remnant in Revelation', *JATS*, 11 (2000), 191; Ben F. Meyer, 'Jesus and the Remnant of Israel', *JBL*, 84 (1955).

¹² Rodríguez, 'God's End-Time Remnant', p. 202.

¹³ Ibid., p. 203.

¹⁴ Ibid. For further research on Jesus and the remnant, see M. A. Elliot, 'Israel', in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. by Joel B. Green (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013).

¹⁵ Hasel, 'Remnant', p. 736. See also: LaRondelle, 'The Remnant', pp. 860-63; Tarsee Li, 'The Remnant in the Old Testament', in *Toward a Theology of the Remnant: Studies in Adventist Ecclesiology*, ed. by Ángel Manuel Rodríguez (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2009), pp. 26-27.

¹⁶ Rodríguez, 'God's End-Time Remnant', p. 205.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 203. For further exploration of a standard Adventist interpretation of Revelation 12-14, as well as the way in which these three chapters contribute towards a wider eschatological framework of Adventism, see: Ranko Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2009), pp. 377-465; Jacques Doukhan, *Secrets of*

IDENTIFYING MARKS OF THE ESCHATOLOGICAL REMNANT

In their standard explications of the identifying marks of the end-time remnant, Adventists usually point to Revelation 12–14, where one can find a general overview of the history of God’s faithful followers, symbolized by a woman who goes into the wilderness for a period of 1,260 years. ‘There she is cared for and nourished spiritually by God’.¹⁸ Using the historicist method of interpretation, Seventh-day Adventists have come to the conclusion that the

1260 prophetic days refer to the period of papal supremacy from the sixth to the end of the eighteenth century (A.D. 538-1798), during which many of God’s people were oppressed, persecuted, and killed. In Rev 12:17, after the fulfilment of the prophetic period of 1260 days, i.e., in the nineteenth century, Satan is described as directing his attack at the remnant of the woman’s seed – the end-time remnant people of God.¹⁹

When situating the appearance of the end-time remnant on a prophetic timeline (after 1798) and in the context of the cosmic conflict between Christ and Satan (developed in some detail in Revelation 13–14), Adventists usually identify the following specific and essential marks of the end-time remnant: (1) they keep the commandments of God (12.17), including the Sabbath commandment; (2) they have the testimony of Jesus (12.17), which refers to the spirit of prophecy or the prophetic gift (19.10); (3) they are a persevering people (14.12), with the patience or endurance which is the result of Christ’s presence in believers’ tribulations (see Romans 5.3–4); (4) they have the faith of Jesus (14.12), meaning that they are faithful to what Jesus believed and taught; and (5)

Revelation: The Apocalypse through Hebrew Eyes (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2002), pp. 107–39.

¹⁸ See Gerhard Pfandl, ‘Identifying Marks of the End-Time Remnant in the Book of Revelation’, in *Toward a Theology of the Remnant: Studies in Adventist Ecclesiology*, ed. by Ángel Manuel Rodríguez (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2009), p. 139.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

they proclaim a specific end-time message – the three angels’ messages (Revelation 14.6-12).²⁰

THE MESSAGE OF THE REMNANT

As already established in Chapter I, Revelation 14.6-12 presents one of the strongest foundational texts for Adventist theology and identity. It is important to note how closely the content of this passage feeds into the functional identity of the church as the remnant serving as the embodiment of the angels (messengers), proclaiming the final warning from God. The three closely related messages aim to warn the world that the hour of God’s judgement has arrived and to gather God’s remnant, scattered throughout the world in preparation for the Second Coming of Christ.²¹

The message of the first angel begins with the announcement of the ‘eternal gospel’ in the setting of end-time events. While it affirms ‘the permanent relevance and inalterability’ of ‘the good news of salvation through Christ exclusively determined by God’s grace’, it calls the world to fear God and ‘recognize his sovereignty and lordship’ over idols (in other words, the dragon and his instruments).²² The reality of judgement, which is one of the main motivations of this appeal, invites the human race to reject false gods and restore the true whole-life worship of the only Creator of heaven and earth. ‘The allusion to the Sabbath in this call is worth emphasizing because the

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 157-58.

²¹ The following section is based on: Rodríguez, ‘God’s End-Time Remnant’, pp. 211-16; LaRondelle, ‘The Remnant’, pp. 857-92.

²² Rodríguez, ‘God’s End-Time Remnant’, p. 212.

Sabbath itself is a weekly reminder of the central biblical truth that God is indeed the Creator.²³

The second angel announces ‘the fall of Babylon and the reasons for its fall’.²⁴ Here one can track a typological link between ancient and end-time Babylon.²⁵ Represented by the symbol of a city (signifying a political power), and by an unfaithful woman (denoting apostasy), Babylon stands for ‘the archenemy of God and his people’.²⁶ It is the false religious system that, according to the Apostle Paul, had already entered the Christian church in its emergent years. Adventist voices join those of other Protestants when claiming that this apostasy had become especially widespread by the Middle Ages and that it will continue to grow until the end of time reaching universal dimensions.²⁷ As a result of this increasing abandonment of true belief, a false system of worship is introduced and the people of God are persecuted (Revelation 17-19).²⁸

In Adventist opinion, one of the factors most instrumental in this gradual degradation has been the rejection and eclipse of scriptural truth.²⁹ When Adventists refer to spiritual ‘Babylon’ (as a corollary to the remnant concept) they usually do so to describe other Christians and non-Christians, especially those who openly oppose biblical teaching, or more precisely, the corpus of beliefs that became known as the

²³ Ibid.; Jon Paulien, 'Revisiting the Sabbath in the Book of Revelation', *JATS*, 9 (2000), 179-86; Mathilde Frey, 'Sabbath Theology in the Book of Revelation', in *Toward a Theology of the Remnant: Studies in Adventist Ecclesiology*, ed. by Ángel Manuel Rodríguez (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2009).

²⁴ Rodríguez, 'God's End-Time Remnant', pp. 212-13.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 213; Hans K. LaRondelle, 'Babylon: Anti-Christian Empire', in *Symposium on Revelation – Book II*, ed. by Frank B. Holbrook (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1992), pp. 151-76.

²⁶ Rodríguez, 'God's End-Time Remnant', p. 213.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 13; John W. Reeve, 'Understanding Apostasy in the Christian Church', in *Message, Mission and Unity of the Church*, ed. by Ángel Manuel Rodríguez (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2013), pp. 155-90.

²⁸ Rodríguez, 'God's End-Time Remnant', p. 213.

‘present truth’ among early Sabbatarian Adventists (the ‘five pillars’). Articulating the standard Adventist interpretation of Babylon in the context of the second angel’s message, Rodríguez writes:

Although the term ‘Babylon’ symbolizes all apostate religious organizations and their leadership, it especially designates the culmination of an eschatological process of apostasy in the Christian world. Then the beast and its image will form an alliance that unites religious and civil powers, culminating in the crisis described in Revelation 13.15–17 and that will result in the final spiritual and literal fall of Babylon. Adventists believe that it is their responsibility to call the attention of the Christian world to this upcoming tragedy and to restore the truth that was cast to the ground.³⁰

The message of the third angel employs ‘strong terms and vivid images’ to announce ‘the final defeat of evil powers and of those loyal to them’.³¹ It warns against ‘worshiping the beast’, ‘the image of the beast’, and against receiving ‘the mark of the beast’.³² In Adventist writings, the mark of the beast is usually identified with end-time attempts by Babylon to use civil authority to impose Sunday observance.³³ Those who resist this and similar religious manipulation and refuse to adopt practices that are being imposed, will be persecuted. Here it should be recognized that modern-day Adventists (with the exception of a few reversionists) acknowledge that more is implied by the symbol of the mark of the beast than the mere question of regarding Sunday as a holy day instead of Saturday.³⁴ In Revelation 13.17 one can find further specifications

²⁹ Ibid., p. 214; Fernando Canale, ‘The Message and the Mission of the Remnant: A Methodological Approach’, in *Message, Mission and Unity of the Church*, ed. by Ángel Manuel Rodríguez (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2013), pp. 261–86.

³⁰ Rodríguez, ‘God’s End-Time Remnant’, p. 214. For further discussion, see: LaRondelle, ‘The Remnant’, pp. 875–77.

³¹ Rodríguez, ‘God’s End-Time Remnant’, p. 214.

³² Ibid.; LaRondelle, ‘The Remnant’, pp. 877–79.

³³ Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1946), p. 234; Rodríguez, ‘God’s End-Time Remnant’, p. 214.

³⁴ Mainstream Adventist publications also support this wider application of the symbol. See, for instance, LaRondelle, ‘The Remnant’, pp. 877–79.

about the name and character of the beast and those who identify with its purpose, intentions and message.³⁵

Conversely, the end-time remnant people will have the 'seal of God on their foreheads' (Revelation 7.3; 14.1, in reference to Sabbath observance) and will 'reflect in their lives the saving power of God'.³⁶ Their faith will 'express itself in complete loyalty and commitment to Christ and His law in the midst of great opposition from evil powers'.³⁷ Adventists also believe that the mission of God's faithful remnant as the personification of the third angel of Revelation 14 will be the one to create universal division between those who are 'called, chosen and faithful followers' of the Lamb (17.4, indicating the eschatological remnant) and earthly worshippers of the dragon and the beast (13.4).³⁸

In the midst of this bifurcation, the remnant will differ from the unfaithful in at least the three main aspects already mentioned in Chapter I. These include: (1) right disposition of heart (*orthopathy*, an attitude of openness and submission to continual divine revelations and guidance), right understanding (*orthodoxy*) in regard to the Sabbath, the Second Coming, Christ's twofold ministry, the State of the Dead, Spiritual Gifts, the Sanctuary, the Three Angels' Messages, and right practice (*orthopraxis*) or keeping the commandments of God and living in obedience to the known truth. Briefly stated, unlike the rebellious group, everyone among the faithful remnant people will love and worship the living God with heart, mind and strength. These attitudes and

³⁵ Rodríguez, 'God's End-Time Remnant', p. 215; Mervyn C. Maxwell, 'The Mark of the Beast', in *Symposium on Revelation – Book II*, ed. by Frank B. Holbrook (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1992), pp. 41-132.

³⁶ Rodríguez, 'God's End-Time Remnant', p. 215.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*; Mueller, 'Remnant in Revelation', pp. 188-204.

practices of love will enable the remnant community to be not only ‘a *historical* entity *faithful* to the Lamb, but also a fully visible *eschatological remnant*’.³⁹

VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE REMNANT

Another important feature characterizing Adventist ecclesiological discourse is the distinction that the denomination’s scholars make between the invisible and visible aspects of God’s present-day remnant church. In the first place, Adventist remnant ecclesiology affirms that ‘the church of Christ is larger than its expression in the remnant’.⁴⁰ In fact, contrary to various mainstream Christian opinions, Adventism admits that ‘the fullness of the church of Christ does not reside in any particular ecclesiastic organization’.⁴¹ This observation, however, is not a denial of the need for an organizational structure, but an acknowledgement that the church is ‘much more than an institutional phenomenon. It is fundamentally a community of believers’.⁴² This ‘universal church’ is ‘composed of all who truly believe in Christ’.⁴³ It is ‘scattered throughout the religious world’ and in that sense it is ‘the invisible church in exile, in Babylon’.⁴⁴

The invisibility, while referring to the temporary lack of any clearly perceivable institutional communal expression, is not a permanent feature of God’s church, especially in view of the fact that the church always involves concrete and physical

³⁹ Rodríguez, 'God's End-Time Remnant', p. 215; Gerhard Pfandl, 'The Remnant Church', *JATS*, 8 (1997); Hasel, *The Remnant: The History and Theology of the Remnant Idea from Genesis to Isaiah*. Hasel was one of the first Adventist theologians to articulate and promote this threefold interpretation of remnant among Adventist academics.

⁴⁰ Rodríguez, 'God's End-Time Remnant', p. 226.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 218.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 219.

⁴³ Ministerial Association, 'Fundamental Beliefs'. See the 12th and the 13th fundamental beliefs.

⁴⁴ Rodríguez, 'God's End-Time Remnant', p. 219; White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 390.

human beings. Its temporary 'unusual condition' of invisibility implies that its members are 'spread throughout different Christian and even non-Christian communities, making it practically impossible to differentiate them from others within those communities'.⁴⁵ The true followers of Christ exist currently under the direct and exclusive guidance of the Spirit.⁴⁶ It is to them that Jesus was referring when he said, 'I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also' (John 10.16). In the book of Revelation, He calls them 'my people' who are still in Babylon.⁴⁷

Mainstream Adventists usually acknowledge the aforementioned trans-denominational definition and are always careful not to reduce the universal church to any particular religious organization.⁴⁸ They also accept that at present, the remnant does not contain the totality of the church. Nevertheless, Adventists *do* argue that they, as a community of God's end-time remnant people, *are* 'the visible expression of the church of Christ, possessing certain specific characteristics and a particular mission to the world'.⁴⁹ In the fulfilment of its mission, which among other things involves restoring fundamental biblical truths,

the remnant will be used by the Lord to pull the universal church out of its invisibility in preparation for the coming of the Lord in glory. At that moment the fullness of God's eschatological remnant will be a reality, and the oneness of the church will reach its deepest expression.⁵⁰

A distinction has been made between the visible end-time remnant and the invisible 'universal church' (that is, the larger group of genuine believers forming an anonymous

⁴⁵ Rodriguez, 'God's End-Time Remnant', pp. 219-20.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 220.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 218-21. Ondap, 'Diversity in the Remnant Concept'; Höschele, 'The Remnant Concept in Early Adventism'.

⁴⁹ Rodriguez, 'God's End-Time Remnant', p. 226.

⁵⁰ Ibid.; Canale, 'On Being the Remnant', pp. 168-73.

remnant). The nature of each group and the spiritual relationship between them now need to be clarified. For instance, without claiming to produce a comprehensive list, Rodríguez identifies some of the elements that these two groups appear to have in common. They have (1) a common future, (2) openness to truth, (3) faithfulness to Christ, and (4) exist in the polluted Babylonian environment.⁵¹

However, there is also a difference between the two types of remnant believer. While they are both open to new light, unlike the universal church, 'the end-time remnant has been entrusted with a present truth' and thereby possesses specific visible marks (such as keeping the commandments of God, being in possession of the testimony/faith of Jesus, having the patience of the saints).⁵² Besides this, while the end-time remnant has a specific mission to Babylon (to present the messages of the three angels), the yet invisible universal church of God is called to come out of Babylon. This said, we can conclude that the end-time remnant 'is a divine project in progress and will reach its ultimate expression shortly before the end of the cosmic conflict'.⁵³ While it is already here as a historical reality, its fullness is gradually coming into being and will be completely disclosed only 'when the rest of God's people will come out of Babylon'.⁵⁴ Through this integrated and fully divulged remnant, which includes all those who throughout the ages were loyal to God, 'the human race will be eternally preserved'.⁵⁵

Since the nature and role of the end-time remnant (as described in the book of Revelation) aptly encapsulates the theological project and aspirations of Seventh-day

⁵¹ Rodríguez, 'God's End-Time Remnant', pp. 221-24.

⁵² Ibid., p. 224.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 225.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.; Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, 'The Remnant and Adventist Church', (2009) <<https://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/materials/adventist-heritage/remnant-and-adventist->

Adventists, it becomes clear why this nineteenth-century apocalyptic movement used this eschatological concept to ground its identity, message and mission.⁵⁶ This concept, which integrates all the distinctive beliefs of the Adventist theological system (as elaborated in the previous chapter of the thesis), largely conditioned the development of the church's ecclesial structures and clarified its particular role within the flow of history. In so doing, it gave the movement a strong sense of direction and purpose.

(II) OTHER FOUNDATIONAL CONCEPTS

Besides the concept of remnant, there are other important scriptural categories and motifs that were used to reinforce the remnant ecclesiological vision during early Adventist history. These concepts (when used correlatively) were of paramount importance for the improvement of the spiritual climate within the young Adventist movement, for enriching its self-perception, and for calling attention to its unique role in the history of the Christian church.

APOCALYPTIC MOTIFS

For instance, while the concept of remnant indicated the uniqueness of Seventh-day Adventists and provided a positive argument for their significant role in the final divine rescue mission, the Laodicean motif (which succeeded the Philadelphian motif) was used to reflect the spirituality of believers. It contributed to an anti-triumphalistic

church> [accessed 10/02/2016]; Clifford Goldstein, *The Remnant: Biblical Reality or Wishful Thinking?* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1994).

⁵⁶ Stephan Paul Mitchell, "'We Are the Remnant': A Historical, Biblical, and Theological Analysis of Seventh-day Adventist Ecclesiological Self-Understanding' (master's thesis, Loma Linda University, 1988); Hachalinga, 'Seventh-day Adventism and the Remnant Idea'; Höschele, 'The Remnant Concept in Early Adventism'.

dimension in ecclesiology and created a spirit of self-investigation and deeper reliance on divine provision.⁵⁷ By interpreting this scriptural motif typologically, Adventists acknowledged ‘the imperfections of the remnant’ and showed ‘trust in God’s power to refine them as they fulfil their mission’.⁵⁸ They ‘understood that [the] remnant is not exclusive in nature but open to all. It is fundamentally controlled by a sense of mission that should not allow for exclusiveness.’⁵⁹

Several other ecclesiological types were employed extensively to elucidate the past, present, and future experience of Seventh-day Adventists. For example, the ‘Israel’ motif, ‘referring to the period between the Exodus experience and the entry into the promised land, was seen to typify the period between the Advent experience and Christ’s return’.⁶⁰ Identification of Adventism as antitypical Israel ‘could also have led to a triumphalist attitude’ (as the concept of remnant did at times), but ‘increasing emphasis on ancient Israel’s failures’ seems to have been a deterrent in that regard and, again, to have fostered a more self-critical attitude.⁶¹

The ‘*Elijah*’ theme, more than any other ecclesiological motif, brought out the mission of restoration – the specific burden of the third angel’s message. It focused on ‘the restoration of true worship in the context of a general apostasy’.⁶² Closely related to the *Elijah* motif is the ‘John the Baptist’ theme. Christ had associated the work of the two men, and the fact that Sabbatarian Adventists saw themselves as preparing the world for the Second Advent inevitably led to identification, not only with *Elijah*, but

⁵⁷ Damsteegt, *Foundations*, pp. 244-48.

⁵⁸ Rodríguez, ‘God’s End-Time Remnant’, p. 216.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Damsteegt, *Foundations*, p. 248.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 250.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 248. For a fuller exposition of an early Adventist interpretation of the *Elijah* motif, see: *Ibid.*, pp. 250-53.

also with John the Baptist, who had been 'engaged in preparing the Jewish nation for the first advent'.⁶³

The task of preparation and reformation was further fostered by the announcement of the imminence of judgement, parallel to the 'Noah' motif with its references to living in the face of impending threats to existence.⁶⁴ In 1872, for instance, Ellen White wrote that

as the preaching of Noah warned, tested, and proved the inhabitants of the world before the flood of waters destroyed them from off the face of the earth, so is the truth of God for these last days doing a similar work of warning, testing, and proving the world.⁶⁵

The 'Enoch' motif was based primarily on Genesis 5.24, 'And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.' Commenting on this, a correspondent of the *Review of Herald* wrote that 'the remnant in these last days must walk closely with God, if they ever expect to be translated as Enoch was'.⁶⁶

Finally, beyond a general interest in Matthew 24 and 25, Adventists found the parable of the ten virgins (Matthew 25.1-13) to be particularly helpful in explaining their last-day mission. They were attracted in a special way to verse 6: 'And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.' By using this story as the 'master narrative' within which they envisaged their identity and role in

⁶³ Ibid., p. 253. Ellen White, for example, said that John 'was a representative of those living in these last days to whom God has entrusted sacred truths to present before the people, to prepare the way for the second appearing of Christ'. See Ellen G. White, 'God's Call to Reform', (2016) <http://www.whiteestate.org/devotional/mar/04_20.asp> [accessed 04/04/2016].

⁶⁴ Damsteegt, *Foundations*, pp. 253-54.

⁶⁵ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church: Volume 3* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), p. 207.

⁶⁶ Hannah Clough, 'Letter to Dear Brother', *RH*, 29 May 1856, p. 47; Uriah Smith, 'Enoch's Testimony', *RH*, 8 January 1857, p. 75. For the antitypical significance of Enoch's holiness of life, his warning of the world, and his translation, see: Damsteegt, *Foundations*, p. 254.

the world, Adventists labelled themselves as being among those faithful ‘watchmen’, whose role is to warn the world of the soon-coming of its Lord.⁶⁷

All the above-listed apocalyptic motifs, which include both eschatological motifs (those of Laodicea, Philadelphia, the watchmen, the three angels from Revelation, the ten virgins, the remnant) and typological motifs (those of Israel, Elijah, John the Baptist, Noah and Enoch), represented the early development of Adventist missionary ecclesiology. They have since then been further developed and frequently employed as typifying the end-time task that Sabbatarian Adventists received from God and were expected to complete before Christ’s second coming. By contributing to the enrichment and consolidation of the foundationally remnant outlook, they helped substantiate the already distinctive self-image of this religious body.⁶⁸

NON-APOCALYPTIC MOTIFS

During the period 1854–74 there was ‘a gradual emergence of non-apocalyptic dimensions’ in Adventist self-understanding, most of which had roots in Protestant ecclesiological traditions in the US.⁶⁹ Among Adventists, the greatest contribution to this dimension of thinking came from Ellen White. Some of the most prominent non-apocalyptic motifs that have continued to be used since that period include *imitatio Christi*,⁷⁰ love, service and other evangelically oriented biblical metaphors, parables and

⁶⁷ Lukic, ‘The Anatomy of Dissension’, p. 166; Knight, *Identity*, pp. 55–57.

⁶⁸ Damsteegt, *Foundations*, p. 248.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 263.

⁷⁰ This concept of Christlikeness was used by Ellen White to describe the movement’s foundational desire to study and imitate the lifestyle of Christ, especially his complete unselfishness (similar to ‘disinterested benevolence’ in Samuel Hopkins and other New England theologians), which became one of the key reference points when talking about the motives for Adventist missionary activity. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church: Volume 1* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), p.

themes, such as being the light of the world, the salt of the earth,⁷¹ stewards of talents,⁷² the body of Christ, temple of the Spirit, field or vineyard, and workers.⁷³

An important pattern can be detected here. The very set of theological questions and commitments that dominated any particular stage in the movement's doctrinal development had a direct impact on the selection of biblical metaphors, emphases and themes employed for descriptions of the movement's nature and role. Hence, in the first period, when Adventism was insisting on what was distinctly Adventist in Adventism, apocalyptic-eschatological motifs dominated the accounts of the nature of the church. However, the subsequent evangelical emphasis (in the post-1888 period) contributed to the development of non-apocalyptic Christocentric motifs.⁷⁴

THE INTEGRATION OF APOCALYPTIC AND NON-APOCALYPTIC MOTIFS

In order to capture the theological and experiential centre of Seventh-day Adventist remnant identity, one must safeguard the overall thematic balance of the Adventist-and-Evangelical poles of Adventist thinking. Only in that way can justice be done to the entire ecclesiological framework that Adventists have constructed around the notion of the remnant. This also implies that an explicit articulation of the underlying theological commitments is indispensable in the construction of a more informed, well-rounded and coherent vision. An awareness of the undergirding assumptions may enable a more meaningful dialogue between various proponents of reversionist, revisionist and

482; Samuel Hopkins, *The System of Doctrines Contained in Divine Relation, Explained and Defended* (Boston: Lincoln & Edmands, 1811).

⁷¹ Ellen G. White, 'Faith of Jesus', *RH*, 7 March 1854; Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church: Volume 2* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), pp. 631-32.

⁷² White, *Testimonies*, 1, p. 197.

⁷³ For a detailed presentation, see: Damsteegt, *Foundations*, pp. 263-68.

mainstream strands of Adventism and thereby contribute towards the internal unification of the movement.

Furthermore, it should be highlighted that this integration of both apocalyptic and non-apocalyptic dimensions within Adventist remnant-based ecclesiological thinking has proven to be valuable in creating a better climate for mission work and for contributing to the already unique position of Adventism in the history of the Christian church. The tensions that marked earlier Adventist attitudes towards other Christian and non-Christian traditions were significantly reduced with the development of a more rounded missionary ecclesiology that broadened the movement's understanding of the function of the Adventist church in the overall context of Christ's mission for the salvation of humanity.⁷⁵

AN OVERALL MISSIONARY OUTLOOK

In regard to mission, it can be reasoned that the well-known phrase *missio Dei* captures appositely the overall framework within which Adventists operated when interpreting and shaping their dynamic communal life in relation to God. In fact, Adventist remnant ecclesiology is first of all a *missionary* ecclesiology, an ecclesiology that sees the church as an active agent in Christ's end-time mission for the salvation of human beings. It is from this vision of God's rescue mission through Christ (Christ-centred

⁷⁴ This corresponds closely to the 1888 evangelical shift in the formation of Adventist identity, as described in Knight, *Identity*.

⁷⁵ Damsteegt, *Foundations*, pp. 259–63.

missio Dei, or perhaps rather *missio Christi*) manifested in an eschatological setting that Adventists derived their identity.⁷⁶

As mentioned earlier, the adherents of this movement have always believed that their divinely appointed task stemmed from the new activity of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary (in 1844). Given that Christians have always endeavoured to define their religion in relation to what Christ is and does, early Adventists believed that their discovery of this new movement in Christ had radical implications for all aspects of their existence, including their mission.

Keeping this in mind, one can conclude that any account of Adventist remnant identity should acknowledge the foundational vision of *missio Christi* (unravelling in the context of the Great Controversy between Christ and Satan) as the ultimate metaphysical framework that informs the meaning and determines the place of all other key themes and concepts that are being used in the biblical, Christ-centred, missionary and eschatological ecclesiological discourse of this religious denomination.⁷⁷ The whole conceptual framework revolving around the notion of the church as the remnant led pioneering Adventists to the conviction that the task that needed to be completed before Christ's second coming primarily involved their proclamation of the 'present truth'.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Jon L. Dybdahl, 'Missionary God – Missionary Church', in *Re-Visioning Adventist Mission in Europe*, ed. by Erich Walter Baumgartner (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998), pp. 8–15.

⁷⁷ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Executive Committee, 'Mission Statement of the Seventh-day Adventist Church' (2014) <<https://www.adventist.org/en/information/official-statements/statements/article/go/-/mission-statement-of-the-Seventh-day-adventist-church/>> [accessed 29/03/2016].

⁷⁸ Canale, 'On Being the Remnant'; Borge Schantz, 'The Development of Seventh-day Adventist Missionary Thought: Contemporary Appraisal' (doctoral thesis, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1983).

(III) ORGANIZED TO PROCLAIM

Although the present-day Seventh-day Adventist church has its origins in the Sabbatarian branch of post-Millerite Adventists that was already identifiable as a separate religious group in the early 1840s,⁷⁹ it was formally established only in 1863, during its first General Conference session. During that congress, twenty delegates from six conferences assembled in Battle Creek, Michigan, representing 3,500 members, mostly from the north-eastern or mid-western United States.⁸⁰ The appointed representatives reached a consensus with regard to the centralized church order that, among other things, involved the election of the president of the General Conference as well as the official appointment of church officers. The latter were to perform their duties within a three-fold hierarchical structure of ministers, elders and deacons. The centralized organization, which resembled a Methodist conference system in its supra-local structures and which functioned on the basis of democratic representation (at least on paper), provided for a high degree of unity among the members and contributed to an efficient coordination of the movement's missional outreach.⁸¹

As a result, membership rapidly increased, the territory covered by denominational work expanded, and the number of institutions multiplied.⁸² With time, rapid numerical and territorial growth on the part of the church, and various

⁷⁹ A more detailed study of an early Sabbatarian Adventism is available in: Everett N. Dick, 'The Adventist Crisis of 1843-44' (doctoral thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1980); Richard W. Schwarz, *Light Bearers to the Remnant* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1979); A. G. Mustard, 'James White and SDA Organization: Historical Development, 1844-1881' (doctoral thesis, Andrews University, 1987).

⁸⁰ A record of the proceedings of the 1863 session can be found in 'Report of General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists', *RH*, 20 May 1963, pp. 204-08.

⁸¹ George R. Knight, *Organizing for Mission and Growth: The Development of Adventist Church Structure* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2006).

concomitant pressures, internal and external, necessitated a more explicitly defined ecclesiastical polity that would regulate the common life of its members.⁸³

Though at first hesitant to adopt any formal type of church governance (generally perceived as a potential hindrance to the work of the Spirit, which 'blows wherever He wills'), Adventists soon understood the necessity of drawing up a routine for the church's communal life.⁸⁴ As in the case of other Christian denominations, this process involved designing a set of rules and regulations that would facilitate the task of the church and the work of those involved in it.⁸⁵ It also involved an attempt to regulate ecclesial relations both within and among various local congregations, as well as to define the roles, responsibilities, jurisdictions and duties of certain administrative offices. The history of Adventism confirms that the process of establishment and explication of a church's organizational structure is an inevitable feature of maintaining dynamic, reciprocal interaction among its members and ensuring that that interaction remains meaningful and sustainable over time.⁸⁶

As the years passed, it became clear that the structures established in 1863 were inadequate. They were failing to meet the challenges that accompanied the

⁸² For an insightful historical study of challenges that early Sabbatarian Adventists faced in their efforts to organize themselves as a distinctive religious group, see: Dick, 'The Adventist Crisis'; Mustard, 'Organization'.

⁸³ For a detailed account of the most important sociological, historical, cultural and theological factors that contributed to the formation of Adventist organizational structure, see: Oliver D. Barry, *Seventh-day Adventist Organizational Structure: Past, Present and Future* (Berrian Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1989).

⁸⁴ Richard Bowen Ferret, *Charisma and Routinisation in a Millennialist Community: Seventh-day Adventist Identity* (Lampeter, Ceredigion, Wales: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2008).

⁸⁵ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 'Constitution of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists', (2010) <<http://www.ted-adventist.org/sites/default/files/%2806%29Gcwp-ConstitutionBylaws.pdf>> [accessed 04/04/2016]. This document was last revised at the 59th Session of the GC, held in Atlanta, USA, from June 24 to July 3, 2010.

⁸⁶ Ferret, *Charisma and Routinisation*; Knight, *Organizing for Mission and Growth*; Rowland Hsu, 'Governance Practices of the Seventh-day Adventists: Compared with Governance Standards and Practices of Corporate and Other Denominational Counterparts' (doctoral thesis, Golden Gate University, 1997).

denomination's rapid geographical and numerical expansion.⁸⁷ Further reflection on the nature and role of church structure was needed. As a result, at the 1901 and 1903 General Conference sessions, the Adventist Church underwent major restructuring that deeply affected its organizational form thereafter.⁸⁸ Emerging from the controversy surrounding the reorganization (1901-1903) were two dominant ecclesiological perspectives.

ONTOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Led by A. T. Jones, E. J. Waggoner, D. J. Paulson, Percy T. Magan, and for a time W. W. Prescott, the proponents of the ontological perspective emphasized the personal relationship of the individual with Christ as the most salient feature of their ecclesiology.⁸⁹ Viewing the corporate existence of the church as the sum of all the individuals who are in a saving relationship with Christ, Jones and Waggoner argued that Adventists should invest their utmost efforts in allowing each member complete independence, originality and individuality in exercising his or her rights in relation to God. That is why the proponents of this view thought the reorganization to be not so much a communal as a rather personal matter that had to be undertaken within the

⁸⁷ In 1901, delegates from around the globe, representing 78,188 members in 57 conferences and 41 mission fields, gathered to discuss and vote on necessary administrative and organizational changes. See Andrew G. Mustard, 'Seventh-day Adventist Polity: Its Historical Development', <<https://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/sites/default/files/pdf/AMustard.SDA%20polity.pdf>> [accessed 04/04/2016].

⁸⁸ Apart from the recent period, in which there has been a growing interest in ecclesiology, the period of the formation of the church's name and institutional structures (1860s) and, to an even greater degree, the period of ecclesiastical reorganization (1890s-1900s), could be regarded as the most fruitful periods in terms of the development of Adventist ecclesiology. The church was prompted to engage in more serious ecclesiological discussion. See Barry, *Organizational Structure*.

⁸⁹ During the Ottawa, Kansas, camp-meeting of 1889, Jones asked the question, 'Who compose the church?' and then answered, 'The members; those who believe in Christ'. See: Topeka, *Kansas Daily Capital*, 16 May 1889. For the collections of sermons preached on that occasion, see: *The 1889 Camp*

domains of the inner life of the individual.⁹⁰ With strong docetic leanings, their ecclesiology stressed the mystical nature of Christ's headship of the church, achieved entirely by the direct influence of the Spirit of God, which endows each member with special spiritual giftedness. The individuals forming the church are, then, expected to be independent when exercising self-government. In the light of this emphasis, church structure was seen as a secondary matter.⁹¹

Notwithstanding the merits of approaching the issue of the church's organization from a more ontological perspective, this idealistic and highly individualistic account, which overlooks some important human and social dimensions of the church as an entity, was not accepted by the larger body of Adventist believers as 'sufficient in and of itself to provide an adequate basis for the organizational structures of the church'.⁹² Instead, the functional view of church organization seemed considerably more timely and appropriate for addressing the structural issues at that time.

FUNCTIONAL PERSPECTIVE

A. G. Daniells, W. C. White, and W. A. Spencer viewed the nature of the denomination's structure in terms of its remnant function – to facilitate the transmission of the gospel. By allowing the function of the church to provide the ultimate grounds informing their concept of church, the proponents of this view

Meeting Sermons: As Found in the Topeka, Kansas Daily Capital May 7–28, 1889 (St. Maries, ID: LMN Publications, 1987).

⁹⁰ *GC Bulletin*, 1901, pp. 37–38.

⁹¹ Oliver D. Barry, 'Why Are We Who We Are? The Ecclesiological Polemic That Shaped Reorganization', in *Faith in Search of Depth and Relevancy*, ed. by Reinder Bruinsma (Nova Pazova, Serbia: Euro Dream, 2014), pp. 435–43.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 435; Oliver D. Barry, 'Reflections on the Church and Unity', in *Adventist Maverick Celebration of George R. Knight's Contribution to Adventist Thought*, ed. by Gilbert M. Valentine and Woodrow W. Whidden (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2014).

measured the adequacy of certain forms of the ecclesiastical structure primarily in relation to their efficiency in achieving the designated goal. Having the interests of the global church in mind, the subscribers to this viewpoint placed emphasis on the unity of church as a whole, while, in contrast with those who adopted the competing theory, they overlooked 'the individuality and diversity of its constituent local congregations and individual members'.⁹³

The task-driven church

The functional perspective was generally perceived as a more adequate structural model in the setting of the Seventh-day Adventist church, mainly due to the generally pragmatic ethos of the movement. Once again, I propose, the belief in an imminent advent generated a spirit of pragmatism and activism, which pervaded everything, including the way in which the adherents of the movement perceived the issue of ecclesiastical structure. They reasoned that the time was too short to spend in 'self-centred', introspective reflection on the details of the remnant's current communal interaction. Christ would come soon, they thought, and when he did, the precise details of how the church had been structured in the interim period would not really matter. What did ultimately matter was whether the remnant would fulfil its global missionary mandate and preach the gospel to every nation, tribe and language group.⁹⁴

Clearly, A. G. Daniels and his colleagues operated within this eschatological and missiological framework when defining the function of the church and its structures. In other words, the certainty and imminence of the return of Jesus Christ, as well as the

⁹³ Barry, 'Reorganization', p. 434.

⁹⁴ Ibid., pp. 444-48.

urgency of mission, were the main theological concerns that informed their concept of church.⁹⁵ Barry aptly captures the logic of their reasoning:

The church existed because it had been commissioned to perform a specific task. That task was missionary in nature. The missionary nature of the church was the theological perspective that informed the need for, and shape of, the structures of the church. Denominational organization was modelled according to the contingencies of the task. The task itself was contingent on the eschatological hope of those who had accepted Christ.⁹⁶

In his correspondence with W. C. White in 1903, Daniells stated that

the vital object for which Seventh-day Adventists have been raised up is to prepare the world for the Coming of Christ; the chief means for doing this work is the preaching of the present truth, or the third angel's message of Rev. 14:6-12.⁹⁷

By making the transmission of the gospel to the world the foremost precondition of Christ's *parousia*, and by affirming the providential work of God in choosing the Adventist community of believers within a precise time reference as the visible remnant – the main instrument for achieving this purpose – the supporters of the functional perspective did not doubt that the ecclesiastical structure that they erected upon these biblical convictions was also biblically founded.⁹⁸ Thus, Daniells, who was to take over as General Conference president, confidently declared that

[t]he doctrines we hold not only created our denominations, but our denominational aim, purpose, or policy, as well. This denominational purpose or policy is formed by our view of what the Bible teaches. It is peculiar to our

⁹⁵ Ibid., pp. 444-45. Some of the key Scriptural passages that are employed to substantiate their position of urgency were: I Thessalonians 4.16-18; John 14.1-3; Acts 1.7-9; Matthew 24.14; 28.19-20; Mark 16.15-16; Revelation 14.6-14.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 444.

⁹⁷ Barry quotes the words from A. G. Daniells's personal correspondence with W. C. White (17 May 1903). See Ibid.

⁹⁸ See, for instance: W. A. Spicer, 'Divine Warnings against Disorganization', *RH*, 14 September 1916, p. 4; S. N. Haskell, 'Organization – No. 18', *RH*, 16 May 1907, p. 4; A. G. Daniells, 'Organization as Developed by Our Pioneers', *RH*, 21 February 1918, p. 5; J. L. McElhany, 'Principles of Conference Administration', *Ministry*, March 1938, p. 5.

denomination. It differs from the policies of other denominations and organizations as widely as our doctrinal views differ from theirs.⁹⁹

The main focus of the reorganizations in 1901 and 1903 was not the end of the world, but the enormous 'work' that needed to be done before the end could come. In the history of Adventism the insistence on the imminence of Christ's *parousia* has often prompted believers to deny the necessity of any form of organization at all. It is therefore reasonable to claim that it is due to the growing missionary consciousness of the church, which intensified in the 1880s and 1890s, as well as to the alleged urgency of the remnant's tasks of 'the rapid dissemination of the third angel's message',¹⁰⁰ that the various functional proposals for more effective organizational structure have emerged.¹⁰¹

The sense of urgency and of the pivotal importance of fulfilling their divinely ordained task was further exacerbated by Adventists' deep sense of divine providence.¹⁰² This doctrine of providence, however, did not come as a result of Calvinistic theological predispositions, but as a consequence of the movement's historicist interpretation of prophecy which located the denomination at the vital historical moment at which it was to act as the crucial agent in a great cosmic theodicy of which God was in control.¹⁰³ Its role in divine theodicy was to prepare the world for the Second Coming by proclaiming

⁹⁹ A. G. Daniells, 'A Statement Concerning Our Present Situation – No. 3', *RH*, 22 February 1906, p. 6; Barry, 'Reorganization', p. 444.

¹⁰⁰ *GC Bulletin*, 1901, p. 20, 27.

¹⁰¹ Barry, 'Reorganization', p. 445; A. G. Daniells, 'The President's Address: A Review and an Outlook – Suggestions for Conference Action', *RH*, 11 May 1905, p. 8.

¹⁰² Uriah Smith, 'Living on Borrowed Time', *RH*, 1 October 1901, p. 636; 'Sermon by A. G. Daniells at the Opening of the Conference', *Bulletin of the European Union Conference Held in London, May 15–25, 1902*, p. 3; S. N. Haskell, 'Australia', *RH*, 6 January 1885, p. 12.

¹⁰³ Barry, 'Reorganization', p. 447.

the present truth, as found in the message of the three angels recorded in Revelation 14.6-12.¹⁰⁴

While Seventh-day Adventists still eagerly awaited the time of the end, the end began to seem more and more remote as the years went past. The members of the church turned their attention to the immediate task that stood before them, the evangelization of the world.¹⁰⁵ In 1894 Ellen White declared that the church 'had been organized on earth for missionary purposes', and it was a divine requirement that the followers of Christ should make 'his work the first and highest consideration'.¹⁰⁶

It is no wonder that expectancy began to be expressed among Adventists, not only in terms of the advent of Christ, but also in terms of the numerical growth of the church.¹⁰⁷ As early as 1891, Adventists had begun the practice of referring to the statistics concerning growth rates in order to substantiate their hope and assess their success as a movement.¹⁰⁸ By viewing numerical growth as a tangible and measurable test of success, the church invested all its energy into maximizing its efficiency in gaining new members. There was 'no time for introversion'.¹⁰⁹ Every moment spent in theological reflection about itself was regarded as lost in view of the imminent eschaton and the great task that ought to be finished by then. After all, 'the prospect of warning the world was far more inspiring than ecclesiological reflection'.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁴ Damsteegt, *Foundations*; Barry, *Organizational Structure*; Barry, 'Reorganization', p. 445.

¹⁰⁵ Barry, 'Reorganization', p. 447.

¹⁰⁶ Ellen G. White, 'Missionary Enterprise the Object of Christ's Church', *RH*, 30 October 1894, p. 673.

¹⁰⁷ Barry, 'Reorganization', p. 447.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*; Uriah Smith, 'Origin and History', *RH*, 27 January 1891, p. 57.

¹⁰⁹ Barry, 'Reorganization', p. 447.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

This functional view of the nature of church, in which 'the church was mission',¹¹¹ explains the scarcity of publications on the subject of ecclesiology, not only during the 1890s but also throughout the rest of Adventist history. Barry's research reveals that, by assuming a functional view of the church, Adventists placed their entire theological focus on defining the nature and scope of mission and the methods of achieving success in carrying it out. Attention was also turned to the message that was to be heralded. It consisted of a set of doctrines that defined the core of the remnant's unity and represented the divine truth for that stage in time. Very little was said about the nature of the church itself. 'The church was taken for granted. It was assumed.'¹¹²

On the basis of his meticulous analysis of the movement's historical publications on the subject of church, Barry claims that while there were some exceptions, in sermons and articles by A. T. Jones, E. J. Waggoner, and W. W. Prescott, attempts to articulate the theological basis for Adventist ecclesiology, especially the issues relating to the nature and being of the church, were virtually non-existent. Besides this, Barry argues, when it comes to ecclesiastical themes *per se*, the situation was a little better.¹¹³ Among the matters that were discussed were the issue of church order and government, ecclesial discipline, the duties and jurisdiction of church officers, and the

¹¹¹ The notion of the church's being 'a missionary society' was first ventured among Adventists in 1863, the year when the General Conference was organized. See, for instance, Damsteegt, *Foundations*, p. 256.

¹¹² Barry, 'Reorganization', p. 448.

¹¹³ Barry's research reveals: 'In the years 1850–59, fourteen articles were written in the *RH* on subjects immediately related to church order and government; 1860–69, forty-two articles were written; 1870–79, thirty-three articles; 1880–89, thirty-four articles; 1890–99, only six articles. It is difficult to know just why there were so few articles on the question of church order and government in the 1890s. Perhaps it was the realization that there were serious problems with the system of organization, and nobody was able to suggest improvements that could solve the dilemma. On the other hand, it may be that many suggestions for structural modification were being made, but they were being suppressed by an editorial policy that considered them counterproductive to the unity and stability of the organization.' See, *Ibid*.

responsibilities relating to church membership.¹¹⁴ However, if any biblical reference was made at all concerning the nature of church's *esse*, it was usually a passing comment on the nature of divine government of his people or in nature, or perhaps some general observation concerning the characteristics of the early Christian church.¹¹⁵

The Mosaic organizational pattern

Perhaps the most influential biblical motif to be considered essential to the organizational proposal among the apologists of the functional view was 'the Mosaic plan of organization'.¹¹⁶ This concept was first introduced by S. N. Haskell in 1892.¹¹⁷ It was later accepted as 'the most perfect organization applicable to human society' by Daniells, Loughborough, Spicer and others.¹¹⁸ The Mosaic organizational pattern came to be used to prove that the functional proposal was not only pragmatically warranted but also biblically based.¹¹⁹

It was often reiterated that God's organizational plan, revealed in the time of Moses, was perfect because 'it embraced all Israel in one general organization, while [...] individuality was preserved'.¹²⁰ In addition, this plan allowed the entire body of God's people to witness and publicly acknowledge the divine appointment of certain individual believers who were called by God to prominent positions, appointments that

¹¹⁴ Ibid. Following the standard practice in the field of ecclesiology, I use the term 'ecclesiological' to denote a theological discourse on the nature of church, and 'ecclesiastical' to refer to discussion of the structures of the church, and its practices, that may or may not be defined theologically.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.; Barry, *Organizational Structure*.

¹¹⁶ Barry, 'Reorganization', p. 449.

¹¹⁷ S. N. Haskell, 'Is Organisation of God?', *RH*, 11 October 1892.

¹¹⁸ J. N. Loughborough, 'The Church: Order in Ancient Israel', *RH*, 9 April 1901, pp. 234-35; W. A. Spicer, *Gospel Order: A Brief Outline of the Bible Principles of Organisation* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1909).

¹¹⁹ Barry, 'Reorganization', p. 450.

¹²⁰ Haskell, 'Organisation', p. 634.

enabled them to lead and influence the other believers in a special way in the domains of their faith and practice. Besides this, by being so minimalistic and adaptable, the plan proved to be efficient, not only in meeting the organizational needs of God's people during their journey towards the Promised Land, but also in regulating their communal life after they had settled in the land. While certain features of this flexible organizational pattern were altered in the course of time, the plan proved to be successful in maintaining the community of God's people over many centuries and against a wide variety of external and internal pressures.¹²¹

Daniells endorsed Haskell's proposal and developed it further by delineating six aspects of a 'plan of organization adopted by Seventh-day Adventists' that resembled the Mosaic pattern. He concluded that

This comparison might be carried still further, but what has been pointed out will prove sufficient to make it plain that there is a very close resemblance between that simple, complete, and efficient system of organization provided for the church established by Moses, and the organization worked out for the remnant church called out by the threefold message of Revelation 14.6-14.¹²²

The attempt to shape the Adventist ecclesiastical life according to the Mosaic plan did not come to fruition without opposition, however. Jones, for instance, rejected the proposal on the basis of his claim that the Mosaic order applied only to the Old Testament people of God. The New Testament community of believers should, according to him, search for a model that corresponds more truly to the new Christian order established by Christ. Jones and his follower asked why the members of God's end-time movement should use the imperfect, transient and incomplete pattern of the

¹²¹ Ibid.; A. G. Daniells, 'Organisation – No. 15', *RH*, 16 May 1907, pp. 4-5.

¹²² Daniells, 'Organisation', p. 5.

Old Testament world of shadows.¹²³ Did not Christ Himself introduce a more perfect way of relating to God and other Christian fellow believers?

Daniells and his followers discarded this kind of argument and continued to use the Mosaic structural paradigm, emphasizing that the church is not only a theological entity, but also a sociological one. They insisted that the structure that is open, minimal, flexible and efficient in preserving individuality while embracing the whole is adequate when it comes to meeting the social needs of the members of the Adventist church and facilitating their mission. These arguments were adopted as sufficient ground for implementation of the Mosaic structural paradigm within the Adventist setting.¹²⁴

Besides their custom of using the Mosaic plan as the basis for their structural proposals, the apologists for the functional approach also referred to some other general organizational principles. This was not necessarily to argue for a specific plan of reorganization, but rather to emphasize the need for an organization *per se*. Even today, it is not uncommon to hear phrases such as 'God is "a God of order"' and 'Lucifer is "the author of confusion"' being used as theological justification of the need for an organized common life.¹²⁵ The early proponents of this view also acknowledged that Christ is the head of the church and that the church is his body. However, unlike the opposing group, they did not believe that the headship of Christ necessarily obviates the

¹²³ Barry, 'Reorganization', p. 451.

¹²⁴ Jones's objections did not have any significant influence on Adventist leaders at the time. The Mosaic organizational pattern continued to be used as the biblical rationale for the current shape of Adventist organization. For proof that this model was used as the main structural paradigm in the later decades, see: W. A. Spicer, 'This Second Advent Movement: An Organized Movement', *RH*, 24 April 1930, pp. 5-6; S. G. Haughey, 'Our Church Organization', *RH*, 12 March 1931, pp. 11-12; McElhany, 'Principles of Conference Administration', pp. 5-7.

¹²⁵ W. A. Spicer, 'Gospel Order – No. 1', *RH*, 25 March 1909, p. 4.

need for human leadership. Daniells explained this point in a letter to Conradi in 1903:

Every board must have a chairman or president, that will be the recognized head. That is too obvious to require argument. I have said that a flock of geese have [sic] leader. We cannot do business, nor carry on anything like organized effort without administrative servants, and this requires someone selected from among the brethren who shall be administrator or executioner. I cannot harmonize Doctor Waggoner's theory with his practice. I think this whole movement against organization which we saw manifested during the [1903] Conference is a bit of a clap-trap.¹²⁶

The outcome of the 1903 polemic surrounding the process of reorganization was that the functional scheme, spearheaded by Daniells and Spicer, prevailed and almost entirely suppressed the ontological one. As a result, the concept of church has been largely informed by Adventist eschatological and missiological concerns. Even the biblical themes and motifs that have been employed by its members throughout the history of the Adventist movement to describe the nature of church have been almost exclusively functionally defined.¹²⁷ This framework has proved to be efficient and in general harmony with Adventist pragmatism and activism. Yet, as the movement has diversified, it has become inadequate for the purpose of coping with various complexities and intricacies that impinge on the church's communal life.

SOME RECENT QUESTIONS AND CHALLENGES

The question that the present-day Adventist church needs to face is 'whether it is still comfortable with an ecclesiology that is primarily functional'.¹²⁸ It is also important to ask whether the church has done enough since the period of reorganization to

¹²⁶ A. G. Daniells to L. R. Conradi, 1 July 1903; Barry, 'Reorganization', p. 452.

¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 454.

demonstrate that its administrative forms are not the result of arbitrary and random choices, but also reflective of the Adventist perception of the being of church? Is the Adventist preoccupation with the church's urgent missionary task still regarded as a valid excuse for not engaging in more thorough systematic reflection about the church's *esse*? Is the failure 'to integrate the full range of foundational biblical themes and images of the church into its ecclesiology' not also a betrayal of its bedrock epistemological convictions (i.e. *sola-tota-prima scriptura* principle)?¹²⁹ Or, put differently, how can Adventism remain faithful to the entirety of divine revelation in Christ and in the Scriptures, while continuing to neglect some of its integral parts?

As early as 1903 it was widely recognized by Adventist leaders that the reorganization they would undertake should not be carried out in a 'haphazard fashion'; it should be constructed on solid biblical principles.¹³⁰ Everyone involved spoke about the necessity for foundational 'principles'. However, the actual task of developing 'systematic ecclesiological positions that provide a framework by which their "principles" could be prioritized or applied'¹³¹ has not yet been undertaken. In the interim, Adventists have continued to focus on the consolidation and systematization of the 'distinctive doctrines that gave legitimacy to their independence and existence as a denomination', as well as on their own rapid expansion, and have 'not take[n] time to find consensus on a distinctive ecclesiology as such'.¹³²

In the last hundred years, Adventist administrators have generally remained determined to invest their energy in improving, adapting and refining the church's

¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 435.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 433.

¹³¹ Ibid.; Barry, *Organizational Structure*.

¹³² Barry, 'Reorganization', pp. 433–34.

organizational structures. Their purpose has been to maximize its efficiency in regulating the communal life the members, as well as in achieving its missionary mandate.¹³³ However, while the attempts at optimization have been undertaken in the practical realm, or rather, in the administrative domain (in regard to voting policies and regulations), a more radical improvement and 'update' of their theological discourse has not followed.¹³⁴

(IV) CONSOLIDATION OF THE REMNANT OUTLOOK

In addition to addressing the wider theological framework of the notion of the remnant, outlining the basic characteristics of truth as Adventists would understand it, and tracking the structural implications of these two quests, it is necessary, for the sake of the argument at hand, to offer a brief overview of the more recent Adventist discussions in the field of ecclesiology. This account is intended to highlight the foci of current discourse and indicate the areas that require further constructive reflection.

It has been repeatedly demonstrated in the foregoing pages that mainstream Seventh-day Adventists have always seen themselves as God's end-time remnant people. However, as early as the 1950s, some Seventh-day Adventists (reversionists) began openly to accuse their own church and its leadership of apostasy from what they regarded as true 'historical Adventism.'¹³⁵ These accusations have continued and have

¹³³ Walter Raymond Beach and Bert Beverly Beach, *Pattern for Progress: The Role and Function of Church Organization* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1985).

¹³⁴ This academic gap represents a standing invitation to Adventist scholars to articulate in an explicit way what is implicitly present in the church's ecclesiastical practice. This could facilitate further self-critical reflection and contribute to a more mature ecclesiological vision.

¹³⁵ Provonsha, *A Remnant in Crisis*; Marvin Moore, *Challenges to the Remnant: Adventists, Catholics and the 'the Church'* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2008); A. Leroy Moore, *Adventism in Conflict* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1995).

generated major tensions within the denomination, raising serious questions as to the nature of the church.¹³⁶

In response to those challenges, some helpful studies have already been undertaken to reveal underpinning issues. For instance, several historical accounts deal with the formation and development of the Seventh-day Adventist message.¹³⁷ A few insightful studies consider the establishment of the Seventh-day Adventist organizational structure and revisions that it has undergone.¹³⁸ Other investigations survey the Seventh-day Adventist missionary endeavour across time, as well as denomination's interaction with others.¹³⁹

Perceiving the need for a further historical study that takes into consideration the interaction of those components in the development of Seventh-day Adventist ecclesiology, Timm R. Alberto, a well-known Adventist church historian, provided a brief historical overview of the development of Seventh-day Adventist ecclesiology from 1844 up to 2012.¹⁴⁰ The overall discussion tentatively addresses the relationship between (1) the Seventh-day Adventist message, (2) the Seventh-day Adventist organizational structure, and (3) the Seventh-day Adventist missionary endeavour across

¹³⁶ Carmelo L. Martinez, 'The Remnant Concept in the Seventh-day Adventist Church: Reasons in the Background of the Contemporary Debate' (doctoral thesis, River Plate Adventist University, 2002); Timm, 'Adventist Ecclesiology, 1844-2001'.

¹³⁷ See, for instance: Froom, *Movement of Destiny*; Damsteegt, *Foundations*; Timm, *The Sanctuary and the Three Angels' Messages: Integrating Factors in the Development of Seventh-day Adventist Doctrines*; R. J. Pöhler, 'Change in Seventh-day Adventist Theology: A Study of the Problem of Doctrinal Development' (doctoral dissertation, Andrews University, 1995); Knight, *Identity*.

¹³⁸ See, for instance: Mustard, 'Organization'; Barry, *Organizational Structure*; Knight, *Organizing for Mission and Growth*.

¹³⁹ Damsteegt, *Foundations*; Borge Schantz, *The Development of Seventh-day Adventist Missionary Thought: Contemporary Appraisal* (doctoral thesis, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1983); Bruinsma, *Seventh-day Adventist Attitudes toward Roman Catholicism, 1844-1965*; Reinder Bruinsma 'Seventh-day Adventists and Other Christians: An Appraisal of the Current Situation', in *Parochialism, Pluralism, and Contextualization: Challenges to Adventist Mission in Europe (19th-21st Centuries)*, ed. by David J. B. Trim and Daniel Heinz (Frankfurt am Main; New York: Peter Lang, 2010).

time. Some attention is also given to the way Seventh-day Adventists have seen themselves and other Christian denominations over the years.

Another similar study worth mentioning is Gerald A. Klingbeil's survey of the most dominant ecclesiological themes and issues that were grappled with in Adventist journals and publications between 1995 and 2004. This bibliographic review examined the major theological academic journals published by Seventh-day Adventist institutions of higher learning; Th.D. and Ph.D. theses and M.A. dissertations that deal with ecclesiological issues and were written at Seventh-day Adventist institutions of higher learning; and monographic studies on ecclesiology.¹⁴¹

Although more limited in scope, Klingbeil's theological article represents a useful bibliographical guide to various recent attempts undertaken by Adventist scholars to clarify the concept of remnant by addressing the issues related to: (1) the nature, structure and scope of ecclesial authority; (2) hermeneutics and methodological assumptions that underpin the discussions concerning the church's origin, ministry, mission, and continuity in time; (3) the movement's involvement with the ecumenical dialogue; (4) the Adventist view of the Petrine ministry and the issue of papal primacy; (5) key ecclesiological metaphors, images, concepts and motifs that emerge from various parts of Scripture; (6) the church's relationship to Israel; (7) the tension between exclusivity and contextualisation; (9) the servant nature of the church and its cross-cultural witnessing; (10) the relationship between unity and diversity; (11) the role of church leadership in Christian discipleship; (12) the structure and organization of the

¹⁴⁰ Alberto R. Timm, 'Seventh-day Adventist Ecclesiology, 1844–2012: A Brief Historical Overview', in *Message, Mission and Unity of the Church*, ed. by Ángel Manuel Rodríguez (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2013), pp. 219–42; Timm, 'Adventist Ecclesiology, 1844–2001'.

¹⁴¹ Gerard A. Klingbeil, 'Ecclesiology in Seventh-day Adventist Theological Research, 1995–2004: A Brief Introduction and Bibliographical Guide', *AUSS*, 43 (2005).

church; (13) the relationship between the local and universal church; (14) the essence and form of worship; (15) the nature of the church's sacraments; (16) the theology and practice of the laying on of hands in the church; (17) the interaction between the church and world; (18) the ordination of women, and (19) similar other exegetical, historical, sociological, missiological, or theological subjects of debate.

Alberto's and Klingbeil's historical surveys, which together encompass the period between 1844 and 2012, confirm the observation made earlier in this discussion that while a systematic and wide-ranging formulation of and theological reflection on Seventh-day Adventist ecclesiology has not yet been undertaken, some of its elements have been studied from various angles. Both authors affirm that it is only in the last fifteen years that serious intellectual prominence has been given to the discipline of ecclesiology within Adventist academic circles. According to Alberto and Klingbeil, the most recurrent topics have included the remnant, unity and diversity, and authority and the power structures of a Seventh-day Adventist denomination.

One of the major landmarks in the thinking about and formulation of Seventh-day Adventist ecclesiology was the publication in the year 2000 of the *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*. This appeared as Volume 12 in the Commentary Reference Series. As mentioned earlier, the project was initiated and supervised by the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference and thus represents the official position of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. All the chapters of the *Handbook* were refereed and discussed by the Biblical Research Institute Committee, which includes

theologians from around the world. The article on ecclesiology was written by Raoul Dederen, who also edited the volume.¹⁴²

Dederen's article is made up of nine major sections, covering the following areas: the church in God's plan; the nature and scope of the church; biblical images of the church; its missions, government, ordinances, authority, and characteristics; and a sobering look into the future of the church. After these theological observations, Dederen also provides a helpful review of the church's history and progress from its New Testament origins to the present time, as well as a selection of Ellen White's comments on the church. True to the purpose of the volume, Dederen's account is rather encyclopaedic and follows systematic methodology, presenting an overview of the basic concepts in tandem with crucial biblical references, without going into detailed exegetical explorations.

Another significant milestone in Seventh-day Adventist ecclesiological discussions was the Fourth South American Biblical-Theological Symposium, held from 30 August to 2 September 2001 at River Plate Adventist University in Argentina. The seminar resulted in 88 papers on the topic of ecclesiology. Most South American countries and institutions were represented, and there were also delegates from the General Conference and from some North American Seventh-day Adventist universities. Thirty-five of these studies were published as *Pensar la iglesia hoy* (Thinking About the Church Today) in honour of Raoul Dederen's contribution to Seventh-day Adventist ecclesiology.¹⁴³ This volume, which is divided into five different sections, examines

¹⁴² Raoul Dederen, 'The Church', in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. by Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2000).

¹⁴³ *Pensar La Iglesia Hoy: Hacia Una Eclesiología Adventista*, ed. by Gerard A. Klingbeil, Martin G. Klingbeil, and Miguel Ángel Núñez (Libertador, San Martín, Argentina: Editorial Universidad Adventista del Plata, 2002).

exegetical and biblical issues facing the church, larger theological questions, historical reflections, topics related to both the church in the world and the church and the world, and practical applications of a rethought Seventh-day Adventist ecclesiology. The book is also characterized by an important interdisciplinary focus. Not all the contributors are theologians, but their input was based on biblical and theological considerations. *Pensar la iglesia hoy* includes a wide variety of topics and approaches and covers the major areas of ecclesiology from a distinct Seventh-day Adventist perspective in a predominantly non-American setting.¹⁴⁴

Another significant research initiative, sponsored by the Postgraduate Studies section of the theology faculty at River Plate Adventist University and led by Mario Veloso, led to the publication of *La iglesia, cuerpo de Cristo y plenitud de Dios* (*The Church, Body of Christ and Fullness of God*).¹⁴⁵ The project included five distinct research groups and consisted of fifteen specialists in discrete theological fields. The resulting volume takes the ecclesologically significant Epistle to the Ephesians as its point of departure, and also covers more systematic elements of ecclesiology that may not be fully present in that particular book of the Bible. In connection with this project, the Fifth Postgraduate Research Seminar at River Plate Adventist University, held on 20 February 2005, in Libertador San Martín, Argentina, focused on the same topic, under the title 'The Church in Ephesians: From Exegesis to Theology'.¹⁴⁶

These publications were followed by the most prominent contribution thus far to the contemporary discourse on remnant ecclesiology. The International Bible Symposium – organized by the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference,

¹⁴⁴ For an extensive overview of the topics, see: Klingbeil, 'Ecclesiology', pp. 24–27.

the Adventist Theological Society, and Andrews University Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary – and held in Turkey from 7 to 17 July 2006 – placed a particular emphasis on ecclesiology. The general title of the conference was ‘The Adventist Theologian and the Nature, Mission, and Unity of the Church’.

In 2009, as a result of that conference, the BRI published a volume dealing exclusively with the Seventh-day Adventist perspective on the church as the remnant. As declared in its preface, *Toward a Theology of the Remnant*, edited by Angel Manuel Rodriguez, is 'dedicated to exploring the concept of the remnant and its contribution to an Adventist understanding of the nature of church'.¹⁴⁷ It should be added that the main value of the volume lies not in breaking new theological grounds or responding to the most recent challenges, but in systematizing and expanding on previously developed statements.

In the same year, Reinder Bruinsma, a Dutch theologian, published *The Body of Christ: A Biblical Understanding of the Church*. This book covers a more general set of ecclesiological themes, informed by more mainstream evangelically oriented framework. Unlike the BRI publication, which draws on the distinctly Adventist aspects of Adventism, Bruinsma emphasizes what is Christian in the Adventist understanding of the church, addressing issues such as ecclesial metaphors, marks, history, mission, and social responsibilities.¹⁴⁸

The most recent substantial publication on Adventist ecclesiology appeared in 2013, issued by the BRI as a sequel to its volume on remnant. This time the concern is

¹⁴⁵ *La Iglesia, Cuerpo De Cristo Y Plenitud De Dios*, ed. by Mario Veloso (Libertador San Martín: Universidad Adventista del Plata, 2006).

¹⁴⁶ For further details, see: Klingbeil, 'Ecclesiology', pp. 26–27.

¹⁴⁷ Rodríguez, *Toward a Theology of the Remnant: Studies in Adventist Ecclesiology*, p. ix.

¹⁴⁸ Bruinsma, *The Body of Christ*.

broader, as is illustrated by the very title: *Message, Mission and Unity of the Church*. It revolves around questions about interpretation of the Scriptures, the role of fundamental beliefs in the church, and the way the message is communicated to the world. Several chapters address the issue of the relationship between Israel and the church as well as topics related to world religions.¹⁴⁹ Although this book is a necessary and welcome addition to the corpus of texts addressing Adventist ecclesiological questions, it is still far from being comprehensive. It manages to address only a selection of the most urgent issues, concerns that were shaped and given prominence in the context of a church that constructs its identity around the notions of message and its proclamation.

All the above-listed ecclesiological endeavours represent responses to relatively fresh major tensions within the denomination. The studies were intended to broaden, reinvigorate and update the Adventist remnant outlook by raising some serious questions about the nature of the church. On the other hand, these recent studies also reveal some inherent weaknesses in the past and present Adventist reflections on the concept of the remnant. To the analysis of these limitations and inadequacies, the focus of this study is now turned.

¹⁴⁹ Rodríguez, *Message, Mission and Unity of the Church*, pp. 361–443.

CHAPTER III

A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OF ADVENTIST UNDERSTANDING OF THE CHURCH AS REMNANT

At the end of Chapter I a list was presented of factors that made Adventists aware of their need for a more fully developed ecclesiology. These factors took into account threats to internal unity, diminished relevance, and complications in external relations. This present section outlines the reasons why building a more elaborate ecclesiology is not only a matter of efficiency, but also one of theological necessity.

The previous chapters on how the traditional Adventist framework of the remnant has developed with and was shaped by the church's understanding of truth, its ecclesial structures, and its scholars' theological discourse on ecclesiology all demonstrate a certain consistency and clear identity, but also point to certain deficiencies that need to be addressed if the movement is to move forward in regard to theological reflection.

The aim of this chapter is therefore to take further the discussions conducted in previous pages by identifying four major inadequacies in Adventist ecclesiological discourse, which, as already demonstrated, is almost entirely centred on the notion of remnant. These weaknesses include (1) a lack of systematic reasoning; (2) a neglect of

ontological definitions of the church; (3) a reductionist concept of truth; and finally, (4) a pneumatological deficit.

(I) THE FIRST INADEQUACY: THE LACK OF SYSTEMATIC REASONING

The attempts at articulating Adventist understanding of the church as remnant have many merits. The concept (1) has a strong biblical basis, (2) stands in continuity with most previous Adventist attempts at self-definition, (3) has potential to integrate various distinctive aspects of Adventist faith into a coherent whole, and (4) carries a concrete, dynamic and historical connotation that places the movement within the flow of prophetic history. It thus captures the imagination, fosters the excitement, and encourages the faithful witness, loyalty and theological creativity of its members. Adventists thus avoid much of what Nicholas M. Healy perceives to be the most unfortunate trend of the modern mainstream ecclesiological endeavour – its inclination towards highly static, essentialist, abstract and idealized descriptions of the church.¹

On the other hand, Adventist accounts fails to articulate in a clear and comprehensive manner the relationships between the remnant and (1) other equally important ecclesiological concepts and metaphors from the Scriptures, such as the body of Christ, the people of God, the temple of the Holy Spirit,² (2) the being and actions of a triune God in redemptive history, (3) the wider Christian and non-Christian communities, and (4) the church's socio-political responsibility as an agent for the betterment of the human community in the world at large.

¹ Nicholas M. Healy, *Church, World, and the Christian Life: Practical-Prophetic Ecclesiology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 26.

Somehow Adventism needs to ground its distinctive particularity in a more universal vision of the divine economy. This insistence on universality is more than a response to the pluralistic modern world; it has strong biblical roots in the doctrine of Creation. So, instead of tendentially emphasizing the isolated community which defines itself in terms of not being like others, an Adventist ecclesiological account should stress the correlative universality implicit in the concept of the remnant, a universality which views the church as the vanguard of a movement towards God's being all in all.

It is important to reiterate that this need does not come only from pragmatic and/or external challenges, but actually rises organically from the movement's theological basis. Given Adventists' stated commitment to the entirety of the Scriptures – the *sola, tota* and *prima Scriptura* project – it should logically follow that the movement cannot remain content with an account of the church that draws on only a very narrow selection of biblical metaphors, motifs and types. While these do, indeed, provide the movement with a strong sense of distinct identity and mission, they are insufficient for addressing the complexity and multidimensionality of the fully fledged communal life of the church as expressed in the Bible.

The remnant outlook itself calls for a more thorough and systematically developed ecclesiological reflection. According to Adventist scholars, the end-time remnant church is to pull 'the universal church out of its invisibility in preparation for the coming of the Lord in glory.'³ Its constant growth – already happened, happening, as well as anticipated – transforming a small group of enthusiastic believers into an

² Paul Sevier Minear, *Images of the Church in the New Testament* (Cambridge: Clarke, 2007).

³ Rodríguez, 'God's End-Time Remnant', p. 226.

internationally present, gigantic, visible religious body, makes talk about the nature, structure and shape of ecclesial community absolutely unavoidable. This very mission demands a clear account of the nature of the church as a community, so that the movement can clarify tensions and impasses in its relationships internally, as well as with other Christian bodies and with the unchurched.

In light of this, it seems highly improbable that the employment of a single-metaphor approach would suffice to give a comprehensive explanation of the multifaceted nature of the church. Adventists typically express the Church's relationship with God and the world by using the concept of remnant and then occasionally – as they find it fitting – employ some other ecclesial metaphor, motif, type or model to correct the emerging imbalances. They would benefit from thinking instead about a systematic framework for approaching the issue of church.

(II) THE SECOND INADEQUACY: THE NEGLECT OF ONTOLOGICAL DEFINITIONS

A crucial move in advancing the Adventist ecclesiology of the remnant as well as its organizational structures is to widen the basis for reasoning from purely functional modes in order to also include the ontological realm. In this study, the brief surveys of the major motifs in Adventist remnant-based ecclesiological thinking and of the way their communal life is structured have revealed that whenever the church has been discussed the prevailing discourse has addressed it almost exclusively from a functional perspective, with axiological or teleological elaborations. While the functional approach involves asking questions about what the church is for, what it *does* for people and what purpose it has, the axiological one discusses the core values, priorities and ideals the

church is to embody on its journey, and the teleological viewpoint means discussing the church from the perspective of its ultimate purpose and final eschatological realization.

Even the question of the church's *esse* has been traditionally addressed in functional terms. For instance, describing what the church *is* in terms of what the church *does* is especially prominent in Adventist self-understanding in vocabulary such as: 'messenger', 'prophet', 'harbinger', 'reformer', 'restorer', 'example', 'servant', 'co-worker with God' – perfectly exemplifying what Avery Dulles would expand on under the 'Church as Herald' model.⁴ All these words belong to a functional nomenclature that applies to the missionary church, which is the *church in action*. It derives its identity from what it is involved in doing; it has a missionary mandate from God. It is always the church-in-mission, the church-in-doing, and the church-in-saying.

However, as important as it is, this functional description of the identity of the church lacks any definition of what the church *is* in itself, ontologically. The problem of talk that focuses only on one perspective lies not in what it is saying, but in what it is *not* saying. Dealing solely with the questions of role and causation (that is, of word, calling, serving) while not elucidating the actual *being* of the church renders the definition one-sided and incomplete. Such an attempt can result not only in conceptual ambiguity but

⁴ Ibid., pp. 68–80. Luther and Barth seem to be the champions of this heralding model. In all fairness, recent years have also seen attempts to advocate that the model of the church as herald can be used as an ontological basis for the church. To this end, John Webster developed his work around the notion of proclamation as the generative event of church life. As an evangelical, he insists that the gospel and its proclamation are somehow intrinsic to the being of the church. For more information, see John Webster, 'On Evangelical Ecclesiology', *Ecclesiology*, 1 (2004), 9–25. However, on a more critical note, such proposals still tend to discuss the being of the church solely through what it is supposed to do in order to be true to its divine calling; they bypass any analysis of how the entity is doing the proclamation. While their reflection is indeed useful in clarifying the reason and cause of the church's existence, any attempt to define the task of witnessing, is still made on the assumption that a certain entity is involved in doing it. This points to the mystical communion as a somewhat more foundational ontological category, whose identity is further explained and clarified by reference to the agency of the Word. For a more elaborate critique of Webster's thesis, see Jenson and Wilhite, *The Church*, pp. 40–44.

also in various types of reductionist distortions in regard to the church's nature and task. Both perspectives are closely interlinked and cannot be separated in a valid ecclesiological definition.

This observation, which indicates the overall *functional mode of Adventist ecclesiological reasoning*, necessitates the construction of a complementary definition that deals more thoroughly with the issue of the church's being.⁵ What comes as a surprise when one surveys the topics covered thus far by Adventist theologians is that the issue of the church's being has not yet been thoroughly addressed; one could even say it has been ignored in Adventist ecclesiological discourse. While the most frequently recurring topics in Adventist research include the remnant, unity/diversity, and authority/power structures in Seventh-day Adventist ecclesiology, there has been no comprehensive analysis of what the church *is* in the first place.

The dissatisfaction with the present state of Adventist ecclesiological discussion is exacerbated by the fact that any talk about inner and external ecclesial unity would have to presuppose at least some form of tentative understanding of what the church *is*. This is an important issue. Its thorough treatment is urgently needed in a denomination that is experiencing rapid polarization. A similar logic also applies to all other ecclesial issues (authority, structure, ordination, baptism), whose ultimate meaning and point of reference is usually determined by some assumed idea of what the church is at its core.

⁵ It would be reasonable to expect that, as in the early Adventist experience in 1888, when the pioneers had to broaden their eschatological vision of the work of Christ by supplementing their earlier functional descriptions with an ontological perspective (reaching something similar to the Chalcedonian formulation of Christ's divine-human nature), one could also find some present-day Adventist theological reflections that have attempted to enrich a pervasively functional understanding of the church through explicit articulation of its *esse*. Some of the more recent attempts to go beyond merely functional definitions and reason from the perspective of believers' unity with Christ are set out in: Ángel Manuel Rodríguez 'Ecclesiology and Reorganization: The Oneness of the Church (2006) <<http://lender.adventist.org/world-church/commission-ministries-services-structures/rodriguez-ecclesiology.pdf>> [accessed 10/02/2016]; Barry, 'Church and Unity'.

From the overview of the rejected proposal described in the section on structure in the previous chapter, another factor emerges that contributed to the Adventist tendency to ignore ontological questions. It is clear that the ontological perspective as presented in 1901–1903 was insufficiently developed and that it overemphasized the individual aspects of the believer's life in Christ at the expense of its corporate dimensions. It naively ignored any sociological challenges the church was aiming to address at the time. Unfortunately, seeing the inadequacies, the church also completely dismissed those aspects of Jones's and Wagoner's agenda that could have greatly advanced the church's communal self-understanding. Owing to the typical Adventist focus on the imminence of Christ's return and the urgency of the proclamation, and to the pragmatic-activist mentality of the denomination, there seemed never to be enough time to spend on more detailed and balanced self-reflection – one that would go beyond merely functional definitions and deal more explicitly with questions of the church's being.

(III) THE THIRD INADEQUACY: THE REDUCTIONIST CONCEPT OF TRUTH

In the history of the Adventist church the question of identity arose as secondary issue – a mere by-product of Adventists' original search for truth. It was this quest for truth that initially united them as a community.⁶ Given the centrality of the notion of truth

⁶ One of the first statements of faith in Adventist history is found in James White's response to the Seventh Day Baptists' inquiry about the identity of Sabbatarian Adventists. In his informal statement, White describes this group of Christians as being 'bound together by the bonds of love – love for the truth, love for each other, and love for a perishing world'. See, James White, 'Resolution of the Seventh Day Baptist Central Association', *RH*, 11 August 1853. Even in later periods of Adventist history, it was repeatedly affirmed by the proponents of the movement that the truth stands at the heart of Adventist life, its message, and its mission. See, Ministerial Association,

in Adventism, the next section will, firstly, offer a précis of the most foundational theological convictions that shape Adventists' dynamic conceptualization of truth, secondly, uncover its inadequacies, and finally, identify some of its neglected key elements. Their retrieval could lead to a richer understanding of the dynamics of divine revelation, and especially of the church's role within it.

THE DYNAMIC NATURE OF TRUTH

It can hardly pass unnoticed that throughout their history Adventists have operated with a highly dynamic and temporal notion of truth. Even when talking about the 'landmarks', 'pillars', or 'foundations' of their faith – which would normally carry predominantly static and timeless connotations in general Christian discourse – they have referred to them by tentative expressions such as 'the present truth', 'new light', or 'progressive revelation'.⁷ A correlative notion of 'progressive understanding' has also been employed by Adventists to describe the dynamics of human consciousness of truth that constantly evolves throughout time.⁸

The strong emphasis on the temporality of truth and on the historically conditioned nature of human understanding has provided, consequently, the grounds for continuing Adventist insistence on the need for ongoing doctrinal revision and reconstruction.⁹ It has similarly provided justification for the church's powerfully

Adventists Believe, p. vii. For a more recent official public statement that supports the fundamental claim that the Adventist church 'emerged from a quest for truth' – a common truth-seeking enterprise characterized by a continual dialogue and scholarly discourse, see: Joe Galusha and others, 'Seventh-day Adventists and Scholarship', *International Conference on Faith and Science in Denver, Colorado* (2004) <<http://fae.adventist.org/statement.htm>> [accessed 12/01/2016].

⁷ Knight, *Identity*, pp. 19–21.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 24–28.

⁹ Pöhler, *Continuity and Change*, pp. 180–95.

dynamic vision of the remnant as a pilgrim community that is always in motion – on a journey towards fuller truth, constantly progressing in its knowledge of God. Its path 'is like the light of the dawn, that shines brighter and brighter until the full day' (Proverbs 4.18).

Ellen White frequently alerted Adventist church members to the new spiritual possibilities that may spring from the richness of the Divine Word. In *Christ's Object Lessons* she wrote, 'The Earth itself is not so interlaced with golden veins and filled with precious things as is the word of God.'¹⁰ A little later in the same book she claimed:

We have seen only the glimmering of divine glory and of the infinitude of knowledge and wisdom; we have, as it were, been working on the surface of the mine, when rich golden ore is beneath the surface, to reward the one who will dig for it. The shaft must be sunk deeper and yet deeper in the mine, and the results will be glorious treasure. Through a correct faith, divine knowledge will become human knowledge.¹¹

This is why, White believed, believers should expect to encounter fresh 'rays of light' at every stage of their growth in the knowledge of truth. She wrote:

New light will ever be revealed on the word of God to him who is in living connection with the Sun of Righteousness. Let no one come to the conclusion that there is no more truth to be revealed. The diligent, prayerful seeker for truth will find precious rays of light yet to shine forth from the word of God. Many gems are yet scattered that are to be gathered together to become the property of the remnant people of God.¹²

¹⁰ Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1900), p. 104.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 113. The same sense of awe when faced by the greatness of the truth that lies before us is captured adroitly by the words of Isaac Newton: 'I seem to have been only like a boy playing on the sea-shore, and diverting myself in now and then finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me.' *Memoirs of the Life, Writings, and Discoveries of Sir Isaac Newton* (1855) by Sir David Brewster (Volume II. Ch. 27). Compare: 'As children gath'ring pebbles on the shore', John Milton, *Paradise Regained*, Book IV, Line 330.

¹² Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Sabbath School* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1938), p. 34.

Linking the concept of truth to the hermeneutical horizon emphasizing the seven stages of Christ's salvific ministry, Adventists also insist that God's remnant people are to be alert to the newness of God's current action, which always highlights certain aspects of truth as particularly relevant and applicable to the present time. The logic of this aspect of dynamic 'present truth' is as follows: as soon as one grasps the fact that God has revealed his action in history and that light has been shed, this awareness changes everything. One is called to respond to this self-disclosure by God and to testify and live according to the new light. That is what gives definition and purpose to human life. According to this view, the highest priority for Christians is to live a life of recognition, of openness, and of sensitivity to the movement of God.¹³

For this reason, most Adventists have considering it a priority to maintain openness to greater knowledge of the truth into which God has been leading them 'step by step'.¹⁴ This openness includes the willingness of the church to 'exchange a thousand errors for one truth'.¹⁵ It requires from the church a readiness for continual change and revisions of its current understanding of faith (*ecclesia reformate semper reformanda*). Enlarging on the implications of this dynamic view of progressive truth, Ellen White stated:

We have many lessons to learn, and many, many to unlearn. God and heaven alone are infallible. Those who think that they will never have to give up a

¹³ From their beginnings as a faith group, Adventists have believed that, throughout the history of humanity, God's remnant people have *always* had a present truth – spiritual insights that are especially applicable to the particular time in which they are living. That 'present truth', is exactly as the words suggest – a *present* truth, not a future or past truth. See Knight, *Identity*, pp. 19–20.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

¹⁵ This attitude is most forcefully expressed by J. N. Andrews in Ellen G. White, 'Spiritual Gifts', <<http://text.egwwritings.org/publication.php?pubtype=Book&bookCode=2SG&pagenumber=117>> [accessed 05/04/2017]. In a similar vein, James White, when faced with complaints concerning the later modification of certain aspects of earlier Adventist teaching, was quick to respond that Adventists 'would change on other points of their faith if they could see good reason to do so from the Scriptures'. See James White, 'The Word', *RH*, 7 February 1856, p. 149.

cherished view, never have occasion to change an opinion, will be disappointed. As long as we hold to our own ideas and opinions with determined persistency, we cannot have the unity for which Christ prayed.¹⁶

Given the strong *logocentric* orientation of the Adventist quest for truth as founded in the Bible, it does not come as a surprise that the primary role of the church is defined in relation to this overall purpose. The church is frequently named 'the pillar', 'the buttress' or the 'fortress' of the truth (I Timothy 3.15), 'the repository of the oracles of God'.¹⁷ Receiving and advancing its divinely allotted role of truth-bearer, a role that previously belonged to its Israelite predecessor, the remnant is 'entrusted with' the 'oracles of God' (Romans 3.2) and given the responsibility of preserving them.¹⁸ As famous American-Dutch Reformed theologian, Louise Berkhof, states,

[B]y giving His Word to the Church, God constituted the Church the keeper of the precious deposit of the truth. While hostile forces are pitted against it and the power of error is everywhere apparent, the Church must see to it that the truth does not perish from the earth, that the inspired volume in which it is embodied be kept pure and handed on faithfully from generation to generation.¹⁹

Ellen White had a similar vision of the role of God's people in the 'end time'. She repeatedly assured Adventist members that the earth will always have God's people among its population, people whose highest priority will be 'to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms'.²⁰ Adventist

¹⁶ Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Writers and Editors* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1946), p. 37.

¹⁷ Ellen White used the metaphor 'fortress of truth' to illustrate the task of God's end-time people. She wrote that 'they are to stand as the strong fortress of truth, their light shining far in the moral darkness of the world'. See Ellen G. White, 'Our High Calling', <<http://text.egwwritings.org/publication.php?pubtype=Book&bookCode=OHC&pagenumber=247¶graphReferences=0>> [accessed 05/04/2016]. See also Elias Brasil de Suoza, 'The Bible and the Church: Revisiting the Obvious', *Dialogue*, <<http://dialogue.adventist.org/en/articles/25-1/de-souza/the-bible-and-the-church-revisiting-the-obvious>> [accessed 05/04/2016].

¹⁸ Davidson, 'The Role of the Church in the Interpretation', p. 326.

¹⁹ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1939), p. 595.

²⁰ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1950), p. 595.

writers have often quoted this and similar words from the writings of Ellen White when reminding the community of believers of their responsibility as bearers of the truth of divine revelation handed down through the sacred canon. The retrieval and preservation of Bible teachings have, thus, always been seen as the most pressing and exigent tasks of the Adventist movement. This has been the case continuously from the time of the movement's inception to the present day.²¹

Therefore, when explaining the church's purpose and mission in terms of its perpetual quest for the 'present truth', Adventists emphasize that those people who would like to become part of God's faithful eschatological remnant need to learn how to be continually sensitive to God's new revelations of divine eternal truth as well as to those aspects of it that are most relevant and applicable at the current stage of salvation history. Discerning these two aspects of truth determines the church's present duty before God, provides the remnant with the specific message it is to proclaim to the world, and unites its members in common faith and purpose – truth as it is revealed in Christ and through the sacred Scriptures.

THE EXCESSIVELY PROPOSITIONAL CONCEPTION OF TRUTH

While Adventists are proud of themselves for having such a dynamic and stimulating perception of the nature of truth, they are generally blind to the fact that, as children of an Enlightenment era, they have uncritically adopted excessively propositional and logocentric interpretations of this concept, which have an intrinsic tendency to impoverish and marginalize ecclesiological discourse.

²¹ For further discussion of the role of the church in relation to the truth as found in the Bible, see: Hyde, *A Symposium on Biblical Hermeneutics*, p. v; Canale, 'The Message and the Mission of the

Shaped by Enlightenment values, Adventists tend to see the truth primarily as 'a characteristic of true statements', which are true 'if [they] declare what is in fact the case'.²² This conception of truth has been sustained by the conviction that the world operates according to universal laws, the 'laws of nature', that exist independently of human reason, yet can be discerned by it.²³

Adventists would, therefore, concur that the notion of truth assumes some form of correspondence with the propositional statement about what the world really is (a close, yet not as theoretically articulated, parallel to what contemporary philosophy would call 'the correspondence theory of truth').²⁴ Additionally, the probability of a certain conceptual framework's being recognized as a genuine truth-carrier is increased by the coherence of its arrangement and its explanatory power ('the coherence theory of truth').²⁵ After all, Adventists proudly declare themselves to have received their beliefs as a coherent, interrelated system of truths. Furthermore, truth can withstand the appearance of new information and facts and reconcile the seemingly conflicting aspects of reality in one unified whole ('universality'). As such, truth involves human logic and experience and can (to a certain degree) be validated by them.²⁶

Remnant', pp. 261–86; White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 593–602.

²² Stanley J. Grenz, 'Participating in What Frees: The Concept of Truth in the Postmodern Context', *Review and Expositor*, 100 (Fall 2003), 688.

²³ Stanley J. Grenz, 'Answering Pilate: The Concept of Truth in the Postmodern Context', *Enrichment Journal*, <http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/200601/200601_110_AnsweringPilate.cfm> [accessed 05/04/2016].

²⁴ Marian David, 'The Correspondence Theory of Truth', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2015) <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/truth-correspondence/>> [accessed 05/04/2016]; Richard L. Kirkham, *Theories of Truth: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997), pp. 119–40.

²⁵ James O. Young, 'The Coherence Theory of Truth', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2013) <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/truth-coherence/>> [accessed 05/04/2016].

²⁶ Simon W. Blackburn, 'Truth: Philosophy and Logic', *Encyclopædia Britannica Online* (2016) <<http://www.britannica.com/topic/truth-philosophy-and-logic>> [accessed 05/04/2016].

Although most Adventists agree that every person should attempt to grasp the meaning of Christological reformulations of the notion of truth,²⁷ the way they approach this task still seems to reflect the arrogance of modernism. This is especially the case in their firm and unquestioning affirmation of the power and supremacy of reason to acquire a complete, objective description of the world as it really is. This can be seen most prominently in Miller's fourteen rules for Biblical interpretation, which were often quoted and applied by early Adventist thinkers.²⁸

A careful analysis of Miller's hermeneutical principles reveals traces of intellectual convictions stemming from Enlightenment heritage. Although Miller abandoned other aspects of his initial deistic interpretations of the world, his approach to Scripture remained similar to that of other deist scholars of his time whose writings contain strong rationalistic or intellectualistic overtones. With them he believed that the Bible contains objective, measurable truths, similar to those that can be found in nature.²⁹ Miller's approach to the truth in Scripture resembled the Baconian method in many respects. He used a system based on concordance or compatibility to gather and process all available information about unclear words. Marko Lukic argues that

what scientists believe they are doing by [the] collection, comparison and exclusion of scientific data in the process of coming to general theories is the same technique Miller used, differing only in that instead of comparing factual qualities of natural phenomena Miller was comparing possible meanings of particular words he was coming to via a concordance.³⁰

²⁷ For a very insightful exploration of the Christian perception of truth, see: Bruce Marshall, *Trinity and Truth* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000). See also, John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), pp. 67–114.

²⁸ William, 'Miller's Principles'.

²⁹ When studied diligently, it opens up its mysteries and becomes 'a feast of reason'. Knight, *Identity*, p. 41; Crocombe, 'A Feast of Reason'.

³⁰ For a more in-depth analysis of Miller's method, see: Marko Lukic, 'The Anatomy of Dissension: The Study of the Early Adventist Paradigm from the Perspective of a Modified Kuhnian Theory of

The most valuable method of searching for the truth, according to Miller, involved inductive and systematic study of the Bible.³¹ The common-sense mindset that was gaining ground in his day simplified attitudes to Scripture and made it seem accessible to 'common' and uneducated people. The spirit of radical democracy of the Jacksonian era also encouraged laypeople to take the initiative, not only in organizational and administrative matters, but also in the process of discovering and articulating what they believed to be true statements about reality that are found in undistorted form in Scripture.³²

Another problematic assumption that Adventists tend to uphold, following Miller's lead, insists that the discovery of truth is to be placed principally in the hands of autonomous and completely independent individuals who have direct access to the depths of God's revelation in Scriptures. This kind of access, they believe, is enabled by the meticulous application of a set of tools defined *a priori* as exegetical and cognitive instruments. In this process, the individual is assumed to stand outside the flux of historical, social and other contingencies. He or she serves as a neutral observer, or as a scientist, gathering and processing the data revealed in personal, methodical study of Scriptures. As the outcome, this independent and self-reliant researcher attains 'objective' truth about reality.³³

Paradigms and Paradigm Changes' (doctoral thesis, University of Wales, Lampeter Trinity Saint David, August 2011), pp. 141-81; Rasmussen, 'Hermeneutics of William Miller'.

³¹ See Dick, 'Adventism in America', p. 1; Knight, *Identity*, pp. 39-42.

³² Vance, *Adventism in Crisis*, p. 14; Knight, *Identity*, p. 36.

³³ Rasmussen, 'Hermeneutics of William Miller'; Crocombe, 'A Feast of Reason'.

CHALLENGING THE TRADITIONAL ADVENTIST NOTION OF TRUTH

As has become clear by now, underlying the predominantly functional and individualistic trends in Adventist theology is the Church's insistence on truth as a mainly logocentric, propositional concept. By definition, such a concept excludes the church from being a significant aspect of divine revelation; the remnant becomes just the messenger. The truth is expressed only in the form of the message proclaimed – predominantly in linguistic discourse, especially in a set of distinctive doctrines – and the carrier of the message is rendered secondary, if not insignificant. Instead of being an organic part of divine revelation – an assumption supported by the mainstream theological forum – the remnant church in Adventist ecclesiology seems to stand *outside* the scope of what is regarded as the truth. Due to this problematic epistemology and the impoverished theory of truth implicit in many Adventist statements of faith (and its traditional interpretation of *sola Scriptura*), the movement, in fear of ecclesiolatry, has also treated ecclesiology as a secondary theological discipline by comparison with, for example, Christology and eschatology.

This narrow conception of truth clashes with the wider biblical concept of truth as Person and, consequently, as *being*.³⁴ Even though Adventists would welcome the communal aspect in the processes of uncovering the truth (as visible in their church structures), the truth they are uncovering still remains propositional and always external to what they are as a community. Thus, the biblical organic connection between the church and revelation is ignored, as is Paul's declaration that the church is being the

³⁴ Grenz, 'Answering Pilate'.

very means by which God reveals his 'manifold wisdom' to the 'principalities and powers in heavenly places' (see Ephesians 3.10).

As stated above, the Adventist definition of truth draws heavily on the intellectual heritage of the Enlightenment, with its well-known limitations. The idea, for example, that truth is only perceivable through logic and abstract reasoning has been challenged by the proposition that the notion of truth belongs to the realm of human affairs and is inextricably tied to its knower. Given that humans never exist in isolation from each other and from the world, truth is not only a personal but also a relational category. One is considered to be true, in this personal and relational sense, when he or she is trustworthy and reliable. So, unswayable faithfulness to one's promise, complete achievement of an intended purpose, or continual integrity that is exemplified in an inextricable relationship between what one is, says and does, qualifies someone to be regarded as true or truthful.³⁵

Such a development of thought is not far from the general Christian account, according to which the ultimate expression of truth is found in the revelation of God in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit.³⁶ By being ascribed a personal quality, the notion of truth transcends mere cognitive definitions. It involves the entire human being, *totus homo* (as Luther would have it), with all his faculties: cognitive, emotional, volitional, spiritual, physical, and social. Therefore it is proper to talk about 'participation',

³⁵ Grenz, 'Truth', p. 688; R. Scott Smith, *Truth and the New Kind of Christian: The Emerging Effects of Postmodernism in the Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005).

³⁶ Marshall, *Trinity and Truth*; 'Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum* Solemnly Promulgated by His Holiness Pope Paul VI on November 18, 1965', <http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651118_dei-verbum_en.html> [accessed 07/04/2016].

'partaking', or 'sharing' in the truth that involves the totality of human and divine beings and their dynamic interplay.³⁷

Paradoxically, this biblical and more comprehensive understanding appears to fit better with the ideas reinvigorated by the postmodern turn, which, in the last few decades, has challenged the central assumptions of the modern outlook. Grenz aptly captures the essence of this paradigmatic shift in people's perception of truth:

According to postmoderns, truth is not merely a quality of statements that ascribe properties to the world. Nor should truth be limited to what can be verified by reason and the empirical scientific method alone. Instead, postmoderns are convinced that there are ways of knowing in addition to reason, such as through the emotions and the intuition. And rather than a realm of impersonal laws, postmoderns view the world as historical, relational, personal, and participatory.³⁸

The same writer goes on to claim:

Postmoderns, therefore, would answer Pilate's question by inviting him to participate in the truth. Pilate will never come to know that Jesus is the Christ, unless he takes the step of participating in what Jesus embodies. To know the truth, he must respond personally to the Master's invitation, 'Come and see.'³⁹

This new development in regard to the conception of truth could support the revision of the Adventist scholars' reductionist definitions of truth held by their predecessors, especially its predominantly rationalistic dimensions. Prompted by postmodern sentiment, it might be easier to start seeing the truth as a more organic historical process that involves the whole person, not only his or her rational faculties. One might even argue that this postmodern shift has reintroduced to the idea of truth some of the elements that existed prior to modernism, yet were eclipsed by it. As mentioned above, it has again drawn attention to the belief that the knowledge of the truth of divine

³⁷ Paul S. Fiddes, *Participating in God: A Pastoral Doctrine of the Trinity* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), p. 29.

³⁸ Grenz, 'Truth', p. 688.

revelation involves the entire human life in all its spheres. It involves one's mind, emotions, intuitions, volition, and actions.

The postmodern epistemological shift reminds Adventists that the truth is always relational and experiential. In other words – put in an ecclesiological context – a deeper knowledge of truth and the faith group members' participation in it happens only in a communal setting that involves both a Spirit-mediated living relationship with Christ and a relationship with the other members of his body. A multifaceted expression of divine love through the transformed lives of the church members enriches individual perception of and participation in truth.⁴⁰ This thoroughly communal nature of believers' participation in truth transcends the narrowly defined individualistic interpretations that were embraced by those taking the modernist outlook.

The Swiss scholar Ulrich Luz introduces a vivid simile when he criticizes the application of the modernist belief by an independent researcher who manages somehow, using the scientific method, to reach objective truth. Luz describes interpreters using this model as being 'like people who have to examine the water of a stream while they are sitting in a boat that is carried along by that very stream'.⁴¹ The somewhat naive interpretation of scientific objectivity in 'which the interpreter is a scientist looking at a static text under a microscope', neglects the fact that both the scientist and the observed text are deeply affected by the 'stream' of historical and social processes in which they fully participate.⁴²

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ This proposal is further explored in Simone Sinn, *The Church as Participatory Community: On the Interrelationship of Hermeneutics, Ecclesiology and Ethics* (Dublin: The Columba Press, 2002).

⁴¹ Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1-7: A Commentary* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007), p. 63.

⁴² Ibid. For an evangelical reaction against this kind of position, see: William David Henard and Adam W. Greenway, *Evangelicals Engaging Emergent: A Discussion of the Emergent Church Movement* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2009).

The recent trends also challenge Adventists to recognize that the process of meaning-making has to be seen exclusively as a participatory event in which an individual enters into the transformative act of interpretation along with other believers and non-believers.⁴³ This activity necessitates the personal involvement of each individual as the *conditio sine qua non* for understanding. A younger, 'postmodern' generation of Adventists would readily agree that the interpretative event always happens in some context and is inevitably a communal activity. This makes the academic discipline of ecclesiology and that of hermeneutics inseparable companions in the process of elucidating the dynamics of the interpretative event — the former providing the essential context for understanding the issues treated by the latter.⁴⁴

It would greatly enhance the Adventist idea of truth to more explicitly address the possibility that a clearer understanding of the Scriptures can best be achieved within a communal setting, by the work of the Spirit. This transformative event produces even greater unity in the members with their God and with others, and results again in an increased understanding through this web of interrelations. This means that the task of providing an adequate account of the dynamics of finding truth cannot be ascribed solely to the disciplines of hermeneutics or epistemology. Ecclesiology takes its stand as an indispensable partner in this discussion, its task being to articulate how this interpretative process occurs, not only in principle but also in the real sphere of a church's life. In the case of Adventist ecclesiology, one of the most pertinent tasks would, therefore, be to provide an account of the ecclesial structures and mechanisms

⁴³ For more detailed exposition of the participatory and communal nature of hermeneutics, see: Simone Sinn, 'Hermeneutics and Ecclesiology', in *The Routledge Companion to the Christian Church*, ed. by Gerard Mannion and Lewis Seymour Mudge (London; New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 589.

⁴⁴ How exactly individuals are to relate to each other in the process of interpreting truth is a matter that will be discussed in Chapter VI.

that are devised to enable the community of believers, as well as the individuals within that community, to engage in the act of interpretation of divine truth and exercise their God-given authority appropriately – within domains set by God in Christ, through the Spirit, in Scriptures.

It is important to highlight that these changes in theological emphases are not necessary *because* of the postmodern shift; instead, they are called for by the implications of the Adventist theological framework and their commitment to the Word. The recent epistemological shift can only serve as a reminder of that and as an opportunity for a fresh and more comprehensive expression of the Adventist collective identity. Instead of restricting prophetic truth to a definite set of faith propositions expressed primarily in official doctrinal statements,⁴⁵ the account can be broadened to include a description of the ways in which a living dynamic of prophetic truth also incorporates the *esse* of the church. In this description the church is recognized, not only as a witness to or messenger of the truth, but also as an integral part of it.

Perhaps one of the key reasons why Adventists encounter difficulties when trying to articulate a more comprehensive theory of revelation is that they lack understanding of the activity of the Holy Spirit in the life the church. This neglect stands as one of the greatest obstacles to further Adventist ecclesiological advancement. The situation needs to be rectified if Adventism is to provide a vision capable of addressing the needs of its twenty-first century members.

⁴⁵ Lukic, 'The Anatomy of Dissension', p. 3.

(IV) THE FOURTH INADEQUACY: THE PNEUMATOLOGICAL DEFICIT

Adventists' high regard for the Jewish roots of Christianity, especially their emphasis on the doctrines of Sabbath and the Sanctuary, has led them to place great emphasis on the Old Testament and consequently on the foreshadowing and community-making work of God the Father. The church stresses that – through his providential deeds and the inspired prophetic types, cultic rites, symbols and utterances – God prepared the way for the coming the Messiah and through Christ invited the fallen world to reunite with him. This realization led early Adventists to recognize the central role of the Son of God in enabling the believers' life in God, both conceptually and empirically. Adventists have henceforth regarded the generative event of Christianity – Christ himself – as the core of any ecclesiological project.⁴⁶

As demonstrated in Chapter I, the Protestant insistence on *sola Christus* has been extended by Adventists to encompass their entire doctrinal corpus.⁴⁷ It has been claimed that every doctrine that Adventists teach should be brought into relation to Jesus Christ.⁴⁸ He is the core, the living centre, of the church's teaching, life and witness.⁴⁹ That is why Rolf Pöhler and George Knight rightly describe the Adventist

⁴⁶ Rodríguez, 'Toward a Theology of the Remnant', p. 20.

⁴⁷ Instead of being used as a criterion for determining the 'canon within the canon', Luther's famous dictum, 'Das, was Christum triebet', was employed as a chief structural principle in Adventist doctrinal systematization.

⁴⁸ In his description of the desirable features of articles about the Adventist faith, Rolf Pöhler claims that statements of belief should at all times maintain their *Christ-centeredness*. According to Pöhler, Adventist beliefs are essentially 'a confession of faith in Christ, the living Word of God'. See, Rolf Pöhler, 'Fundamental Beliefs – Curse or Blessing?', *Ecclesia reformata semper reformanda* (Binfield, Bracknell: Newbold College, 2015), p. 9.

⁴⁹ Ideally, each doctrine, with all its facets and claims, if expressed adequately, should be able to better elucidate the character and nature of Jesus Christ. If the statements fail to build a community of believers around the ultimate divine revelation in Jesus Christ, they cease to be true to their original intent. Daniel Heinz, Jiri Moskala, and Peter M. Van Bemmelen, *Christ, Salvation, and the Eschaton:*

doctrinal model as being at its best when Christ-centred – Christ representing 'the hub from which doctrines issue like spokes from a wheel, going out to the rim where "the rubber meets the road"'.⁵⁰ With Christ as their centre and context, these doctrines are to be used to enrich, integrate and focus the church's confession of God and each individual's personal life. According to this line of reasoning, every Christian doctrine, including ecclesiology, should be first and foremost Christ-centred.

Following this wide-spread Christian principle (*solus Christus*), Adventist scholars have always endeavoured to define their concept of church as remnant in relation to Christ's salvific actions in the past and his current High-Priestly work in the Heavenly realm. Their remnant theology, it can be shown, draws directly on Christ's recent restorative/judicial works *pro nobis*, which should be seen as the most important factor generating and shaping the end-time community of Christ's followers – a community that has as its highest mandate to be the witness to the pre-Advent works of God in Christ.

Perhaps one of the weakest points in Adventist ecclesiology thus conceptualized is its failure to provide a developed account of the activity of the Spirit in the church in all its manifold dimensions. While its Christ-centred outlook represents a feature that should characterize any genuine Christian discourse about God and the church, the absence of pneumatology, has rendered the Adventist theology of church somewhat

Essays in Honor of Hans K. Larondelle (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2009), pp. 209-10.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 209. Similarly, Norman R. Gulley discussed a variety of possible foci or themes for theological systems. 'He compares systems to revolving swings, hanging from a central pole. Where one sits, one always looks up to the central pole. Gulley declares Jesus Christ to be "both the centre and context" of his theological system, for he is also central to the plan, and history, of salvation as well as to all Scripture.' See, Gulley, *Systematic Theology: Prologomena*, pp. 145-48.

imbalanced. This is reflected, unfortunately, in both the Adventist theory of church and in Adventist communal praxis.

Given this neglect, it can be said that Adventism, like the majority of other Western Christian traditions, suffers from what James Forbes calls 'Holy Spirit shyness'.⁵¹ Commenting on the same phenomenon, Cheryl B. Johns mourns the tragedy of the absence of Spirit-sensitive reflection in modern ecclesiological discourse and refers to this as 'Holy Spirit Deficit Disorder'.⁵² It seems that failure to express the compound and intricate relationship between the divine Spirit and the human spirit in the context of ecclesial community is visible not only in Adventism but also in Christianity at large.⁵³

While God the Spirit is never bound by the constraints of human rhetoric, language and expression, one cannot deny that absence of understanding of the Spirit's work, or a distortion of one's understanding of it, can have an impoverishing effect on one's experience of God (the reverse is true, as well). Thus, when employing the phrase 'deficit disorder' to describe the current state of Adventist ecclesiology, I refer to the deficiency that arises from not allowing pneumatology to have any significant bearing on the church's understanding of its own life, mission and structures. This impasse, naturally, creates the need to align Adventist views to properly correspond to what the church really is — the creature of the Spirit.⁵⁴

⁵¹ James Forbes, *The Holy Spirit and Preaching* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1989), p. 21.

⁵² Cheryl Bridges Johns, 'Overcoming Holy Spirit Shyness in the Life of the Church', *Vision*, May 2012, p. 1.

⁵³ Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, p. 123.

⁵⁴ Stephen K. Pickard, *Seeking the Church: An Introduction to Ecclesiology* (London: SCM Press, 2012), p. 19.

THE FALLACIES OF ADVENTIST PNEUMATOLOGICAL FORMULATIONS

Traditionally, Adventists have been aware of the indispensability of the Spirit in mediating Christ's presence among his people. While Christ's incarnation, death and resurrection are certainly seen as crucial in enabling the divine filiation of believers, Adventists have at the same time maintained that it is only through and in the divine gift of the Spirit that this filiation is actualized in believers' lives. The work of the Spirit is regarded as vital to the processes of transformation and renewal of the individual soul (see the Adventist doctrine of sanctification),⁵⁵ to the illumination of the intellect (see Adventist teaching about revelation, inspiration and illumination),⁵⁶ and to the believers' reception of the panoply of spiritual gifts, virtues and fruits.⁵⁷

In regard to the church, Christ is seen as its great founder, while the Spirit, who came to further Christ's work, is portrayed as merely an animator of the ecclesial structures established by Jesus Christ. The Spirit's main role is to build up, unite and empower the members in their growth towards Christlikeness. In the distinctive Adventist doctrine concerning the pre-Advent judgement that commenced in 1844, the church is depicted as a witness to Christ's present work in the heavenly sanctuary, and the Holy Spirit is understood as the one who brings the fullness of Christ's presence among us in order to prepare us (read: 'cleanse us'; cf. Daniel 8.14) for his Second

⁵⁵ Woodrow W. Whidden, *The Judgment and Assurance: The Dynamics of Personal Salvation* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2011), pp. 73–85.

⁵⁶ Peter M. van Bemmelen, 'Revelation and Inspiration', in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. by Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2000), pp. 22–57.

⁵⁷ For some of the most comprehensive Adventist reflections on the work of the Spirit in the domains of the church, see: Marcos Carvalho De Benedicto, 'The Role of the Holy Spirit in Enabling Believers for Ministry: An Adventist Perspective' (doctoral thesis, Andrews University, 2004); Denis Fortin, 'The Holy Spirit and the Church', in *Message, Mission and Unity of the Church*, ed. by Ángel Manuel Rodríguez (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2013); Ron

Coming. While Christ brought about an 'objective' reconciliation of God and his creatures, the gift of the Spirit internalizes and applies Christ's reconciliatory work at the subjective or personal level.⁵⁸

Other aspects of Adventist pneumatology that differ from some other general Christian accounts involve their teaching about the last-day manifestation of 'the spirit of prophecy' (the phrase comes the book of Revelation) in the life and work of God's end-time 'prophet', or 'messenger' – Ellen White.⁵⁹ In addition, Adventists claim that before the 'close of probation' God is going to cause the 'latter rain' of the Spirit (alluding to Joel's imagery) to outpour on his remnant people in order to prepare them for their last witness (proclamation) to the world.⁶⁰

The literature further reveals that while Adventists, along with other Christians, have generally recognized the important role of the Spirit in the divine economy, their attention has always been almost exclusively given to the indwelling of the Spirit in the life of the *individual* believer rather than to examining the implications of this indwelling for the structure and mission of the church. Various pneumatological insights have entered Adventist anthropology, which is famous for its perpetual emphasis on human wholeness. Yet, surprisingly, this alleged 'holistic' anthropological interpretation has failed to include a systematic exposition of the relational or

Springett, 'The Spirit and the Church', <<https://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/materials/church-ecclesiology-project-1982-1990/spirit-and-church>> [accessed 29/01/2015].

⁵⁸ Whidden, *Judgment*, pp. 47–94; Fernando L. Canale, 'Doctrine of God', in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology: Commentary Reference Series*, ed. by Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald Publishing Association, 2000), pp. 134–37.

⁵⁹ Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, 'The "Testimony of Jesus" in the Writings of Ellen G. White', in *Toward a Theology of the Remnant*, ed. by Ángel Manuel Rodríguez (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2009), pp. 241–43.

⁶⁰ Ángel Manuel Rodríguez 'Images of the Holy Spirit (Latter Rain)', (2007) <<https://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/materials/holy-spirit/images-holy-spirit-latter-rain>> [accessed 05/04/2016]; Whidden, *Judgment*, pp. 129–45.

communal dimensions of human beings. This is because Adventists have neglected to account for the complex interaction that exists between the divine spirit and the human spirit. This is unfortunate, since it is precisely at the point of such a *pneuma-dynamic* exchange that one can begin to understand the relationships that form the church.

Not only does this omission create doubt about whether Adventist anthropology is really as holistic as the church claims; it also guarantees that the ecclesial account will inevitably be found insufficient. There cannot be an adequate explanation of the nature of ecclesial community without the recognition of two other fundamental presuppositions – that community is somehow intrinsic to people and that it is through the Holy Spirit that this communal aspect of human beings is awakened and actualized, both on personal (anthropological) and communal (ecclesiological) levels.

The failure to account for these two aspects of pneumatology results in an overly-voluntarist and individualistic ecclesial vision that equates the church with an assortment of autonomous and 'self-enclosed individuals whose relationships are at bottom contractual and whose attachments last only "until better return is available elsewhere".⁶¹ These interpretations describe the realm of human relationships and communality as somehow accidental (or non-essential) to the human being. As such, they cannot be regarded as adequate grounds for envisioning the essence, structure and means of ecclesial *koinonia*.⁶²

Put briefly, the only viable way for Adventists and other Christians to talk about the church is to recognize the activity of the Spirit as ecclesially (and anthropologically)

⁶¹ Michael Luntley, *Reason, Truth, and Self: The Postmodern Reconditioned* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 190.

⁶² The 2013 official ecclesiological volume of the Adventist church seems to express a general awareness of the need to give a proper place to the Spirit and Christ in the church's ecclesiology.

constitutive of the being of the church – just as the work of Jesus Christ is customarily regarded to be. There is a need for construing pneumatological anthropology and, consequently, pneumatological ecclesiology in order to supplement the current ecclesial discourse within the Adventist community. As will be argued later, this also calls for a pneumatological Christology.⁶³

THE CAUSES OF THE PNEUMATOLOGICAL DEFICIT

There are numerous factors that have contributed to the tragic neglect of the Holy Spirit in Adventist ecclesiology. Five of them appear to be especially relevant to the current examination. The following section will, I hope, uncover the main factors that have conditioned Adventists' thinking and contributed to the pneumatological blind spot in their remnant-based ecclesiology.

The first factor seems to be Adventists' perpetual emphasis on Christ-centredness. In their attempt to be entirely Christocentric, however (and ironically so), Adventists have overlooked the vital role of the Spirit-sensitive discourse on the issue of church. Instead, they have usually treated the church in their official statements as 'a chapter of Christology'.⁶⁴ Consequently, this focus on Christ and Christ alone has led to the compartmentalized vision of the triune God and has deprived believers of the

However, the chapter of this book that deals with this issue is quite general and does not discuss ecclesiological implications at length. See Fortin, 'Holy Spirit', pp. 303–22.

⁶³ Herschel Odell Bryant, *Spirit Christology in the Christian Tradition: From the Patristic Period to the Rise of Pentecostalism in the Twentieth Century* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2014). This construct will be discussed in Chapter V.

⁶⁴ The same phenomenon is present in other Christian traditions. See Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, pp. 123–24. Notwithstanding its invaluable ecclesiological contribution and worldwide popularity that it rightfully enjoys, Vatican II, for instance, was also not immune to this tragic omission of an account of the action of the Spirit in the ecclesial communion. 'More particularly, it was observed that the Holy Spirit was brought into ecclesiology after the edifice of the Church was constructed with Christological material alone.' Perhaps not as acutely, but the same neglect of the role of the

experience of the astonishing aliveness of Christ that is brought about by no one else but the Holy Spirit.⁶⁵

The second factor that has contributed to the Adventist failure to provide a Spirit-sensitive ecclesiological interpretation is the habit of emphasizing scripture in preference to Spirit. The stress on the Spirit has been closely associated in Adventist minds with enthusiastic forms of religion that find their prime expression in overly emotive worship.⁶⁶ In their eagerness to have an immediate experience of the Spirit, Adventists fear, Scripture is being disregarded. Following their Protestant predecessors, Adventists therefore continue the habit of juxtaposing the Word with the Spirit. According to them, Scripture and Scripture alone is the only reliable theological source for determining the church's orthodoxy.⁶⁷ Given such an outlook, the trust is ultimately placed in a set of exegetical and hermeneutical procedures and tools instead of acknowledging the critical role of the Spirit in bringing God's people to a fuller understanding of divine truth. As a result, the separation of Word and Spirit and the prioritization of the former have marginalized the Holy Spirit and left the community of believers languishing with a severe case of 'Holy Spirit Deficit Disorder'.⁶⁸

The third reason for the tragic neglect of the Spirit is the false dichotomy that was presumed by the early Adventists when separating mind and spirit, reason and emotion. Being children of the Enlightenment, Adventists have always accepted the notion that logic and reason are more reliable avenues for finding and grasping the essence of truth

Spirit in the life of the church can be noticed in Eastern-Orthodox ecclesiological tradition. *Ibid.*, pp. 123-26.

⁶⁵ Johns, 'Holy Spirit Shyness', p. 8.

⁶⁶ Charles Byrd, 'Pentecostalism's Anabaptist Heritage: The Zofingen Disputation of 1532', *Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association*, 28 (2008), 58.

⁶⁷ Johns, 'Holy Spirit Shyness', p. 8.

⁶⁸ Suoza, 'The Bible and the Church'; Johns, 'Holy Spirit Shyness', pp. 8-9.

than human emotion, imagination and intuition can ever be.⁶⁹ As a result, they shun everything that appears irrational and emotive. In this respect, Adventists have aligned with other Protestant traditions that are criticized by Cheryl B. Johns for 'failing to understand the difference between the trans-rational and the irrational'.⁷⁰ They have limited the work of the Spirit to what can be rationally understood and logically explained. This, in turn, has contributed to the Adventist marginalization of the work of the Spirit within the churches.

The fourth reason for shying away from articulating a Spirit-sensitive ecclesiological discourse seems draw on the various misuses and distortive interpretations of the work of the Spirit within both Adventist and non-Adventist communities of believers. The fear that relying solely on the manifestation of the Spirit will automatically lead to some form of fanaticism is exacerbated by recollections of various theological 'oddities', disruptive practices and incidents that occurred in the young Pentecostal/charismatic movements that began to flourish at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century.

The problematic areas included: (1) the belief that the Holy Spirit 'obsesses' the recipient, overriding the will (for example, the phenomenon of being 'slain in Spirit'); (2) restricting the external sign of the baptism of the Spirit solely to the gift of tongues or some other exclusive (usually 'ecstatic' or 'miraculous') gift; (3) the disruptive and disorderly manner in which the spiritual gifts were expressed during the public worship (usually manifested in uncontrolled laughter, shouting, shaking of the body, a trance-like state of mind void of cognitive content, excessive emotionalism and other bizarre

⁶⁹ Jeff Crocombe, 'A Feast of Reason – the Legacy of William Miller on Seventh-day Adventist Hermeneutics', in *Hermeneutics, Intertextuality and the Contemporary Meaning of Scripture*, ed. by Ross

behaviour); (4) antinomian impulses (to which Adventists were and still are very sensitive); (5) an over-realized eschatological outlook; and (6) a specific set of assumptions that underpin Pentecostal soteriological vision, particularly the notions of 'the second blessing' and perfection.⁷¹

All of these areas contributed to the general suspicion that Adventists have of charismatic phenomena.⁷² Consequently, instead of engaging more deeply in the field of pneumatology, Adventists have tried to distance themselves from anything that reminds them of extreme forms of Pentecostalism or any other similar charismatic strand of Christianity. Again, the unfortunate outcome of such an attitude has been impoverished ecclesiology, void of any explicit treatment of the delicate relationship between the church and the Spirit.

Finally, the fifth reason for the meagre references to the community-forming work of the Spirit in Adventist literature seems to be the generally 'self-effacing' or 'anonymous' character of the Spirit's self-presencing in the world. The Spirit always points away from himself towards the Son and the Father. He never witnesses about himself.⁷³ Naturally, this creates obstacles when one starts to inquire into the character of the presence of the Spirit of Christ among God's people.

Cole and Paul Petersen (Adelaide: Avondale Academic Press, 2014), pp. 227–38.

⁷⁰ Johns, 'Holy Spirit Shyness', p. 9.

⁷¹ Harry W. Lowe, 'Speaking in Tongues', Biblical Research Institute Release, (1965) <<https://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/sites/default/files/pdf/speaking%20in%20tongues.pdf>> [accessed 05/05/2016]; Knight, *Identity*, pp. 113–15.

⁷² A recent monograph by Sarah Coakley on the Trinity documents a similar trend in Christianity more broadly. See, Sarah Coakley, *God, Sexuality and the Self: An Essay on the Trinity* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 152–89.

⁷³ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen remarks in the preface to his book on this subject, 'In the Bible and in Christian tradition, the Spirit's role in the Divine Trinity is to turn our eyes to the Son and in doing so return us to the Father. The Spirit is the contact point, so to speak, not the focus.' Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen and Amos Yong, *Toward a Pneumatological Theology: Pentecostal and Ecumenical Perspectives on Ecclesiology, Soteriology, and Theology of Mission* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2002), pp. vii–viii.

Faced with this complexity, Adventists have not developed a balanced theological account of the Spirit's work in their community. In fact, they have considered the theological task to be less important than having an actual experience of one's personal life in the Spirit on a daily basis. This, however, cannot be used as an excuse for the lack of theological expression, I would argue. The mystery of the Spirit cannot automatically mean that nothing meaningful should or could be said about the relationship between the church and the Spirit. While any genuine Christian author will admit the limitations of the human potential to portray God, there is still a significant part to be played by believers in witnessing to the work of the Holy Spirit among them.

THE ECCLESIOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF THE PNEUMATOLOGICAL DEFICIT

The marginalization of the Holy Spirit arising from these five factors has undermined Adventist ecclesiology. As in other Christian traditions that have failed to acknowledge the community-making role of the Spirit, Adventist ecclesiology suffers from: (1) a tendency towards over-institutionalization, which, as Belgian bishop De Smedt noticed, encourages harmful tendencies like clericalism, juridicism, and triumphalism;⁷⁴ (2) an over-centralized concept of church that gives temporal and ontological priority to the global church in preference to its local expressions;⁷⁵ (3) a monolithic and simplistic view of unity that demands conformity and sameness; (4) pyramidal notions of ecclesial authority, leading to a hierarchical and centralized organizational structure, with an unbalanced emphasis on the 'one' over the 'many' in the process of doctrinal and administrative decision-making; (5) a gap between laity and clergy, with the

⁷⁴ Dulles, *Models*, p. 31.

accompanying syndrome of membership passivity and indifference; (6) a deficient explanation of the church's embodiment in history (i.e., 'meta-historicism' in the East; 'historization' in the West); (7) general cultural and environmental insensitivity; and, on an individual level, (8) a prevailing sense of God's distance, or even complete absence, from the concrete, day-to-day realm of the believers' life.⁷⁶

These are just some of the ecclesiological deficiencies that come about as a direct result of the lack of Spirit-talk in Adventist circles. Adventism seems to enact a perfect example of the scenario that Zizioulas, Kärkkäinen and other CE authors warned the Christian church against. This is what happens, they claim, when the community of believers neglects the Spirit's movement among them. In the context of general Christianity, Zizioulas remarked that most of the deficiencies described above have been almost entirely avoided in those Orthodox churches that have tried to keep their eyes on the work of the Spirit in the life of Christ, on the one hand, and his work in the life of individual Christians and the church as a whole, on the other.

Zizioulas proposes that by being attentive to the movement of the Spirit, these churches are saved from the perils of the one-sided Christologically constituted ecclesiologies that the Western church suffers from. Thus, it can be stated that the result of heightened interest in the work of the Spirit in the making of the community has already been instrumental in overcoming the problems of clericalism, over-institutionalism, authoritarianism, fragmentation and other negative tendencies (listed above) in the context of other Christian traditions.⁷⁷ There is no reason to expect that it

⁷⁵ This tendency can be clearly seen in the functionalist approach to church structure (as taken by Daniels and others) that was explained in Chapter II.

⁷⁶ For further explanation of these symptoms of pneumatological neglect, see: Kärkkäinen and Yong, *Pneumatological Theology*, pp. 86-87.

⁷⁷ Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, pp. 132-42.

will be any different in the Adventist community if this proposal is taken seriously. Whatever one thinks of the accuracy of these claims concerning the life of Orthodox (and perhaps also Pentecostal and charismatic) communities, I believe that they contain theological insights worth pondering. They should not be taken lightly.

(V) A WAY FORWARD

In concluding Part I, which has examined the proposals, potential and limitations of existing Seventh-day Adventist ecclesiological discourse, it can be submitted that, contrary to what some may think, Adventists already have a 'clear self-understanding, a unique identity, and a specific mission'.⁷⁸ This distinct identity, as can be seen from denominational publications and scholarly literature, was and still is expressed most prominently and coherently through the biblical concept of remnant – a concept that has been widely accepted among Adventists as their key ecclesial self-descriptor. The notion of remnant is used to integrate various aspects of their distinctive theological identity and message, and stands at the core of their understanding of what the church is called to be and do in the last stages of God's story of redemption.

This thesis, should not, therefore, be considered as a pioneering work in the development of an Adventist ecclesiology, nor as a replacement of it, but as an attempt to improve, clarify and supplement existing reflections. The best way to advance Adventist ecclesiology from this point on, I would argue, is to start by addressing the four major inadequacies that have been identified in the present chapter.

⁷⁸ Rodríguez, 'Toward a Theology of the Remnant', p. 19.

I should like to propose that Adventists could greatly benefit from engaging constructively with the works of some of the most prominent twentieth and twenty-first century ecclesialogists, particularly those authors who were involved in constructing and refining the most widely spread, well developed and comprehensive ecclesiological system, known otherwise as *communio* ecclesiology.

This new *communio*-based ecclesiological framework currently represents the leading approach taken in the contemporary mainstream Christian scene. It is able to achieve what the existing Adventist remnant framework has failed to do. It contains valuable insights and conceptual tools that may be useful in addressing the four inadequacies in the Adventist theology of church.

The first inadequacy: The lack of systematic reasoning. I propose that a shift from the single-metaphor, *ad hoc* approach that has marked the denomination's remnant-based self-descriptions to a more balanced, comprehensive and systematically developed ecclesiological viewpoint can be greatly facilitated by adopting the formal conceptual framework of *communio* ecclesiology.

The second inadequacy: The neglect of ontological definitions. The development of a *definitio realis* which is concerned with the church's *being* is seen as an organic development in existing remnant ecclesiology, in line with other functional and axiological descriptions that have fed the movement's self-understanding from the time of its inception to the present day. In what follows, I expand my proposal that the writings of *communio* ecclesialogists can facilitate Adventists' current search for a more fully fledged and comprehensive understanding of what the church is. This is so because of the potential of this new theological framework to successfully articulate a

delicate balance between what the church does and what the church is – a balance that has not yet been attained by the proponents of remnant theology.

The third inadequacy: The reductionist interpretations of the concept of truth.

The appropriation of some of the most fundamental assumptions of contemporary *communio* ecclesiology in regard to the organic connection that exists between the church and the truth would help Adventism to take into account the totality of the church's life in God, not merely insist on the primacy of its message. Although the vision of community as part of the truth might seem to some to be directly in opposition to Adventism's basic epistemic postulates (in other words, *sola Scriptura*), the broadening of the conception of truth to include its relational, experiential and participatory dimensions can help Adventists to avoid the crippled, modernist, 'logocentric' definitions to which they have been slaves for too long.

In the process, it will become clear that this updated conception of the nature of truth is actually in complete congruence with the genetic core of Adventism, which, among other characteristics, includes affinity with Semitic modes of reasoning. Viewing prophetic truth as a lived reality that finds its expression in the totality of the communal life of the church, and not merely in its propositional statements of faith (as upheld so far), may contribute to a more holistic, organic and dynamic vision of church – a vision that will contain 'the spark, commitment and message' that gave Adventism its original power, while also including the necessary 'institutional, structural and cultural changes that are the inevitable concomitant of growth in the real world'.⁷⁹

The fourth inadequacy: The pneumatological deficit. Finally, a more advanced and comprehensive Trinitarian framework of *communio* ecclesiology can enrich

Adventist understanding of the indispensable role of the Holy Spirit in enabling believers' immersion in the life of the Trinity. An articulation of a Spirit-laden account of the church will help Adventists to balance their one-sided appropriation of the *solus Christus* principle. In turn, this advancement will directly contribute to a more coherent and rounded theory of church structure, ministry, ordinances, mission, communal interpretation and reform.

The following part – Part II – of this thesis will therefore go on to present the core of *communio* ecclesiology and to explore ways in which it can enrich the remnant ecclesiological outlook so close to the heart of Adventist identity. While the first and the second inadequacies will be examined cumulatively in Chapter IV, Chapter V will be an attempt to address the third and the fourth inadequacy by providing a brief demonstration of how the integration of a Spirit-sensitive account of the church might enable Adventists to express a more comprehensive and balanced Trinitarian vision of the believer's participation in God. It is hoped that, thus advanced, remnant ecclesiology will prove to be more adequate in confronting some of the practical challenges that the Seventh-day Adventist church is currently facing when trying to retain its unity, maintain its relevance and enable a more fruitful and meaningful interaction with others.

⁷⁹ Gary Land, *Adventism in America: A History* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), p. 189.

PART II

CHURCH AS *KOINONIA*: ENHANCING THE VISION

CHAPTER IV

***COMMUNIO* ECCLESIOLOGY: A NEW ECCLESIOLOGICAL OPPORTUNITY**

The central hypothesis around which the entire argument of this thesis revolves is that Seventh-day Adventists *can* supplement their current discourse about the nature of church by developing their own version of *communio* ecclesiology. Since this has not been the usual route taken by Adventists thus far, it is necessary to provide the theological grounds for highlighting this particular concept, as well as some preliminary explanation of how this proposal might work.

Accordingly, this chapter represents a brief enquiry into the field of mainstream modern ecclesiology. It outlines what the various *communio* ecclesiologies hold in common, in the expectation that this material, with appropriate adjustments, might contribute to an ecclesiology that is genuinely Adventist. Adventists, too, can accept the prevailing contemporary consensus that the ‘the church is the *communio* of the faithful’¹ as a formal theological principle, while, like other Christians, making additional specifications in line with their own distinctive theological heritage and priorities. What is more, the elements of overlap and difference here will open up the possibility of dialogue between Adventists and other Christians on ecclesiological matters.

¹ Herwi Rikhof, *The Concept of Church: A Methodological Inquiry into the Use of Metaphors in Ecclesiology* (London: Sheed and Ward; Shepherdstown, WV: Patmos Press, 1981), p. 236.

After offering a brief survey of the origins and role of the *communio* trend in modern Christian ecclesiology, I shall explore how *communio* or *koinonia* can provide an ‘ontological’ complement to the merely functional Adventist portrayal of the church as herald, doing greater justice to the church’s compound and multi-faceted relational nature.

(I) THE COMMUNIO TREND IN MAINSTREAM MODERN ECCLESIOLOGY

An unprecedented explosion of interest in ecclesiology marked the theological landscape of the twentieth century.² While the reality of the church long predates the Reformation, it was only around that stage in history that ecclesiology established itself as a distinct intellectual enterprise in systematic theology, its establishment being due, perhaps, to a range of different and conflicting viewpoints that surfaced in that turbulent period.³ Even then, however, many foundational issues, of the kind currently being discussed in a systematic treatment of the church, received very little attention.⁴ A

² Pickard, *Seeking the Church*, pp. 26-29. Given its preoccupation with ecclesiological concerns, the twentieth century is often called the ‘century of ecclesiology’. See, Otto Dibelius, *Das Jahrhundert Der Kirche: Geschichte, Betrachtung, Umschau Und Ziele* (Berlin: FurcheVerlag, 1927). Similarly, Avery Dulles claims that this new development can be seen as an ‘ecclesiological revolution’. See, Avery Dulles, *Models of Revelation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000), p. 35. A famous Lutheran theologian, Jaroslav Pelikan, described this ecclesiological renaissance of the twentieth-century in the following way: ‘The doctrine of the Church became, as it had never quite been before, the bearer of the whole of the Christian message for the twentieth century, as well as the recapitulation of the entire doctrinal tradition from preceding centuries.’ See, Jaroslav Pelikan, *Christian Doctrine and Modern Culture (since 1700)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 282.

³ Ecclesiology was not a separate locus in either the early church or the Middle Ages. A detailed outline of the emergence and history of ecclesiology can be found in Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), pp. 21-27. Cyril Hovorun, *Meta-Ecclesiology: Chronicles on Church Awareness* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

⁴ Kärkkäinen, *Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical & Global Perspectives*, pp. 9-10.

perusal of contemporary theology, on the other hand, reveals that the amount of literature in and on ecclesiology itself has increased significantly.⁵

Numerous factors have contributed to the recent resurgence of interest in ecclesiology. Yet, as Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen has convincingly argued, the main catalyst for the growing popularity of this branch of study seems to be the emergence of the ecumenical movement.⁶ With unity as its highest theological aspiration, the ecumenical movement has forced Christian denominations to reformulate their own self-understanding against the background of a new appreciation of other churches.⁷ It has prompted ecumenically sensitive representatives from various Christian traditions to re-interpret their religious identity in ways that are faithful to their particular theological

⁵ The nature, story and study of the Christian church have become extremely popular areas of inquiry in various religious communities, in courses on theology and religious studies and in the field of scholarly debate. Ecclesiological questions and concepts have also been addressed by historical, ethical, missiological, anthropological, sociological, philosophical, and many other sub-disciplines. See Gerard Mannion and Lewis Seymour Mudge, 'Ecclesiology — the Nature, Story and Study of the Church', in *The Routledge Companion to the Christian Church*, ed. by Gerard Mannion and Lewis Seymour Mudge (New York and London: Routledge, 2008), p. 1. See, for example, Kärkkäinen's overview (2002) and the publications from the *Ecclesiological Investigations Research Network* – www.ei-research.net.

⁶ Notwithstanding the fact that the history of formal ecumenism in terms of the formation of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in 1948 is quite brief – less than half a century old – it can still be claimed that 'no other movement in the history of the Christian church, perhaps with the exception of the Reformation, has shaped the thinking and practice of Christendom as much as the modern movement for Christian unity'. Kärkkäinen, *Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical & Global Perspectives*, pp. 7–8. Hence, it is not unreasonable to expect that historians in the coming days will almost surely record that ecumenism has been 'one of the most remarkable characteristics of the twentieth century of church life.' Lorelei F. Fuchs, *Koinonia and the Quest for an Ecumenical Ecclesiology: From Foundations through Dialogue to Symbolic Competence for Communionality* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), p. xii.

⁷ Nicholas Sagovsky, *Ecumenism, Christian Origins, and the Practice of Communion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Francesca Aran Murphy and Christopher Asprey, *Ecumenism Today: The Universal Church in the 21st Century* (Aldershot, Hampshire; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008). Gesa Elsbeth Thiessen, *Ecumenical Ecclesiology: Unity, Diversity and Otherness in a Fragmented World* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2009). Influenced by the ecumenical wave, the older, controversial approach has thus created space for mutual learning and appreciation.

heritage and, at the same time, comprehensible to people today, open to the insights of secular disciplines, and sensitive to the current needs of the world.⁸

One of the outcomes of the increasing rapprochement among different theological traditions has been the realization that any discussion on unity within the church will have to presuppose ‘some tentative understanding of what the church is’.⁹ After all, it is reasoned, ‘[o]ne cannot unite entities without knowing what kind of organisms one is trying to put together’.¹⁰ This conviction has also resulted in the appearance of new concepts and language that are aimed at overcoming the present ecclesiological divides and reaching common ground on how to express the nature of church. Surprisingly, this quest to define the church’s essence has become a widespread tendency even among Protestant churches, which are traditionally wary of making such definitions.¹¹

In the immediate aftermath of Vatican II, the concept of *koinonia*, commonly translated as *communio* in Latin and ‘communion’ or ‘fellowship’ in English, emerged as a key idea in contemporary self-definition of the Christian church.¹² Because it sought

⁸ See, for example, Paul M. Collins, *Christian Community Now: Ecclesiological Investigations* (London: T & T Clark, 2008), pp. vi–xiii; Paul M. Collins and Michael A. Fahey, *Receiving 'the Nature and Mission of the Church': Ecclesial Reality and Ecumenical Horizons for the Twenty-First Century* (London: T & T Clark, 2008).

⁹ Kärkkäinen, *Ecclesiology*, p. 8.

¹⁰ Ibid. This kind of reasoning seems to represent the main drive behind the recent document from the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches. Published in 2013, this document summarizes the outcome of many years of collaborative work by a large number of representative theologians from Anglican, Protestant, Evangelical, Pentecostal, Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches. See: World Council of Churches, *The Church: Towards a Common Vision (Faith and Order Paper No. 214)* (Geneva: World Council of Churches Publications, 2013).

¹¹ Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998); Robert W. Jenson, *Systematic Theology. Volume II, the Works of God* (Oxford University Press, 1999); Alan J. Torrance, *Persons in Communion: An Essay on Trinitarian Description and Human Participation* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996); Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, 'The Church as the Fellowship of Persons: An Emerging Pentecostal Ecclesiology of *Koinonia*', *PentecoStudies*, 6 (2007).

¹² For understanding the centrality of *koinonia* and different approaches to this concept in contemporary ecumenical debates, see, for instance: Susan H. Moore, 'Towards *Koinonia* in Faith, Life and Witness: Theological Insights and Emphases from the Fifth World Conference on Faith

at least partially to incorporate all its rival theological proposals, *koinonia* quickly gained a worldwide reputation as one of the most stimulating and promising ideas in contemporary ecclesial discourse.¹³ The significance of this multivalent concept for the understanding of the church's faith, life and witness was given special emphasis at the Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order in Santiago de Compostela (1993),¹⁴ after which it assumed a critical role in ecumenical dialogues, the work of Faith and Order, assemblies of the World Council of Churches, and the theological self-understanding of individual churches.¹⁵

With the passing of time, it became almost impossible to write or talk about ecumenical ecclesiology without employing the term *koinonia* to express the relational unity of the churches. Now the notion of *koinonia* appears ubiquitously in ecumenical literature and is generally used as 'an expression of the most profound and all-embracing [relational] reality that establishes "the church of God"'.¹⁶ Because of the

and Order, Santiago De Compostela, 1993', *Ecumenical Review*, 47 (1995); Verna Lewis-Elgidely, *Koinonia in the Three Great Abrahamic Faiths: Acclaiming the Mystery and Diversity of Faiths* (South Bend, IN: Cloverdale Books, 2007); Fuchs, *Koinonia and the Quest for an Ecumenical Ecclesiology*; Margaret Jenkins, 'Towards Koinonia in Life', *Ecumenical Review*, 45.1 (January 1993), 93. Günther Gassmann and John A. Radano, *The Unity of the Church as Koinonia: Ecumenical Perspectives on the 1991 Canberra Statement on Unity* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1993). J. M. R. Tillard, 'Koinonia', in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, ed. by Georges Florovsky (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1991), p. 568.

¹³ Ernest Skublics, *Aspects and Implications of Communion Ecclesiology* (Dent, by Sedbergh, Cumbria; Handstand Press; Calgary, Alberta: Theophania Publishing, 2001), pp. 13–34.

¹⁴ The Collins, *Christian Community Now: Ecclesiological Investigations*, pp. vii–xiii. World Council of Churches, 'Towards Koinonia in Faith, Life, and Witness: A Discussion Paper', *Proceedings of the Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order in Santiago de Compostela* (Geneva: World Council of Churches Publications, 1993).

¹⁵ Fuchs, *Koinonia and the Quest for an Ecumenical Ecclesiology*, pp. xxxii–xxxiv.

¹⁶ Thomas F. Günther, World Council of Churches, *On the Way to Fuller Koinonia* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1994). This notion is considered to be 'the central and fundamental idea of the Council's documents'. See, Extraordinary Synod of 1985, 'The Final Report,' *Origins* 15 (19 December 1985), 448.

popularity of its foundational concept, *communion ecclesiology* has been recognized as the ultimate and ‘the most basic form of ecclesiology’.¹⁷

Most recently, scholars would seem to consent that *communio* ecclesiology (henceforth referred to as CE), which formally began prior to Vatican II with the work of Roman Catholic thinkers such as Yves Congar and Henri de Lubac, and was then succinctly expressed by J.-M. R. Tillard,¹⁸ represents a shift in emphasis away from juridical and institutional elements of ecclesial reality.¹⁹ There is agreement, however, regarding what exactly CE transfers its emphasis to.²⁰ Notwithstanding the differences of opinion on this matter, it is still possible to claim with a high degree of confidence that by now no serious theologian would deny that the church does indeed represent the communion of believers with each other and with the triune God.²¹

Described in such broad terms, CE is often taken as ‘the ecclesiological paradigm of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries’.²² Although CE assumed central stage in Roman Catholic thought under the influence of Vatican II, the fact that this paradigm stems from the *ressourcement* trend suggests that it could easily correspond to

¹⁷ When producing the document, ‘Some Aspect of the Church Understood as a Communion,’ Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger openly argued that ‘communion ecclesiology’ represents the ultimate and the most basic form of ecclesiology. *L’Osservatore Romano* [English Edition], 17 June 1992, 1. See also, Lorelei F. Fuchs, *Koinonia and the Quest for an Ecumenical Ecclesiology: From Foundations through Dialogue to Symbolic Competence for Communionality* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), p. xiii.

¹⁸ J. M. R. Tillard, *Church of Churches: The Ecclesiology of Communion* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992). Timothy I. MacDonald, *The Ecclesiology of Yves Congar: Foundational Themes* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984); Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* (New York: Crossroad Publications, 1997); Yves Congar, *Diversity and Communion* (Mystic, CN: Twenty-Third Publications, 1985); Henri de Lubac, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988); Henri de Lubac, *The Splendour of the Church* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1956).

¹⁹ Dennis M. Doyle, *Communion Ecclesiology: Vision and Versions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000), pp. 7–8; Jenson and Wilhite, *The Church*, p. 18.

²⁰ Jenson and Wilhite, *The Church*, p. 18.

²¹ *Ibid.*; Rikhof, *The Concept of Church*, p. 236.

²² Jenson and Wilhite, *The Church*, p. 18.

Eastern Orthodox ecclesiology as well, with its famous emphasis on antiquity.²³ Likewise, due to the existing affinity between the *ressourcement* project, on the one hand, and the Humanist and Protestant principle of *ad fontes*²⁴ on the other, it is not difficult to understand why CE has had such an appeal among the mainline Protestant communities, which could readily claim it as their own.²⁵ Since CE has proved to be such a suitable ecclesiological framework for so many Christian denominations, a great many ecumenically oriented scholars across the globe have seen in this newly emerging trend an opportunity for further theological convergence and have accepted the challenge of redefining their respective religious traditions on the fresh conceptual basis provided by it.²⁶ The ecumenical traction of this form of ecclesiology has depended on its not specifying the *communio* concept too closely (see below).²⁷

²³ Ernest Skublics, 'The Rebirth of Communion Ecclesiology within Orthodoxy: From Nineteenth Century Russians to Twenty-First Century Greeks', *Logos*, 46 (2005), 95-124. Grigorios Larentzakis, 'The Unity of the Church as Koinonia: Some Reflections from an Orthodox Standpoint', *Ecumenical Review*, 45 (1993).

²⁴ Jenson and Willhite, *The Church*, p. 19. Compare with Alister E. McGrath, *Reformation Thought: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), pp. 44-45.

²⁵ Arguably, one of the finest examples of a Protestant appropriation of CE framework can be found in Volf, *After Our Likeness*, pp. 127-282. Or, for a more recent attempt, see: Scott MacDougall, *More Than Communion: Imagining an Eschatological Ecclesiology* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2015).

²⁶ Highlighting various stages that mark this common movement towards a full communion, ecumenical theologians have introduced language that distinguishes between different 'degrees of communion'. See, Jeffrey T. VanderWilt, *Communion with Non-Catholic Christians: Risks, Challenges, and Opportunities* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2003), pp. 29-31.

²⁷ Rikhof argues that any term that is to be used to define the essence of the church *must* fulfil two more linguistic conditions: precision and openness. A completely empty term would add to the existing ecclesiological confusion since it would not be able to lead to a formal system that shapes an ecclesiological discourse. On the other hand, a closely determined term would not leave enough space for subsequent filling in with different concepts, motifs and metaphors. Rikhof, *The Concept of Church*, p. 232. Even though a great many terms are available to express the communal nature of the church, not all of them fulfil the aforementioned conditions. Rikhof's ultimate vote for *communio* is based on its strong links with other related terms like 'community', 'communion', and 'communication', that assumed great popularity in the ecclesiological literature in the post-conciliar period. While Rikhof argues for the adequacy of *communio* over the Greek term *koinonia*, this paper utilises both terms interchangeably, as equally good for facilitating critical development and evaluation. In light of all the above arguments, Rikhof concludes that 'the quintessential approach' to 'the complete basic statement' should then be: '*The church is the communio of the faithful*'. Ibid., p. 233.

Overall, one may affirm that although CE may be losing its prominence after decades of discussion, it can *still* be recognized as ‘the only viable framework for interdenominational dialogue about ecclesiology’.²⁸ This is the case in spite of suspicions created because theologians from different traditions can all readily employ the CE framework while at the same time disagreeing about the nature and scope of its implications. Critical comments about the potential — or better, alleged limitations — of CE should not, however, demoralize those who promulgate it; nor should those shortcomings be used to dismiss the entire CE project as a superfluous theological endeavour.²⁹ They are simply a reminder of how much more needs to be said beyond what is, by now, regarded to be the general ecumenical consensus about the CE approach. In order to understand how the *communio* trend can be used, perhaps in a modified form, to suit the purposes of Adventist ecclesiological needs, some additional qualifications must now be introduced.

(II) BASIC FEATURES OF COMMUNIO ECCLESIOLOGY

RELATIONAL FRAMEWORK

Communio ecclesiology represents a specific type of ecclesiology that focuses on relationships in order to understand the church. The primary aim of those who adopt it is to articulate clearly the nature of the dynamic interplay that exists between, among

²⁸ Jenson and Wilhite, *The Church*, p. 19. See also, Doyle, *Communion Ecclesiology*, p. 12. *Communio* ecclesiology is still regarded as a ‘major achievement of ecumenical consensus’. See Robert Jenson, ‘The Church as *Communio*’, in *The Catholicity of the Reformation*, ed. by Carl Braaten and Robert Jenson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), p. 1.; Jenson, *Systematic Theology. Volume II, the Works of God*, p. 221.

²⁹ For an example of typical objections to the CE framework and its potential weaknesses, see: Edward Russell, ‘Reconsidering Relational Anthropology: A Critical Assessment of John Zizioulas’

others: (1) the persons of the Trinity (Trinitarian communion), (2) human beings and the Triune God (vertical communion), (3) the members of the *communio* of the faithful (horizontal communion), (4) the local and universal church, (5) the church and non-church.³⁰

In his seminal book *Communion Ecclesiology: visions and versions*, Dennis Doyle argues convincingly that CE emerged as ‘an attempt to move beyond the merely juridical and institutional understandings’ by emphasizing other complementary dimensions of the church. In contrast to those taking more institutional approaches, CE argues that ‘[p]ersonal being and interconnectedness lie at the heart of what the Church is’.³¹

Along with this foundational conception of the church as a ‘web of interwoven relationships’,³² five other elements remain fairly constant within the various versions of

Theological Anthropology’, *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, 5.2 (July 2003). Susan K. Wood, ‘Communion Ecclesiology: Source of Hope, Source of Controversy’, *Pro Ecclesia*, 2 (1993).

³⁰ Doyle, *Communion Ecclesiology*, p. 12. Although Fuchs’s proposal might appear different from Doyle’s at first glance, in essence they both express the same composite relational network that comprises the fundamental nature of church. Compare with Fuchs, *Koinonia and the Quest for an Ecumenical Ecclesiology*, pp. 25–43. In his famous study, *The Concept of Church*, Rikhof clarifies this relational framework in more depth. According to him, the phrase ‘*communio* of the faithful’ can be treated as a basic statement about the nature of the church. He notes that this definition presumes a certain formal, systematic network that follows from it and determines the coherence of a possible ecclesiological discourse. Among other dimensions, this formal network involves: (1) the constitutive relationship of the faithful as a whole to God, Father, Son and Spirit; (2) all the elements that are characteristic of relationships in which people are involved; (3) a temporal dimension of communal relations, which normally imply some duration and cover a more or less substantial period of time; (4) a spatial dimension in which communal relationships are expressed in some visible, localized form. Because ‘*communio* of the faithful’ infers the faithful as a whole, and not merely an individual or a number of separated individuals, (5) the structure of that whole becomes a significant issue as well. As generally accepted, some form of internal organization is a feature characteristic of communal human behaviour that occurs over time. Rikhof even claims that choosing *communio* as the central notion (6) has implications for our understanding of purpose: ‘The purpose of a communal relationship can lie inside the relationship, that is to say, the relationship can be its own purpose, or it can lie outside the relationship, or a relationship can have both types of purposes.’ Linked to this, but also to the previous point, is (7) the element of a relationship between the church and ‘non-church’, which also becomes a necessary part of ecclesiological discourse. Rikhof, *The Concept of Church*, pp. 233–35.

³¹ Doyle, *Communion Ecclesiology*, p. 13.

³² Ibid.

CE: (1) a desire to retrieve a vision of the church that existed prior to the divisions among Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Protestant manifestations of Christianity;³³ (2) a strong awareness of the need for a visible realization of the church's unity (especially as symbolically displayed through participation in the Eucharist); (3) an inclusive and, thereby, ecumenically-oriented framework that is an attempt to understand God's work *in* and also *outside* the confines of any particular Christian religious tradition or denomination; (4) the promotion of 'a dynamic and healthy interplay between unity and diversity in the church'³⁴ (in other words, between the universal church and local churches); (5) a recognition that, although important as they are, institutional, legal and juridical approaches cannot fully express the church's essential fabric as consisting of close interpersonal relationships characterized by love, acceptance, intimacy, forgiveness, and commitment; and (6) an insistence on seeing church as an organic feature of divine revelation.³⁵

Doyle also identifies five basic forms of relationship to which *communio* theologians refer when defining the nature of church: (1) divine, (2) mystical, (3) sacramental, (4) historical, and (5) social.³⁶ In his opinion, a well-developed *communio* ecclesiology should emphasize simultaneously all of these five types of relationship by seeking to transcend false dichotomies.³⁷ A failure to address these dimensions in an

³³ Skublics, *Communion Ecclesiology*, pp. 7-8.

³⁴ Doyle, *Communion Ecclesiology*, p. 13.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

³⁶ For an overview of Doyle's explanations of these five so-called 'touchstones' of CE vision, see: *Ibid.*, pp. 175-78. Doyle (pp. 18-19) explains the ways in which his proposal further squares with the five models of church, as set out in Dulles, *Models*.

³⁷ Therefore, among more than twenty ecclesiological proposals that Doyle surveys in his book (most of them emerging from Catholic cues), Henri de Lubac's radically inclusive and multilayered vision of the church strikes him as particularly promising in terms of the ability to orchestrate all of the aforementioned dimensions of relationality as one harmonious whole. See, Doyle, *Communion Ecclesiology*, pp. 63-70.

adequate way leads to a form of ‘reductive distortion’,³⁸ as seen in: (1) juridicism, (2) individualism, (3) ebionism, (4) mystification, and (5) exclusivism.³⁹

CE is ‘a broad and inclusive category that makes room for a range of legitimate approaches’,⁴⁰ or, as Doyle puts it, it is ‘like a playing field within which various theological approaches co-exist’.⁴¹ By allowing for the presence of a variety of approaches, CE ‘seeks to harvest the best from a range of perspectives and to show how each perspective contributes to a fuller vision’.⁴² Thus formulated, the inclusive outlook of CE can be perceived as at once offering a promising path beyond narrowness, doctrinal cliques and ‘left-right dichotomies’, while not succumbing to fundamental relativism or ‘spineless pluralism’.⁴³

Doyle catalogues at least six contemporary Catholic versions of CE. He claims that those versions, if understood in a proper dialectical way, are not exclusive of each other, but contribute to the enrichment of the Catholic vision of the church for the third millennium. For instance, the CDF version seems to be of use to the vision by insisting that the universal aspect of the church and its visible structures be taken into account properly in ecclesiology. The Rahnerian version proved to be fruitful in fostering an understanding of ‘the sacramentality of the world and on the communion with God that exist within all humankind’.⁴⁴ The Balthasarian version provides important insights into ‘the uniqueness of Christian revelation and its aesthetic

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 14-17.

³⁹ Dennis Doyle has attempted to devise a strategy for combating these five unfortunate reductionist distortions. The strategy consists of juxtaposing the reductionist ecclesial vision with an appropriate image or ecclesial dimension that is lacking in its elucidation of the nature of church. For an illustration of how his strategy works, see: Ibid., pp. 14-16.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 3.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 20.

⁴² Ibid., p. 3.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 20.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 19.

character'.⁴⁵ The liberation version takes the needs of the poor into consideration and thinks through political implications of communion. The contextual version shows appreciation of relationality by viewing it from a perspective shaped by gender, ethnicity, and social location. Finally, the reforming version dares radically to challenge existing ecclesiological norms and presuppositions for the sake of ecumenical advancement.⁴⁶

All six of these theological versions, as well as many others that are not identified by Doyle, deserve to be given attention and properly contextualised within the larger framework of CE. This does not, however, automatically entail that all of the existing versions of CE will have a strictly 'equal say' in ecclesiological dialogues.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, the particular concerns and emphases that each of them brings to the discussions can indeed provide opportunities to enhance the understanding of certain aspects or dimensions of the church that have been neglected by other co-existing theories. If one proceeds with such an approach, one may well discover that, in spite of the seemingly irreconcilable theological diversity that exists among the various versions of CE, one may still detect 'a host of deeply shared presuppositions'⁴⁸ that could help illuminate the ways in which all those versions 'are being played out within the same ballpark'.⁴⁹

Commenting on the dangers and limitations of the flexible framework of CE, Joseph Komonchak argues that an ill-defined CE has the tendency to 'evaporate communion into a nebulous fellow-feeling, a content-less "agreement to disagree", or

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ For a brief outline of the main contributions of these six approaches, see: Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 20.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid. Perhaps, a move beyond the propositional perception of truth to include its other complementary aspects might prove valuable in this regard.

into a purely spiritual or eschatological ideal with no historical form or force'.⁵⁰ Nicholas Healy makes a similar criticism. He claims that the fact that different authors can readily convey different, and often conflicting meanings, depending on the context, indicates that CE has nothing substantial to add to the discussion.⁵¹ Joining these two critical voices, John Ford thinks that one should not be too optimistic regarding the potential of CE, especially since it often acts as a cover for a whole range of latent tensions.⁵²

In his ecclesiological synthesis, however, Dennis Doyle has demonstrated that the alleged misgivings about CE can be turned to advantage. He manages to prove that, notwithstanding the challenges it faces and the complications it involves, CE can still be used as a valuable tool for bringing about unity. Its capacity to accommodate a plethora of ecclesiological reflections and to treat them as complementary proposals, allows one to see the richness and multi-dimensionality of the church's communal esse. Its fluidity, far from being a hindrance to the ecclesiological quest, allows different ecclesiological traditions (including Adventism's) to enter a mutually enriching dialogue, without compromising their distinctiveness.⁵³

It may sound overoptimistic or even naïve to believe in the potential of CE to build genuine bridges between all these contrasting viewpoints (both in and across particular denominational confines). It must also be acknowledged that the mode of

⁵⁰ Joseph A. Komonchak, 'Conceptions of Communion, Past and Present', *Cristianesimo nella storia*, 16 (1995), 339.

⁵¹ Nicholas M. Healy, 'Communion Ecclesiology: A Cautionary Note', *Pro Ecclesia*, 4 (1995), 6.

⁵² John Ford, 'Koinonia and Roman Catholic Theology', *Ecumenical Trends*, 26 (March 1997), 42-44.

⁵³ 'Communion is an elastic image: there can be *degrees* of commonality. It thus avoids the either/or generated by the juridical and institutional images.' Murphy and Asprey, *Ecumenism Today: The Universal Church in the 21st Century*, p. 48; CDF, 'Some Aspects of the Church Understood as Communion', *Origins*, 22 (25 June 1992), 108-12; Michael G. Lawler and Thomas J. Shanahan, *Church: A Spirited Communion* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995), pp. 19-20.

reasoning presented by CE will always have ‘its own dialectic of the universal and the particular, of the one and the many, of the vision and the versions’.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, this thesis asserts that it is important to explore the options that the *communio* trend opens up, before dismissing the possibility of a constructive conversation via this systematic pathway. An analysis of Doyle’s approach supplies enough evidence for the belief that ‘though this be madness, yet there is method in’t’⁵⁵ — a method that will help in the achievement of a more meaningful dialogue among various versions of CE by identifying the fundamental presuppositional framework within which divergent theological proposals are all being played out.⁵⁶ Adventists, like the other denominations, can make use of this conceptual platform to express their theological convictions and heritage as well as to complement their existing ecclesiology. This will help them to share specific visions of church among different strands within their community. It will also encourage them to learn from older Christian traditions with more experience in the field.

CHURCH AS KOINONIA: TOWARDS A COMMON VISION

To conclude this brief general survey, the following section highlights six motifs that recur in *communio* ecclesiology. These represent a contemporary ecumenical consensus on what any ecclesiological framework should include if it is to provide a foundational ontological definition of the church. Including this formal conceptual network within the scope of Adventism’s remnant ecclesiology can significantly enrich the denomination’s concept of church.

⁵⁴ Doyle, *Communion Ecclesiology*, p. 20.

⁵⁵ The quotation is from Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, Act II, Scene 2.

Firstly, the church is *communio*. Whether explicitly recognized as such or not, the church's communal essence does stand as the foundation of all other primary metaphors and models of the church that the Christian tradition has brought forth.⁵⁷ After all, as can easily be demonstrated, no model or ecclesiological system would gainsay the fact that the church is always a church of the people, or 'communion of persons'.⁵⁸ Moreover, this communion of persons is a communion under God: it cannot be articulated through merely sociological descriptions.⁵⁹ The church is a *sui generis* community of those who, while living on earth, are at the same time citizens of heaven through their fellowship with God.⁶⁰

While the church exists in time and space and can therefore be explored by sociological, anthropological, cultural, historical and many other scientific disciplines, its essence cannot fully be understood without a wider theological framework.⁶¹ That structure must be one in which the church is viewed as being the communion of persons that is 'mystically united to God in Christ through the Holy Spirit'.⁶² Despite

⁵⁶ Doyle, *Communion Ecclesiology*, p. 20.

⁵⁷ Rikhof sums up his quest for the real definition of the church by stating that the notion of church as the 'communio of the faithful [...] can stand as the central statement in ecclesiology. With the help of this terminus, this basic statement, the richness of religious metaphors and of biblical and other insights can be made fruitful, and the opportunities created by Vatican II can be used to develop a truly theological vision of the church'. See, Rikhof, *The Concept of Church*, p. 236.

⁵⁸ Yves Congar, 'Pneumatologie Dogmatique', in *Initiation À La Pratique De La Théologie*, ed. by B. Lauret and F. Refoulé (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1982). Manuel Rebeiro, *The Church as the Community of the Believers: Hans Küng's Concept of the Church as a Proposal for an Ecumenical Ecclesiology* (New Delhi: Intercultural Publications, 2001).

⁵⁹ Elizabeth Teresa Groppe, *Yves Congar's Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 156.

⁶⁰ Jenson and Wilhite, *The Church*, p. 51.

⁶¹ Rikhof, *The Concept of Church*, p. 235. For one of the most insightful proposals on how disciplines such as history, sociology, cultural analysis or ethnography can be used within the wider framework of the theological exploration of the church, see: Healy, *Church, World, and the Christian Life : Practical-Prophetic Ecclesiology*, pp. 154-85.

⁶² Jenson and Wilhite, *The Church*, p. 24. Michiels reiterates a somewhat standard ecumenical definition of *koinonia* when he writes: 'Koinonia is therefore more than human solidarity. It is, in the first place, the participation of the community in the life of the Father and the Son, and in their Spirit. It is this *koinonia* or *communio* of believers with God, Jesus Christ, and their Spirit which

the often conflicting further specifications of the church as a communion, all ecclesiological traditions concur that the concept of *koinonia* offers the most foundational ontological definition of what the church is.⁶³ Nevertheless, a clearer conceptual differentiation needs to be introduced to distinguish the various forms of relationality involved in the complex communal identity of the church.

Secondly, the church represents multifaceted and multidirectional reciprocal interaction. Any sustained ecclesiological framework will have to take into consideration that the ultimate cause and basis of the church's existence is the whole-life response of the community of believers to the continuous presence, words and actions of the Triune God, who dwells among them and draws them into mysterious union with himself and with each other. From this it becomes clear that further explication of the inner dynamics of this theandric (divine-human) union, which constitutes the core of the church's communal being, would need to involve an understanding of the rich and dynamic interplay that exists between the following entities: (1) the persons of the Trinity (Trinitarian communion), (2) human beings and the Triune God (vertical communion) and (3) members of the *communio* of the faithful (horizontal communion).⁶⁴ The description should also include (4) an elaboration of the ways in which divine and human realities intersect (vertical and horizontal), which in turn requires 'listening to and looking at the words and deeds of Christ and his

constitutes the church.' See, Robrecht Michiels, 'The 'Model of Church' in the First Christian Community of Jerusalem: Ideal and Reality', *Louvain Studies*, 10:4 (1985), 309.

⁶³ CDF, 'Some Aspects of the Church Understood as *Communio*', p. 108.

⁶⁴ Jeffrey T. VanderWilt, *A Church without Borders: The Eucharist and the Church in Ecumenical Perspective* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998), pp. 20–21; CDF, 'Some Aspects of the Church Understood as *Communio*', p. 108. For a theological use of this 'geometric' language, see: VanderWilt, *Communion with Non-Catholic Christians: Risks, Challenges, and Opportunities*, p. 24.

church, to their modes of action, reaction and interaction'.⁶⁵ Other areas for exploration involve the dynamic multidimensional interaction between (5) the local and universal church, and (6) the church and non-church (or the world).⁶⁶

Thirdly, the church is structured. Since that 'communio of the faithful' includes the faithful as a whole, and not merely an individual or a number of separate individuals, the structure of that whole becomes a significant element in any ecclesiological framework. Some form of internal organization is an indispensable feature of human communal behaviour, especially that which extends over some period of time.⁶⁷ While it is maintained that all churches and all theological reflection on ecclesiology will always have to include institutional elements, a scholarly consensus on the degree and forms of institutionalism is as yet out of reach. However, one thing is certain: 'a critique of institutionalism *qua* institutionalism is unhelpful'.⁶⁸ A more clearly defined ground for criticism is required — one that will help us to discern when 'the institutional elements of the church [are] no longer in accordance with the intrinsic nature of the church'.⁶⁹

Fourthly, the church is internally and externally oriented. While it is true that it becomes what it is in response to God's calling to enter into a mystical union with himself and with other believers, the moment an ecclesial community becomes preoccupied with itself (*incurvatus in se*) and forgets its world-oriented ecstatic mission (*excurvatus ex se*), it fails to fulfil the purpose to which it is called.⁷⁰ Every genuine

⁶⁵ Jenson and Wilhite, *The Church*, p. 149.

⁶⁶ Rikhof, *The Concept of Church*, pp. 233–35; Fuchs, *Koinonia*, pp. 25–26.

⁶⁷ Rikhof, *The Concept of Church*, p. 234.

⁶⁸ Jenson and Wilhite, *The Church*, p. 54.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Matt Jenson, *The Gravity of Sin: Augustine, Luther and Barth on 'Homo Incurvatus in Se'* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2006), p. 190.

account of the church will acknowledge that it is born as a result of God's mission in Christ through the Spirit, and will actively participate in that same mission of reconciling the world to God in word (preaching), being (signifying) and deed (service).⁷¹ By keeping in mind the fact that the ultimate purpose of the 'communio of the faithful' lies both 'inside' and 'outside' the relationships existing among its members, one can avoid the snare of one-sidedness, and achieve a more complete articulation of the church's *esse*. This, in turn, will require supplementing the account of inner-ecclesial relationships (see points 2 and 3) with a more nuanced view of the compound interaction that exists between the church and the external world in which it is located (such as Israel, world religions, culture, politics, ecumenism, cosmos). Useful for elucidating various facets of this ecstatic orientation is the grand conceptual framework of *missio Dei* (examined in more detail in Chapters V and VI).⁷²

Fifthly, the church is visibly manifested. Whereas various ecclesiological visions differ in the way they interpret the visibility of the church in reference to its institutional elements, proclamation of the gospel, sacramental practices, or missional activity, all of them concur that 'the church is only known as a church visibly'.⁷³ According to the exponents of CE, the invisible *koinonia* must have some form of visible

⁷¹ Jenson and Wilhite, *The Church*, p. 51. Michael W. Goheen, 'As the Father Has Sent Me, I Am Sending You': J. E. Lesslie Newbigin's *Missionary Ecclesiology* (Zoetermeer: Uitgeverij Boekencentrum, 2000), p. 6.

⁷² For an example of a mature articulation of this overarching missiological framework, see: Lesslie Newbigin, *A Word in Season: Perspectives on Christian World Missions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), pp. 52–53; Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), p. 32.

⁷³ Jenson and Wilhite, *The Church*, p. 52; Jacques Haers and Peter de Mey, *Theology and Conversation: Towards a Relational Theology* (Leuven; Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2003), pp. 532–38. Thomas Oden cautions ecclesialogists not to fall into the habit of binary thinking that polarizes an ecclesiological discourse into opposition between 'hypervisibility' and 'hyperinvisibility'. Thomas C. Oden, *Life in the Spirit* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992), p. 330.

expression in order to be rightly regarded as a church.⁷⁴ After all, ecclesial phenomena involve concrete people who live in a concrete and visible spatio-temporal domain. Since the church is deeply rooted in the historical and physical realm, any account of ecclesial reality that does not take seriously its visible human aspects (including its flaws and weaknesses), can be considered one-sided and deficient.⁷⁵ Of course, it should be clarified that accounts of the church's manifestation and fulfilment of divine calling usually point to what the church *should* be, and not necessarily to what the church is in its dishevelled reality. Nevertheless, it must be kept in mind that the church definitely fails to be the church when it ceases to actively respond to its vocation and to visibly manifest its being in practice.⁷⁶

Sixthly, the church is both local and universal. The church of Jesus Christ is one and universal, and yet a church of a certain place(s). It follows that both local and universal aspects should find their proper place in any ecclesiological paradigm.⁷⁷ While most contemporary ecclesialogists would differ to a degree in their accounts of what exactly the relationship is like between the local and universal church, they would all assent that, no matter how its global dimension is construed, the church is a mystical communion which is always manifested in a real time and locality.⁷⁸ Whether one talks about the invisible aspects of the church (mystical communion) or its visible manifestation (institutional, sacramental, evangelical, missional), one should never

⁷⁴ For a balanced examination of the visible and invisible aspects of *koinonia*, see: Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 'Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Some Aspects of the Church Understood as Communion', *Ecumenical Trends*, 21:9 (1992); VanderWilt, *Communion with Non-Catholic Christians: Risks, Challenges, and Opportunities*, p. 24.

⁷⁵ Healy, *Church*, p. 3.

⁷⁶ Jenson and Wilhite, *The Church*, p. 52. For elaboration more detailed presentation of the thesis that it is through the variety of church practices that *koinonia* becomes discernible, see: Reinhard Hüter, *Suffering Divine Things: Theology as Church Practice* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000).

⁷⁷ Corneliu C. Simut, *A Critical Study of Hans Küng's Ecclesiology: From Traditionalism to Modernism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 81.

reduce the notion of church to ‘a nebulous and unknowable reality’⁷⁹ that cannot be described in local terms. Nevertheless, in order to keep the universal and local dimensions in proper tension, it is proposed that anyone offering an ecclesiological account should find a way to explain how God’s church, while indeed manifested in a certain time and place, transcends its local boundaries. Although more has to be said to clarify this point, for now it may be sufficient to note that the right balance between the local and the universal (between the local and the worldwide church) belongs to the very essence of ‘church’.

Overall, the mysterious and complex nature of the church forbids one to express as a single metaphor, model, or conceptual system the various facets of its being. However, for the purpose of summarizing some of the essential formal elements that any ecclesiological framework should include, the following provisional formal definition can be proposed: The church is one, holy, apostolic and catholic entity. It is a (1) divinely initiated and sustained *communio of the faithful* that involves (2) dynamic multi-directional and multi-dimensional reciprocal theandric interaction, (3&4) visibly realized in an inter-dependent relational structure, and in its sacramental, heralding, diaconical and other ecclesial practices, and it is (5&6) called to expand inwardly and outwardly while actively participating in the reconciling mission of God for and in the world.

While much more needs to be added in order to provide a foundational definition of ‘church’, this six-fold statement connects some of the most important motifs that surfaced in the above discussion of contemporary ecclesiology, motifs that

⁷⁸ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 145.

⁷⁹ Jenson and Wilhite, *The Church*, p. 52.

represent an ecumenical consensus of what *must* be said about the nature of church. Needless to say, this formal definition cannot be viewed as exhaustive, but rather as a very general description of the church's *esse*.

(III) REASONS FOR INCORPORATING THE CONCEPT OF *KOINONIA* INTO ADVENTIST REMNANT ECCLESIOLOGY

The key question that needs to be addressed next is why and how a specific theological tradition — in this case, Adventism — with its peculiarities and distinct concerns, would be integrated into this broad and flexible theoretical framework. Since this is a new route for Adventists, it may first be necessary to outline why the *koinonia* framework is considered to be a suitable, or, I would even argue, a *necessary* addition to their existing ecclesiology. In order to do that, seven potentialities the *koinonia* approach can introduce to the Adventist discourse will be presented. It is proposed that an argument for adopting the *koinonia* approach stems from its biblical, historical, ontological, dialogical, cultural, unifying, and systematic potential.

1. BIBLICAL POTENTIAL. In the light of the Adventist perpetual insistence on the primacy of the Scriptures in theological reflection, the fact that *koinonia* is thoroughly biblical, both as a term and as a concept, should make it a most welcome enrichment to their ecclesiological discourse.⁸⁰ After all, the Apostle John summarized the purpose of

⁸⁰ For a useful summary of the biblical foundations of this concept, see: Herwi Rikhof, *The Concept of Church*, p. 233; Fuchs, *Koinonia*, pp. 6-7; J. Y. Campbell, 'Koinonia and Its Cognates in the New Testament', *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 51 (1932), 353-82; G. Panikulam, 'Koinonia in the New Testament: A Dynamic Expression of Christian Life' (doctoral thesis, Biblical Institute Press, Pontificio istituto biblico, Rome, 1979); M. Jack Suggs, 'Koinonia in the New Testament', *Mid-Stream*, 23 (1984), 351-62; J. C. Hay, *Koinonia in the New Testament: A Study of the Word* (Toronto: Canadian Council of Churches, 1970); Leopold Sabourin, 'Koinonia in the New Testament', *Religious Studies Bulletin*, 1 (1981); Andrew T. Lincoln, 'Communion: Some Pauline Foundations', *Ecclesiology*, (2009).

the entire apostolic proclamation of the Word as the creation of *koinonia* (1 John 1.1-4). In their theological project as the remnant, Adventists would do well to supplement their focus on proclamation (heralding) and the Word (logocentricity) with the category of communion — biblically a natural *telos* of the two. For a community committed to being faithful to the entirety of the divine revelation, understanding how naturally *koinonia* follows from these Apostolic concepts and central Adventist concerns becomes essential.⁸¹

2. HISTORICAL POTENTIAL. Incorporating this *telos* into remnant theology also enables Adventists to further pursue their aim to remain close to the apostolic tradition (apostolicity). Such a project is, therefore, historically warranted as it is deeply rooted, not only in the Bible but also in the early Christian tradition as seen in the Apostles' Creed (*Symbolum Apostolorum*), in which the notion of church is directly linked with the idea of community (*communio* or *koinonia*).⁸² Since this practice, seen too in other apostolic and patristic texts, dates back to the pre-Constantinian period, it is appealing for Adventists, who are primarily restorationist in their method (*ad fontes* project).⁸³ They try to recover what is lost during the church's medieval apostasy. In this they are

⁸¹ The connection between the act of proclamation and the resulting phenomenon of *koinonia* is made more than explicit in the prologue to the epistle of John (1 John 1.1–4). For a more detailed exegetical analysis of this organic link, see: Panikulam, 'Koinonia in the New Testament: A Dynamic Expression of Christian Life', pp. 131–40. For the theological appropriation of this text, see the preface to *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation: Dei Verbum, Solemnly Promulgated by His Holiness, Pope Paul VI on November 18, 1965* (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 1965). John Webster is one of the most prominent evangelical theologians to undertake the important task of articulating the organic relationship between the Word (and the heralding of it) and the genesis of the ecclesial community. See, Webster, 'On Evangelical Ecclesiology'; John Webster, 'The Church and the Perfection of God', in *The Community of the Word: Toward an Evangelical Ecclesiology*, ed. by Mark Husbards and Daniel J. Treier (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005).

⁸² See 'The Apostles' Creed', <<http://www.creeds.net/ancient/apostles.htm>> [accessed: 21/12/2015]. Jaroslav Pelikan and Valerie R. Hotchkiss, *Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition: Early, Eastern and Medieval* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003). Sagovsky, *Ecumenism, Christian Origins, and the Practice of Communion*.

⁸³ For an insightful study of an Adventist method of retrieval of the lost aspects of the early Christian vision of reality, see a recent doctoral dissertation: Lukic, 'The Anatomy of Dissension'.

no different from Christians of some other Protestant traditions. Interestingly, the *koinonia*-based discourse in modern theology seems to share the same implicit aim — to return Christianity to the pre-Schism period, when the church was united in faith and life.⁸⁴

3. ONTOLOGICAL POTENTIAL. In the tradition of the New Testament writings, *koinonia*, with its multivalence and rich connotations, can be used today to express the network of intrapersonal relations that forms the core of the church's being. Serving as a primarily ontological qualifier, the term *koinonia* can be used as the most foundational concept attached to the being of church — a mystical *koinonia* of the faithful with God in Christ through the Holy Spirit.⁸⁵ Following that, the term can then be extended to incorporate other definitions.⁸⁶ While still accommodating the functional, structural, axiological, kerygmatic, kenotic, sacramental, teleological, theodramatic, practical-prophetic, contextual (and other) aspects of church, *koinonia* always remains the primary expression of the underlying ontological core of the church, incorporating these other

⁸⁴ Doyle, *Communion Ecclesiology*, p. 13; Skublics, *Communion Ecclesiology*, p. 36.

⁸⁵ In his influential monograph, *The Concept of Church*, Herwi Rikhof concludes his inquiry into the use of metaphors (and models) in ecclesiology by arguing for the necessity of having a pivot-terminus in the construction of a 'real definition' of the concept of the church. He claims that it is possible to provide the *definitio realis* (essence or reality description) of church — a definition that revolves around the terminus that states the key-element, which structures the whole and from which other elements follow. However, it has to fulfil a number of rules or requirements in order to be adequate. According to Rikhof, a proper definition should: (1) 'establish the essence of what is defined and not state accidental properties'; (2) 'state the genus and the differentiating species' (i.e., *per genus proximum et differentiam specificam*); and, (3) 'not use metaphors or figurative language'. While Rikhof admits that one of the main conditions the central statement has to fulfil is to 'express the internal link between the various images used for the church', metaphors or images themselves (as prominent as they may be in contemporary discussions) *cannot* be used to make a central ecclesiological terminus that provides a formal base for a systematic theological treatment of the church. Their presence would 'start a regressive search for interpretation-keys and coherence-criteria' and would necessitate additional terminological qualifications (pp. 225-36).

⁸⁶ As argued above, Matt Jenson has convincingly shown that even the famous Avery Dulles' definitions of the church as herald, institution, servant and sacrament primarily address what the church *does*, while the church as mystical communion represents what the church *is* and therefore precedes any further qualifiers.

aspects as further clarifications.⁸⁷ As demonstrated above, this is *exactly* what has been lacking in the Adventist ecclesiological discussions about the church as the remnant and *why* Adventists should consider engaging more thoroughly with mainstream Christian *koinonia*-based ecclesiology.

4. DIALOGICAL POTENTIAL. The history of the use of the *koinonia* framework by a number of different Christian churches has already proved its capacity to provide a suitable space and language for interdenominational discussions, hopefully leading to a greater degree of 'symbolic competence for communionality', as Lorelei F. Fuchs would express it.⁸⁸ While the concept of the remnant has been successful in highlighting Adventists' distinctive concerns and mission, there remains the need to position their church in the wider Christian context. A *koinonia* framework would, therefore, also enable Adventists to voice what they have in common with other Christian traditions. It would help Adventists to relate more successfully to others, since it does not carry the potentially exclusivist and pretentious connotations that the concept of remnant tends to evoke in the minds of some.

Koinonia as a concept is broad enough to be able to encompass the distinctive emphasis of various theological traditions, but specific enough to be used as the common Christian descriptor of the nature of church. While Adventists do not traditionally emphasize the need for joining the ecumenical body, they nevertheless cherish communication among different strands of Christianity — some appreciating it as a platform for exchange of ideas, some merely as an opportunity to share the distinctive Adventist message. In any case, the Adventist church is in need of finding

⁸⁷ Jenson and Wilhite, *The Church*, p. 52.

⁸⁸ Rikhof, *The Concept of Church*, p. 233.

better ways of interacting with the larger Christian world, and the *koinonia* approach may provide the necessary tools for this.

5. CULTURAL POTENTIAL. Widening the focus of Adventist identity formation from a purely remnant-based rhetoric to a more inclusively communal one is also likely to speak more meaningfully to the contemporary mind, as it connects to values such as tolerance, solidarity, collaboration, and inter-cultural and inter-religious exchange.⁸⁹ Cultural relevance (contemporaneity) is needed if certain theological discourse on the nature of church is to be relevant and applicable to the present-day generation of Adventists as well as to the wider society in which the believers live.⁹⁰

As Skublics explains, a recent shift from ‘the damaging effects of an over-analytic rationalism, mechanicism, and individualism’⁹¹ to a more dynamic and relational interpretation of reality has had important ecclesiological implications. According to his analysis, the widespread impulse towards ‘the recovery of the ancient and more organic models of the church as the mystery of communion, a communion of persons’⁹² is only

[a] part of a larger cultural ‘paradigm shift’ which includes the way the hard sciences themselves have come to understand the relational structure of reality. It is part of a recognition that everything that exists is part of an integral whole, and that, in this feature, creation mirrors the personal and relational being of the Creator who is a Communion of three persons in one.⁹³

In the light of this paradigm shift in the domains of prevailing culture, it is not hard to see why the adoption of a *koinonia*-based rhetoric and theology, with its personalistic,

⁸⁹ Gerard Mannion, *Ecclesiology and Postmodernity: Questions for the Church in Our Time* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007).

⁹⁰ Skublics, *Communion Ecclesiology*, pp. 8–10.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 9–10. See also the chapter ‘A Renewed Sociality’ in Pickard, *Seeking the Church*, pp. 81–100.

intrapersonal, communal and inclusive resonances, might turn out to be the most suitable move that Adventists can undertake in rethinking their vision of the church.

6. UNIFYING POTENTIAL. Given that concept of *koinonia* has not yet been properly developed by different strands of Adventists to argue on behalf of their distinctive, and often conflicting, doctrinal proposals, the notion does not carry any polemical and divisive connotations. There is therefore no reason to expect that this conceptual framework would be too loaded and problematic to act as the space for a potential rapprochement between various strands within the Adventist community of believers.

The unifying and mutually enriching potential of this network is well demonstrated by Dennis Doyle's exposition of six Catholic versions of the *communio* ecclesiology, each contributing to a larger general vision.⁹⁴ In the same way that the *communio* approach seems to work in the Catholic context, it can also work in the Adventist one, or in any other religious community. The same unifying effect that was described above in the section on dialogical potential pertaining to the larger ecumenical context can here be expected to occur on a miniature scale, within the movement itself.

7. SYSTEMATIC POTENTIAL. With its interlinking quality,⁹⁵ the concept of *koinonia* can be used as an integrative motif to connect and express the core of various

⁹⁴ Doyle, *Communion Ecclesiology*, pp. 23–168.

⁹⁵ Rikhof's seminal study, *The Concept of Church*, demonstrates that by connecting the rich biblical and patristic tradition of the early Christian Church to the ecclesiological issues prevalent in contemporary ecumenical discussions, the term *communio* (or its Greek synonym – *koinonia*) serves as a chief 'interpretation-key and coherence criterion' for the construction of a comprehensive systematic vision. Rikhof claims that, when used as a basic statement about the nature of the church, a pivot-terminus has the purpose of: (1) *indicating the basic constitutive elements* of the formal systematic network, (2) *determining the scope* of any possible ecclesiological discourse, and (3) *guaranteeing the consistency* of a systematic conceptual meta-structure, both internally and externally.

components of the Adventist belief system. For instance, the relational reality of *koinonia* could be seen as the fulfilment of the true purpose of the seventh-day Sabbath — the union between God and humanity and among human beings. While the remnant framework enables an emphasis on preaching and restoring the Sabbath as the right day of worship, *koinonia* expresses the very essence of the day and draws attention to the restoration of its content.

The Decalogue, whose perpetual validity for the people of God in the Old as well as the New Testament periods is highlighted by Adventists, would from the *koinonia* perspective maintain its significance as a divine attempt to disclose the character of the ideals for the relational realm. It outlines the main characteristics and concrete manifestations of loving relationships (*koinonia*) between God and his people (the first four commandments) and describes how unity with God also translates into the reality of human relationships (the last six commandments). Such an approach in Adventist thought again draws the Sabbath to the foreground as a space in which those two realities become inseparably intertwined.

Thirdly, the *koinonia* framework enables Adventists to present in more detail their teaching about the Sanctuary as the place of encounter between Creator and creatures. The complex system of Old Testament cultic life can be seen as a representation of how the divine salvific plan is intended to overcome all the obstacles that stand in the way of the true *koinonia*. In the Most Holy Place stands the Decalogue, symbolizing the relational ideal, while everything happening around it is meant to point to Jesus as the

For a more detailed explanation of the role of *koinonia* as a pivotal term in an ecclesiological synthesis, see: Rikhof, *The Concept of Church*, pp. 228-36.

Messiah, who is both the embodiment of these ideals and the agent through whom dynamic harmony with God can be restored.

In addition to that, *koinonia* expresses the core and purpose of Jesus' High-priestly ministry as described in John 17 as well as of the Apostolic ministry set out in 1 John 1.1–4. Both of these pivotal statements point to the fact that human beings were created to be persons-in-communion according to the divine communal image.

While remnant-based Adventist theology emphasizes the instrumental role of the people of God in preaching about and preparing the world for the imminent return of Christ, *koinonia* encompasses the *telos* of human existence as implied by the Adventist teachings about the Second Advent. In other words, it outlines what the Second Coming accomplishes. In Revelation 20 this eschatological goal is described as mutual interpersonal indwelling — God lives in us and we live in God. Death, seen as the result of breaking *koinonia* with God, is defined as a creature's being non-existent. For the faithful, this state is only temporary and is overcome in the full bodily resurrection that takes place at the Second Coming of Christ. On the Day of Resurrection, God's people will be reunited with their loved ones and join the eternal communion with God and other creatures.

Following from that, the general metaphysical framework of Adventism — the Great Controversy — would also be seen as revolving around the concept of *koinonia*. To establish, maintain and defend the life-giving relationship with God and with other believers has been the main drive of the Great Controversy in the interim period after the Fall and before the Restoration. This phase of the cosmic war is characterized by Satan's offering his counterfeit relational models and trying to thwart divine intentions implicit in the creation and recreation of the world.

In this clash, it is the role of Christ and his faithful remnant to call God's people out of the Babylonian environments into communion with Him. Hence, instead of diminishing the importance of the proclamation of the Three Angels' Messages from Revelation 14, the *koinonia* framework shows it to be instrumental in inviting the world to return to the true communal relationship with God and others. Thus, the message, occasionally seen as an aim *per se* in Adventist circles, becomes a tool for achieving the real goal. The people involved and joined together in the process of proclamation are no longer only simply instrumental in achieving the aim, but — as a community of believers — constitute a part of the end goal. The vitality of this ecclesial *koinonia* is maintained through spiritual virtues, gifts and fruits (and these include the role of the prophetic gift of Ellen G. White).

In a similar way, all the other facets of Adventist doctrine and practice can be integrated into this larger conceptual scheme. Even characteristic Adventist preoccupations can be interpreted through the *koinonia*-based lenses. So, for instance mission can be seen as spreading *koinonia*; healthy living can be viewed as the holistic renewal of a human being in the context of community; interpretation of the Bible may be regarded as a transformative community-generating event that always occurs in the interface between personal and communal reading of the written Word of God; and education can be looked at as a communal process of sharing and learning, resulting in a constantly improving understanding of the common faith. Lastly, the denomination's insistence on the need to define certain common ecclesial structures that regulate the dynamic life of the community of believers both globally and locally may be seen as giving the church the role of the visible and concrete foretaste of the more fully realized eschatological *koinonia*.

(IV) KOINONIA AS THE NEW CENTRE OF ADVENTIST ECCLESIOLOGICAL DISCOURSE

One might claim, then, that *koinonia* is already implicit in Adventism's doctrines and practices as the 'integrative' and 'systematic' theological motif that unites all the distinct features of Adventist theological vision into a coherent whole. *Koinonia* ecclesiology is required by the existing theology as a natural onward development.

While there may be a temptation for some to see this shift merely as a semantic game, undertaken to make the theological terminology more 'popular', I propose that the project of integrating *koinonia* into Adventist theology goes much further. It is not simply a matter of shifting emphases or rearranging an already existing discourse; instead it is one of becoming aware of deeper theological realities. These realities may have been present as assumed, but they now need to be explicitly voiced and allowed to introduce their own set of questions, concerns and priorities into the Adventist theological discourse. Their contribution is therefore far from being only semantic. Instead, those realities touch on the foundational questions concerning the ontological-theological meta-structure of the church's being.

Another set of objections may arise from the fear that the project outlined in this thesis attempts to eclipse or even replace the concept of remnant, along with all the uniquely Adventist theological emphases. In response it should be reiterated that the proposal at hand does not treat *remnant* and *koinonia* as mutually exclusive and competing categories. Instead, the one can accommodate and complement the other. Here, a reference to a metaphor employed by Rolf Pöhler may be of use. When describing different approaches to refocusing a particular theological system of thought, he addresses the question of distinguishing between 'central truths' and 'peripheral

notions'. Elements from either category can be used to describe this larger system of thought.⁹⁶ At the same time, not all of these elements are equally useful in such a task. This does not make these peripheral components any less a part of the overall system, but it highlights other parts as essential or more central. In his words,

no one would be as foolish as to try to remove the shallow waters at the banks of the river where ships are unable to sail. But no one should make himself a fool by declaring that he can make as much headway at the banks of a river as he does in the center of the stream, where the water is flowing the fastest.⁹⁷

Pöhler advises theologians to 'sail where the water is deep, so that [...] they may not one day run aground'.⁹⁸ In the context of the current dissertation, *koinonia* definitely qualifies as 'deep waters'. Maybe the notion of remnant has a venerable history in Adventism, but it is reflection on *koinonia* that will enable Adventist scholars to make progress, and to integrate Adventist ecclesiology more fully into the church's life and doctrine.

To conclude this section, it must be reiterated that the global Adventist Church has, at the present time, three ecclesiological priorities, as stated by the BRI. These are: resolving current internal theological tensions (maintaining unity); helping the movement to express its ecclesial identity in a meaningful way to other Christians and non-Christians (interacting with others); and doing so with particular application to the current generation (relevancy). A discourse of church as *koinonia* offers many resources

⁹⁶ The search for a conceptual unifying centre, as already suggested, is not new to Adventism. Rolf Pöhler has rightly claimed that there is no one 'correct' way of doing theology, but many possible ways. Each situation, target group, or context requires the process of rethinking and revisiting of existing theological knowledge to see how it can be adapted to respond to the purpose of the communication of the gospel. Not all the central motifs are equally suitable for use in integrating the totality of one's religious outlook, but if approached with thoroughness and if one remains faithful to the core values of a certain religious community, they can all still be used as valuable conceptual and systematic tools. Pöhler, 'Unifying Centre', pp. 18–20.

⁹⁷ Ibid., pp. 19–20.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

that can assist Adventists to pursue these goals. It is this task that will occupy the rest of this thesis.

At this point one might rightly expect that the current thesis would proceed to articulate a distinctly Adventist reinterpretation of the concept of *koinonia*. Based on my analysis of Adventist ecclesiological self-understanding in Chapters I and II, this reinterpretation should be decisively shaped by Adventists' distinctive theology of the Bible and hermeneutics, their general account of God, the world, and eschatology, and their particular understanding of the Christ-centeredness of revelation.

My project in this thesis, however, needs to be less ambitious. Within Adventism, further groundwork must be done before such a task can be attempted. In next chapter – Chapter V – I want to develop further, in a way that is new within Adventism, the connections between the revealed Word, the doctrine of the Trinity (with special reference to the Holy Spirit), and a theologically robust account of the church. In doing so, I shall continue to draw on authors who have reflected on *communio* within the mainstream Christian churches. In Chapter VI, I will look at how such a perspective enables one to look afresh at some contentious issues within contemporary Adventist church polity.

CHAPTER V

THE TRINITY AND THE CHURCH: TOWARDS A PARTICIPATORY ECCLESIOLOGICAL VISION

Most *communio* authors writing in the last half-century have recognized that the way one understands the nature and scope of God's involvement in the making of community largely determines the basic shape and orientation of believers' common life in him.⁹⁹ They have therefore taken as their prime ecclesiological task the widening of existing social and ecclesial interpretations of the term 'communion' (*koinonia*). To do this they investigate the notion of human community as a *reflection of* and *participation in* the Trinitarian communion.

Two major approaches seem to be at the forefront of the contemporary ecclesiological conversation. The first approach – *imitatio Trinitatis* – focuses on the concept of church as an image or icon of the triune God.¹⁰⁰ The principal, axiomatic

⁹⁹ Most contemporary theology (especially theological anthropology and Trinitarian ecclesiology) is based on the following premises: To know ourselves, we need to know God, or – to know God, we need to know ourselves. While both of these two approaches are used in contemporary ecclesiology, the *imitatio Trinitatis* approach seems to favour the first type of theological discourse when defining the nature of church. See Faith and Order Commission, 'Christian Perspectives on Theological Anthropology', *Faith and Order Paper no. 199*, (2005) <<https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/commissions/faith-and-order/v-theological-anthropology>> [accessed 27/01/2016].

¹⁰⁰ For instance, Zizioulas defines the church as 'a set of relationships making up a mode of being, exactly as is the case of the Trinitarian God'. John D. Zizioulas, 'The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity: The Significance of the Cappadocian Contribution', in *Trinitarian Theology Today: Essays on Divine Being and Act*, ed. by Christoph Schwobel (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1995), p. 27. In other words, the church is a 'reflection' of God's *relational* way of being. See, John D. Zizioulas, 'The Church as Communion', *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, 38 (1994), 7.

idea is that the intra-Trinitarian relationship of the divine persons of the immanent Trinity somehow mirrors the relational components of ecclesiality.¹⁰¹ The inner-Trinitarian communal mode of being provides a heuristic paradigm for construing one's concept of church as a community of believers. Accepted as almost a standardized ecclesiological procedure, this approach ('from above') has been developed and applied extensively by a considerable number of mainline Christian theologians.

The second approach – *participatio Trinitatis* – seems to be a methodological route that is exploited less often. It examines the relationship between Trinity and church in terms of the believer's *participation* in the divine life as unveiled in history, with an emphasis on dynamic personal interaction, indwelling and sharing, both among the believers and with God. Rather than focusing on speculation about the inner mode of being of the immanent Trinity, the *participatio Trinitatis* ecclesiological project tends to stress the works of God *ad extra*. It grounds the church's being in those aspects of divine life that have been made accessible to human beings in the concreteness of the revelatory and reconciliatory event of Christ, in which human beings participate through the workings of the Spirit. Starting 'from below' – with believers' most immediate and unmediated experience of the community-forming work of the Spirit – this approach moves upwards in explaining the ways in which this Spirit-gathered community is then incorporated into the spiritual body of Christ and, through this life-giving, mysterious union with the Son, reunited with the Father.

In order to determine the most promising methodological route for Adventists to pursue in their ecclesiological construction, it is necessary to consider briefly the main proposals, prospects and limitations of these two Trinitarian approaches. The following

¹⁰¹ MacDougall, *More Than Communion*, p. 76.

questions should give direction to this critical inquiry: Can Adventists use some of the insights emerging from these two CE strands to move their ecclesiological reflection forward? If yes, in which way and to what extent should they be free to do that without compromising their most foundational theological commitments?

Clearly, answering these questions involves a rather judicious and eclectic process of reading, which in turn requires Adventists to tread their path by selecting options carefully in the present debates.¹⁰² It requires discernment about what further adjustments and refinements are needed to provide ground for a genuinely Adventist version of *communio* ecclesiology.

(I) THE *IMITATIO TRINITATIS* APPROACH

Within Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant theological circles, the most coherent, creative, and profound theological attempts to define a vision of the church according to the image of a triune God have been made by Metropolitan John D. Zizioulas (Eastern-Orthodox tradition),¹⁰³ Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (who later became Pope Benedict XVI),¹⁰⁴ and Miroslav Volf (Protestant/Evangelical and 'Free Church')

¹⁰² In this process one should resist the temptation to juxtapose these two *communio* approaches automatically, as if they were mutually exclusive or contradictory theological proposals. The divide goes much deeper than a standard theological differentiation between immanent and economic Trinity – as if one of these aspects could ever exist in isolation.

¹⁰³ John (or Jean) D. Zizioulas' most notable works include: Jean Zizioulas, *The Eucharistic Communion and the World* (London; New York: T. & T. Clark, 2011); Jean Zizioulas and Gregory Edwards, *The One and the Many: Studies on God, Man, the Church, and the World Today* (Alhambra, CA: Sebastian Press, 2010); Jean Zizioulas and Douglas H. Knight, *Lectures in Christian Dogmatics* (London; New York: T. & T. Clark, 2008); Jean Zizioulas and Paul McPartlan, *Communion and Otherness: Further Studies in Personhood and the Church* (London; New York: T. & T. Clark, 2006); Jean Zizioulas, *Eucharist, Bishop, Church: The Unity of the Church in the Divine Eucharist and the Bishop During the First Three Centuries* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2001); Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*.

¹⁰⁴ The following sources are foundational for understanding Ratzinger's approach to *communio* ecclesiology: Joseph Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism, and Politics: New Endeavors in Ecclesiology* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2008); Joseph Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2005); Joseph Ratzinger, *Called to Communion: Understanding the Church Today* (San

tradition).¹⁰⁵ Their theological reflections have been widely accepted, commented on and analysed by a number of Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant theologians.

THE CENTRAL ARGUMENT

The standard procedure followed by the aforementioned *communio* authors was to base their reflections on the Trinity. After drawing certain principles from their understanding of the inner life of the triune God, they made a series of deductions that subsequently impinged on their entire theological thinking, and especially on their understanding of the *koinonia* at anthropological, soteriological and ecclesial levels.¹⁰⁶

When explaining the nature of the various relationships existing among the divine persons, between Christ and the church, between the local and the universal church, between church members and officials, and between the church and the world, these theologians have had as their final goal the presentation of a grand vision of the ecclesial communion in the image of the triune God. In this way, everything that happens on the level of ecclesial communion is seen by them as somehow a ‘mirror’ or ‘icon’ of the Trinitarian structural model by which the concept of church is informed.

Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996); Joseph Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1990); Joseph Ratzinger, *The Open Circle: The Meaning of Christian Brotherhood* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1966); James Massa, 'The Communion Theme in the Writings of Joseph Ratzinger' (doctoral thesis, Fordham University, 1996).

¹⁰⁵ The following primary sources are indispensable for understanding Volf's version of *communio* ecclesiology: Volf, *After Our Likeness*; Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996); Miroslav Volf, 'The Trinity Is Our Social Program: The Doctrine of Trinity and the Shape of Social Engagement', *Modern Theology*, 14 (1998); Miroslav Volf, 'The Church as a Prophetic Community and a Sign of Hope', *European Journal of Theology*, 2 (1993), 9-30.

¹⁰⁶ For a more thorough critical and comparative analysis of the concept of *koinonia* in the writings of these three authors see: Tihomir Lazic, 'Koinonia: A Critical Analysis and Comparison of *Koinonia* within Joseph Ratzinger's, John Zizioulas's and Miroslav Volf's Versions of "Communion Ecclesiology"' (master's dissertation, University of Wales Lampeter, April 2008). The next section of this thesis will briefly highlight some of the most important conclusions of my MA research project.

In this theological construct the notion of *koinonia* is seen as the key integrative motif that unites and informs various aspects of their ecclesial synthesis. Shaped by their distinctive conceptualizations of the inner life of the triune God, the concept of *koinonia* is used to elucidate various aspects of their ‘ecclesiology of communion’, such as the church’s identity, structure, authority, mission, offices, life in history, and finally, her sacramental life, built most expressively around the Eucharist.

A particularly prominent feature of this kind of Trinitarian approach to *communio* ecclesiology seems to be continual interest in the structural aspects of both the Trinitarian and human community. For example, Ratzinger’s insistence that the structure of Trinitarian relations is characterized by pyramidal dominance of ‘the one’ (precedence of divine substance over non-accidentally conceived persons) results in support for a monolithic, hierarchical vision of the relationship of the Pope to cardinals, of the cardinals to bishops and, in turn, of the bishops to the laity. On the other hand, Zizioulas’s stress on hierarchical bipolarity between ‘the one’ (the person of the Father) and ‘the many’ (Christ and the Spirit) implies an asymmetrical-reciprocal relationship between bishops and laity. Finally, Volf’s notion of the polycentric and symmetrical reciprocity of ‘the many’ (perichoretic divine persons) forms a congregational and pneumatic ecclesial vision that insists on ‘the priesthood of all believers’.¹⁰⁷

Consequently, Ratzinger’s and Zizioulas’s variants of the episcopal model insist that humans are integrated into the Trinitarian life through the ‘narrow portals’ of ordained office. While Ratzinger argues that this integration occurs through a multiple

An electronic version of this dissertation can found at: <http://n10308uk.eos-intl.eu/eosuksql01_N10308UK_Documents/Dissertations/Lazic.pdf>

ecclesial mediation involving the Petrine office, episcopal collegium, the bishop and members of the local church, Zizioulas stresses the mediation of the local bishop and other members. On the other hand, Volf endorses the congregational model and insists that this process of mediation and integration of members into divine *koinonia* happens through the dynamic life of the entire church. Here the mediation is attested not merely by the institution or office, but through the multi-dimensional confession of the entire assembly, which is seen as the primary channel for the Spirit-mediated relationship with God.¹⁰⁸

While different authors within this *communio* strand have presented different visions of the Trinity, and of church and their inter-relationships, they have all used the Trinitarian paradigm as an ultimate benchmark for determining the essence, structure and configurations of *koinonia*. This has subsequently affected the shape of their entire ecclesiological synthesis.

INADEQUACIES

After a number of decades of pursuing this route, however, some of the inconsistencies and fallacies intrinsic to this trinitarian methodology have gradually emerged. The main difficulty with such an approach seems to be that, in order to be feasible at all, it has to presume the existence of specific, reliable and detailed knowledge of the inner being and workings of God – knowledge that we as human beings simply do not possess.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., pp. 95–96.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., pp. 100–01.

¹⁰⁹ For a more detailed analysis of the inadequacies of the *Imitatio Trinitatis* approach, see: Ibid., pp. 104–09.

Additionally, in order to present a vision of the church as an image of the triune God, a theologian not only needs to reason as one who knows what God is in himself, but must also make a series of deductions that can then be applied directly to human relations. In this process, insights into the inner mode of God's existence are used as a structural pattern, according to which ecclesial relationships are moulded. This kind of reasoning seems to draw parallels between the communal being of the Creator and the created order that are too close, making a critical ontological assumption that cannot be sustained.¹¹⁰

As a result, the project to construe the vision of church as an image of the triune God often becomes merely a guessing game, a projection of human ideas about what *communio* might mean in our experience of relationships with others onto our understanding of the dynamics of Trinitarian communion. While this transfer of meaning from the human to the divine domain can never be fully avoided, one should not use this as an excuse to sanction every human experience of ecclesial community as an infallible and accurate representation of what God is.

Arguably, this epistemological objection would be sufficient on its own to discredit the *imitatio Trinitatis* approach. However, there are several other inadequacies that may also be highlighted for the sake of strengthening the case. For instance, the authors writing within this strand of *communio* ecclesiology have failed to take into consideration the current sinful conditions in which human beings exist. This omission may be due to their assiduous preoccupation with translating the perfect Trinitarian model in the sphere of human relationships, while at the same time neglecting the

¹¹⁰ This kind of reasoning operates within a classical Platonic and Neo-Platonic philosophical framework, which is closely accompanied by an under-emphasis on the fundamental discontinuity

human agency in the process of ecclesiogenesis. As a result they have produced an overly idealized, abstract, static, romanticized and almost entirely docetic vision of the church. This 'docetic' form of distortion, to use Doyle's taxonomy,¹¹¹ is usually accompanied by insufficient attention to human embodiment in the world, an underestimation of the value and importance of the socio-historical factors present in ecclesial reality, an undervaluation of the gravity of sin, and various inconsistencies brought about by a too eagerly defined, over-realized eschatology.¹¹² All of these aspects, when neglected, usually lead to catastrophic results in the domain of ecclesiology.

The basic presumption intrinsic to this approach is that the church has to be exalted as an unquestionable and trustworthy epistemological avenue for the communication of the knowledge of God's inner life to the world. It is on the basis of this premise that the authors representing this strand of thought claim to have direct access to the inner mode of God's communal being.

To sustain this position one must presume that the Spirit will somehow eliminate the possibility of human imperfections and override the distortive effects that these imperfections might have on the church as the epistemological source.¹¹³ Along with

existing between divine and human realities. Adventists, along with many other Christians, would find this claim irreconcilable with some of their basic theological hypotheses. *Ibid.*, pp. 122-27.

¹¹¹ Doyle, *Communion Ecclesiology*, p. 15.

¹¹² For a lucid critical analysis of various weaknesses in one of the foremost expressions of the *imitatio Trinitatis* approach, as expressed by an Eastern-Orthodox theologian, John Zizioulas, see: Edward Russell, 'Reconsidering Relational Anthropology: A Critical Assessment of John Zizioulas' Theological Anthropology', *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, 5 (2003), 169-86; Travis E. Ables, 'Being Church: A Critique of Zizioulas' Communion Ecclesiology', in *Ecumenical Ecclesiology: Unity, Diversity and Otherness in a Fragmented World*, ed. by Gesa Elisabeth Thiessen (London: T. & T. Clark, 2009). A critical evaluation of Volf's approach is presented in: Kevin J. Bidwell, *The Church as the Image of the Trinity: A Critical Evaluation of Miroslav Volf's Ecclesial Model* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011).

¹¹³ Most traditions have dealt with this issue under the rubric of the church's infallibility or holiness, most expressively present in the papal office, or Magisterium, or the public doctrinal consensus of the community as a whole. The exact nature and extent of this infallibility is still the subject of ongoing discussion. As in previous centuries, this issue seems to remain somewhat divisive. Further details given in: Ladic, 'Koinonia', pp. 104-09.

Nicholas Healy, I would argue that it is the sign of poor theological practice not to acknowledge the challenges created by the sinful conditions of both the world and the church in the present eon. The fragmentary and incomplete nature of human communal experience simply cannot be ignored; especially not when discussing the possibility of a church representing somehow the source of one's knowledge about God.

Traces of such a blind spot are not entirely absent from the writings of the aforementioned representatives of the *imitatio Trinitatis* approach. They have all had to assume some form of on-going ecclesial revelation in order to justify the exceedingly detailed information about God gained through church tradition, offices, liturgy, public confession of faith, reason or communal experience. They have clearly not been entirely wrong when ascribing a revelatory role to the church. Nevertheless, they have not offered ways to resolve the question of the eventual distortion of the ecclesial avenues through which they claim to be able to gain authoritative insights into the mysteries of the divine ontological life. Neither have they expanded on the potential ecclesial mechanisms and procedures that might be established in order to prevent, or at least minimize the negative effects that this distortion of believers' communal experience has on the church's self-understanding and its vision of God.¹¹⁴

Some of the crucial questions that are not satisfactorily addressed by the proponents of this strand of *communio* ecclesiology are the following: What happens when the church's liturgy, doctrinal pronouncements, and exercise of various offices and sacraments are being distorted? To what extent does the distortion of the church's communion affect the purity of the church as an epistemological source? Will a defective human experience of community automatically feed into a distorted vision of

who God is? If yes, what can be done about it? What are the potential mechanisms, procedures or structures that can be integrated into the church's life for the purpose of preventing or minimizing the damage caused by the imperfection of the church's doctrine or communal experience?

These questions become vital when one tries to articulate an ecclesiology that views the church as being somehow an organic part of divine revelation – a fundamental proposal of the current thesis. This proposal makes it necessary for a discussion about the Trinity and the church to be supplemented by a more thorough explication of the compound relationship that exists between the church and truth, as well as the nature of human agency in the process of ecclesiogenesis. These two aspects of ecclesial life, however, are almost entirely neglected by scholars within this strand of CE. Given their importance, and for the purpose of achieving the aim of this thesis, some attention is paid to the former issue (see: 'Truth as *koinonia*' section), while the other matter (human agency in the formation of the community) remains outside the purview of this study and is highlighted as one of the key areas for further investigation.

* * *

By now it is clear that the *imitatio Trinitatis* paradigm cannot qualify as an overarching systematic pathway for Adventist ecclesiological construction. This applies not only to Adventist theologians but also to all other Christians who are willing to acknowledge their epistemic limits and remain within the bounds of what has been explicitly revealed about God. It is true that, due to their restorationist leanings, Adventists would naturally be more suspicious about the kind of 'speculative' reasoning intrinsic to the *imitatio Trinitatis* approach. I would nevertheless claim that this reticence is not merely

¹¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 108–09.

an eccentric proclivity on the part of Adventists, but the expression of a sane theological instinct that should shape all Christian talk about God and his church.

Therefore, in conclusion, I submit that, notwithstanding its popularity as the most widespread contemporary CE procedure, the *imitatio Trinitatis* approach is really not the most suitable starting point for an Adventist version of *communio* ecclesiology. This is primarily due to the foundational Adventist conviction that human beings are *not* granted exclusive and unmediated access to the hidden dimensions of Trinitarian ontological life. Neither can they fully apprehend the inner mode and structure of God's communal existence. An attempt to translate the Trinitarian structural model directly into the sphere of human sociality is therefore not tenable. With this in mind, I now turn to the analysis of the potentials, proposals and weaknesses of the next – perhaps less popular, yet hopefully more promising – CE approach.

(II) THE *PARTICIPATIO TRINITATIS* APPROACH

In their attempt to avoid the language of imitation, with its abstract and somewhat idealistic overtones, some CE authors have tried to develop an ecclesiological vision that depicts the church as an active participant in the triune life of God. This proposal has altered the mode of speaking about the union between the Trinity and the church. The complex divine-human interface is now being described in a more personal and experience-rooted language of participation and mutual sharing. While this might appear to be a matter of semantics, in the course of the actual theological construction this change makes a significant difference.

At the outset, it is important to note that this participatory form of religious discourse is nothing new in the history of theological thought. Yet, for some reason, it

has been far less represented on the contemporary ecclesiological scene (including in the Roman Catholic tradition). This is unfortunate, given its potential to correct some of the excesses intrinsic to the dominant CE procedure. While it has indeed always been implicitly present in the *communio* conversation, this approach must still be further systematically developed and articulated if it is to provide an adequate framework for explaining the church as *koinonia*.

For the time being it is possible to identify some of the basic features of the participatory vision of church – its pneuma-logo-dynamic interpretation of the concept of participation, its experience-rooted theological language, its emphasis on the Spirit-generated, Spirit-mediated union with the Son and the Father, and its comprehensive Trinitarian outlook that enables a fuller expression of the organic relationship that exists between the church and the truth of divine revelation.

These features, if appropriately integrated into the Adventist version of *communio* ecclesiology, have the potential to overcome the four inadequacies identified in Chapter III. What follows now is a concise exposition of the most distinguishing aspects of the participatory CE approach.

THE PNEUMA-LOGO DYNAMIC NATURE OF KOINONIA

While it could be argued that there is a version of *imitatio Trinitatis* – that of *imitatio Christi* – which could be maintained as a valuable ground for determining the nature and shape of ecclesial relations, a difficulty emerges from the fact that Christ is not physically present among us in the same way as he was two thousand years ago. This makes believers' personal and communal participation in his Spirit essential for interpreting Christ's past, present and future actions. Without this dynamic

participation in the Spirit it is not possible to discern the true meaning of the divine Logos – the biblical account (written logos) of Christ's paradigmatic life (embodied Logos).

This *pneuma-logo-dynamic* participatory framework is rooted in a conviction that – contrary to what some Bible-adhering Protestants might assert – the experience of Christ is not only an ancient memory, confined to the Book. Neither can this experience be acquired simply by applying a set of predetermined exegetical tools and procedures in the context of an individual Bible-study. Notwithstanding the value of a sound exegesis, the participatory approach stresses that it is only through the mediation of the Spirit that the prophetic and the Apostolic witness are truly made alive. Likewise, it is only through the movement of God the Spirit that Christ is still present in a real way and interacts with the community of his followers across time and space.¹¹⁵

Dynamic, life-giving and church-generating participation is possible only because God, in his mercy and wisdom, has made himself accessible to the world in Christ through the Holy Spirit, enabling believers to be partakers of the divine nature (II Peter 1.4).¹¹⁶ In turn, this divinely enabled participation opens up new ways of speaking about the church's communal being and its role in the process of divine revelation.

The *participatio Trinitatis* approach is at its best when it starts by offering a rich account of the movement of the Spirit among believers and then explores the ways in which the Spirit transforms and gathers believers around Christ, making them an essential part of his story and therefore the story of the Father.¹¹⁷ Adventists have a specific understanding of the role of Christ, centred on the heavenly sanctuary and the

¹¹⁵ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, pp. 228–29.

¹¹⁶ See article no. 2 in 'Dei Verbum'.

autumn cultic festivals. However, Adventists share with other believers in Christ a need to recognize that it is only through the Spirit's activity within the end-time remnant of God that this particular community of believers can be considered an active participant in Christ's pre-Advent restorative actions, commencing in 1844 and foretold to reach their climax at his Second Advent.

In due course – as the community of Christ's true followers – Adventist Christians are being transformed through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and are being given an opportunity to play an integral part in divine Self-revelations in and to the world. Their calling, therefore, consists not only in passing on the message – distinctive doctrinal statements that, according to Adventist believers, form the 'present truth' – but also in being (embodying) the message that they are called to proclaim. This integration of the church within the realm of divine Self-disclosure represents both the most precious gift of grace that believers have received from God in Christ through the Spirit, and their highest responsibility. Neither the gift nor the responsibility should be taken lightly.¹¹⁸

Contrary to the *imitatio Trinitatis* (or *imitatio Christi*) approach, a balanced pneuma-logo-dynamic Trinitarian interpretation of the church's life in God is therefore not intended to emphasize that through Jesus one can have a full knowledge of the Trinity. The high level of exactness and precision that proponents of *imitatio Trinitatis* wish to attain is neither possible nor desirable within the *participatio Trinitatis* approach.

¹¹⁷ Gregory J. Liston, *The Anointed Church: Toward a Third Article Ecclesiology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015), pp. 12–14.

¹¹⁸ See article no. 1 in 'Dogmatic Constitution on the Church: Lumen Gentium, Solemnly Promulgated by His Holiness, Pope Paul VI on November 21, 1964', <http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html> [accessed 07/04/2016].

The same can be argued for any other interpretation that implies that with the historical Jesus everything became clear and the element of mystery was taken away.

Instead, the pneumatologically enriched vision of the church's participation in the Logos of God claims that, to a large degree, the veil of mystery remains, and should be allowed to permeate the way one talks about Jesus and his fellowship of believers. Therefore, the essential proposal and the inner logic of this Spirit-sensitive approach may be summed up in the following way: It is through the man Jesus, and his earthly life, culminating in the Resurrection and Ascension, that believers are confronted with the *mystery* of God, which they learn of by participating in him through the work of the Spirit.¹¹⁹

To put this last insight into perspective and identify the ways in which it can enrich Adventist theologizing, it is worth remembering that Adventists normally feel at ease with those accounts of redemption, revelation and church that put the person and work of Christ at the centre. While their insistence on Christ-centred explanations is not wrong *per se*, these explanations must be supplemented by pneumatological insights, as well as insights stemming from the study of the work of the Father, in order for Adventist ecclesiology to be fully Trinitarian.

This is where the participatory framework comes in and offers a very much-needed corrective and supplement to Adventist thinking. While not undermining Christ-centeredness, it widens the scope of Adventist interpretation by referring to all the Persons of the Trinity. This view is based on the conviction that it is not simply the mediatory work of Christ that is central to the church's participation in God. Rather, it

¹¹⁹ Gary D. Badcock, *Light of Truth and Fire of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), p. 101.

is in the whole-life experience of believers with the *three* Persons that Christ's work opens up.¹²⁰ However, this first-hand experience by believers is contingent on the prevenient work of the Spirit, who brings a sense of the 'astonishing aliveness' of the presence of God into all domains of human life, including its private (anthropological) and communal (ecclesiological) expressions.¹²¹

THE LANGUAGE OF KOINONIA: FROM EXPERIENCE TO CONCEPT

Responding to the challenges that standard CE procedure had left unattended, Paul Fiddes, a well-known Baptist theologian, developed a very creative and insightful ecclesiological synthesis. His reflection stands out as an example of what a good participatory proposal might look like in church praxis.¹²² He begins by introducing the distinction between participatory and observational language. According to him, participatory language refers to the experience of God that believers gain through personal union with him, while the language of observation describes God from 'the standpoint of an external watcher or perceiver'.¹²³ Nicholas Healy expresses this distinction by referring to 'theodramatic'¹²⁴ and 'epic'¹²⁵ horizons.¹²⁶

¹²⁰ Fiddes, *Participating in God*, pp. 5-6.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 257; D. Lyle Dabney, 'Starting with the Spirit: Why the Last Should Now Be First', in *Starting with the Spirit*, ed. by Stephen K. Pickard and Gordon R. Preece (Hindmarsh, Adelaide, South Australia: Australian Theological Forum, 2001).

¹²² The best expression of his synthesis can be found in: Fiddes, *Participating in God*.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

¹²⁴ Dramatic theology, according to Healy, 'takes the perspective of a participant in the drama, of one who lives entirely within the movement of the play. It displays the tensive and conflictual nature of Christian existence, reflecting in its very form the ongoing dramatic struggle that constitutes discipleship'. Healy, *Church*, pp. 53-54.

¹²⁵ Healy explains: 'Epic theology steps out of the drama to take an external, spectator's perspective upon the completed play. The epic horizon can be seen especially in the church documents, catechisms, and those large-scale systematic theologies in which the Christian life is laid out as a whole, as if nothing further needs to be done or known. By distancing itself from the confusions of the struggle, epic theology is able to develop a "tidy" account of Christian doctrine.' Healy claims that while this kind of approach may be useful for certain purposes, it has evident drawbacks 'if it

This 'participatory' or 'theodramatic' approach to theological epistemology offers a way out of the dilemma between an absolute subjectivity, prioritizing the perspective of the knower, and a concern for the truth of things in themselves. Both the subject and the object of knowing play indispensable roles in the process of meaning-making.¹²⁷ This distinction is introduced mainly to stress a fact that is often forgotten in contemporary ecclesiology, namely, that no human being can be a neutral observer with unmediated access to the mystery of the inner life of the triune God. Nor can any human being start a theological reflection by claiming to know what God's inner life is like and then make a series of ecclesiological deductions based on that claim.

Bible authors, too, were well aware of the limitations of human language when expressing the mysteries of divine life. Faced with the ineffable mysteries of God that transcend human comprehension, the best they could do was to talk about them through metaphors.¹²⁸ They began with their own experience and then tried to find the most appropriate concepts and extended language forms that might illuminate essential aspects of their familiarity with this Spirit-gathered community.¹²⁹ However, figurative forms of language, as is widely recognized, both reveal and conceal the reality they point

becomes the sole form of theological discourse'. It ignores and dissolves the tensions inherent in our existence as Christians and that present themselves in overly 'static' and 'essentialist' terms. See *Ibid.*, p. 54.

¹²⁶ Healy's practical-prophetic ecclesiology draws heavily on the theodramatic theory of Hans Urs von Balthasar. See Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1988). The metaphor of drama is also used in Robert W. Jenson, *Systematic Theology: The Triune God* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 75.

¹²⁷ For further elaboration of this epistemological thesis within the Adventist context, see: Fernando L. Canale, 'A Biblical Epistemology for Adventist Scholarship?', *4th Symposium on the Bible and Adventist Scholarship in Riviera Maya, Estado Quintana Roo, Mexico* (Silver Spring, MD: The Foundation for Adventist Education; Institute for Christian Teaching; Education Department – General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2008).

¹²⁸ Fiddes, *Participating in God*, pp. 5–6; *Zondervan Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, ed. by John A. Beck (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011).

¹²⁹ The most comprehensive list of all NT metaphors for the church is found in: Minear, *Images*.

to. This may appear to be a limitation, but a more thorough investigation reveals that it is precisely by virtue of their inherent vagueness and open-endedness that metaphors allow space for the mysteries, tensions, imperfections and paradoxes that characterize believers' communal participation in God to be expressed more adequately.

It can therefore be submitted that, rather than expressing their convictions in the form of abstract doctrine, biblical authors grounded their language about God and the church in the concreteness of human experience.¹³⁰ By doing this they tacitly acknowledged that language about God is always only a limited and incomplete expression of equally partial and imperfect experience of God that believers gain through their personal interaction with him and with other believers. Therefore theological discourse, as far as biblical authors are concerned, always 'arises from our participation in the life of God, enabled by God's own participation in the life of the world'.¹³¹

The fact that all Christian language about church is essentially experiential should not, however, discourage efforts towards a more elaborate and systematic theology. It is precisely because the theory of participation in God is shaped in the context of a community that is taking part in God's life that the development of a more rounded ecclesiology is necessary. It provides the community of believers with a coherent conceptual framework for their shared experience. It is intended not only to describe what the church is at the moment but also to point to what the church is intended to be.

¹³⁰ Janet Martin Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

¹³¹ Fiddes, *Participating in God*, p. 258.

This stress on the participatory form of Trinitarian ecclesiology brings to the forefront discourse about believers' experience of God's dwelling among them. This in turn makes ecclesiology central to the theological enterprise, intrinsic to the grounding of theological claims and the interpretation of biblical texts.¹³² Of course, such a highlighting of ecclesiology within the Adventist theological system challenges the church's traditional approach to doctrine that is centred solely on the message, while the church appears secondary – like John the Baptist, a voice crying in the wilderness. Yet, if Adventists recognize that the content of revelation is about the possibility that we will be transformed, it is natural to expect that ecclesiology should become prominent. At the same time, the nervousness about human beings simply inventing a message from God remains honoured – because in a participatory ecclesiology human beings are nevertheless being changed by God's action.¹³³

While Adventists have traditionally been hesitant to appeal to experience as the starting point of doctrine (due to its alleged lack of immunity from all kinds of distortions), they may still accept that there is a way forward 'into God', which, to use Paul Fiddes' words, 'recognizes both the divine mystery and the brokenness of human words in the face of God'.¹³⁴ Fiddes argues this point well in claiming:

If God has taken the initiative in self-disclosure, and we have received the gift of God's self-unveiling in our experience, then we are required to speak both to and about the Giver. The faithfulness and truth with which God has declared God's own self calls out for us to witness faithfully to God.¹³⁵

In his *Church Dogmatics*, Karl Barth expresses a similar point of view when affirming that 'while human speech in itself is utterly incapable of representing God, in revelation

¹³² Sinn, *Participatory Community*.

¹³³ Sinn, 'Hermeneutics and Ecclesiology', pp. 588–89.

¹³⁴ Fiddes, *Participating in God*, p. 30.

God "seizes" words to make them capable of meaningful God-talk'.¹³⁶ While words can never describe God in a literal way, by his grace 'they have been made into analogies that speak truly and reliably about God'.¹³⁷

Fiddes claims that Barth's insight into 'the seizing of human language by the self-unveiling of God'¹³⁸ can be extended to the nature of communities as a whole. He rightly suggests that the forms of language, rules and practices of the particular social group to which individuals belong decisively shape their conceptions of both God and their own participation in his nature. Fiddes explains:

Before any language skills are acquired by the individual person, he or she already participates in a community and its 'language games', so that language itself is not just a vehicle of expression, but conditions our perception. We can therefore think of God's self-giving and self-presencing in the world as taking hold of these very structures and shaping these language-games, creating metaphors which are capable of pointing us towards the reality of God and enabling us to participate in it.¹³⁹

It seems right to conclude, along with Alan Torrance, that the life lived in the ecclesial community provides the social ambit that enables believers' 'doxological and semantic participation' in God.¹⁴⁰ It enables them to discover the essence of what it means to be human, the essence of their authentic relational personhood. While their experience of the communal mode of being is indeed limited and defective, by the grace of God it still provides a glimpse or taste of what they will become in the future when God restores the whole of humanity according to his own likeness. While this resemblance is very

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ This is Fiddes' summary of Karl Barth's view, expressed in: Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I/1, p. 430.

¹³⁷ Fiddes, *Participating in God*, p. 30.

¹³⁸ Ibid., p. 33.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Alan Torrance sums up this transforming of a community and its language as the creating of both 'doxological and semantic participation' in God. See, for instance, Alan J. Torrance, *Persons in Communion: Trinitarian Description and Human Participation* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1996), pp. 356-62.

weak and at best incomplete, it is nevertheless there and stands as an invaluable resource that informs and inspires believers on their journey towards a greater participation in God.

Surely, most human talk on this side of eternity is to a great extent only a projection of our highest societal ideals. However, this does not mean that one is forever bound to retreat to the world of apophatic silence and give up any opportunity to say something meaningful and hopeful about the mystery of the church. Fiddes seems to be aware of the difficulty that lies in any attempt to discern the mystery of church. He also acknowledges that any theological discourse will inevitably be inadequate. Like some Eastern Orthodox thinkers, he seems to emphasize that it is more important to live or be the church than to explain away its mystery.¹⁴¹ At the same time, Fiddes believes that one must not underestimate the value of theological efforts.

It is because of the grace of God who, according to Barth, "seizes" words to make them capable of meaningful God-talk',¹⁴² that Fiddes can consistently claim that 'the faithfulness and truth with which God has declared God's own self calls out for us to witness faithfully to God'.¹⁴³ After all, God did intend to share his mind with us and reveal his secrets to fallen humanity (Amos 3.7). The mind of the Heavenly Father and, in particular, his vision of the gathering of his people into the *koinonia* of his Son (I Corinthians 1.9) through the workings of his Spirit (II Corinthians 13.14), have, after all, been made public to all the creatures in the universe (Ephesians 3.4–11).

¹⁴¹ Fiddes, *Participating in God*, pp. 5-9.

¹⁴² This is Fiddes' summary of Karl Barth's view, expressed in: Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I/I, p. 430.

¹⁴³ Fiddes, *Participating in God*, p. 30.

Given that divine Self-revelation was expressed most sublimely in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, and that through this incarnation of the Word of God one can have access to the mind of God (I Corinthians 2.16), all Christians (including Adventists) can confidently claim that certain aspects of the divine triune life can be known to us, maybe not comprehensively, but definitely meaningfully. This knowledge of God as mystery (as opposed to total ignorance) is made possible via the illuminative and transformative work of the Spirit, who is actively involved in shaping certain communal, linguistic and symbolic structures. It is within these Spirit-formed structures that the fullness of Christ is most expressively perceived by the community of his human companions.¹⁴⁴

These distinctive, yet indivisible divine initiatives, comprising those historical deeds of God that are made known through the self-presencing of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit among the believers, provide an opportunity for the church to participate in the divine life and speak meaningfully about it.¹⁴⁵ By sharing his life with us, God raised the whole of humanity to the status of his beloved friends (John 15.15) and gave them something to hope for. While hoping, they were and are to experience a glimpse of the glory that will be revealed fully when the Bride meets the Bridegroom (cf. Revelation 19.7).

Adventists have traditionally recognized that in their activities the Father, the Son and the Spirit – while distinguishable in terms of the relationships of the Persons to believers – are in reality ontologically and functionally indivisible. Yet, as established in Chapter III, Adventists fall short of articulating the complexity in God because of their

¹⁴⁴ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution of Messianic Ecclesiology* (London: SCM Press, 1977), pp. 291–300.

neglect of pneumatology. The pneumatological deficiency is visible in at least three major circumstances – firstly, when they discuss the role of the Spirit in the life of Jesus (Christology), secondly, when they examine the Spirit’s interaction with individual believers (anthropology), and, thirdly, when they investigate the activity of the Spirit within the community (ecclesiology).

This deficiency calls for a reconceptualization of Adventist Christology, anthropology and ecclesiology in tandem with a richer theology of the Spirit, of a kind that would require a major collaborative effort among Adventist theologians. For the purpose of this thesis I will provide merely a brief demonstration of ways in which a dynamic interface between the Holy Spirit and the church might contribute towards a fuller theological vision of the church as the *koinonia* in the triune life of God.

In exploring some key aspects of the church’s participation in the Trinity, I shall start with the Spirit and then proceed to examine ways in which this new pneumatological emphasis can enrich Adventist understanding of the church’s relationship with the Son and the Father. My thesis is that a richer theology of the Spirit contributes directly towards a more organic and participatory vision of salvation, revelation, God and humanity.

(III) THE SPIRIT-LADEN ACCOUNT OF KOINONIA: BEYOND THE PNEUMATOLOGICAL DEFICIT

The foregoing survey of the writings of the most significant *communio* ecclesiologists reveals many areas in which Adventist theology can be enriched by an ecclesiology with strong pneumatological features. Even though Adventism’s foundational events

¹⁴⁵ See the introductory paragraphs of *Lumen Gentium* and *Dei Verbum*.

generate properly distinctive Christologies, Adventist tradition arose from a form of Christianity prone to focus too narrowly on Christ and not to recognise the Spirit. Without loss of its integrity, Adventism can learn from the enriched pneumatologies and ecclesiologies developed comparatively recently by mainstream Churches.

THE ESSENTIAL ROLE OF THE SPIRIT IN PROCESS OF ECCLESIOGENESIS

First of all, in order to truly engage in this pneumatological project, Adventists need to acknowledge the essential role of the Holy Spirit in initiating, maintaining, and guiding the community of believers towards its final glorification, as expressed both by the New Testament authors and by subsequent generations of Christians.¹⁴⁶ They all believed that it is through their response to the activity of the Spirit that people are gathered into a community of believers. Without the Holy Spirit, one cannot even confess Jesus as Lord. The Spirit, therefore, stands as the main bond that unites all believers in all eras (*semper ab omnibus*)¹⁴⁷ and all places (*ubique ab omnibus*)¹⁴⁸ into one spiritual body — the church of Christ.¹⁴⁹

The indispensability of the presence of the Spirit for the existence of the church was famously captured by Irenaeus, who claimed: 'Wherever the Spirit of God is, there

¹⁴⁶ See, Moltmann, *The Church*, p. 198; Lawler and Shanahan, *Church: A Spirited Communion*.

¹⁴⁷ The phrase encompasses 'all Christians at all times' and is used to indicate the temporal dimension of the church's oneness. See Jenson and Wilhite, *The Church*, p. 66.

¹⁴⁸ By emphasizing the spatial dynamics of the church's oneness, the phrase refers to 'all Christians everywhere'. Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Miroslav Volf, thus, claims: 'The Spirit unites the gathered congregation with the triune God and integrates it into a history extending from Christ, indeed, from the Old Testament saints, to the eschatological new creation.' Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 129. Ernest Skublics also claims: 'The organic unity is the work of the Holy Spirit, who is the common life principle.' Skublics, *Communion Ecclesiology*, p. 22.

is the church, and all grace.¹⁵⁰ Although the presence of the Spirit of Christ cannot be restricted to the church alone, there is no church without his presence and his ecclesially constitutive activity. In this sense, church can be seen as essentially a pneumadynamic community,¹⁵¹ a community of people created, gathered, gifted, and empowered by the Holy Spirit.¹⁵² Many prominent contemporary ecclesialogists have noticed that even in the Apostles' Creed, 'the presence and future of redemption, the church and the kingdom of God are framed and comprehended by belief in the Holy Spirit'.¹⁵³ Thus, the Apostles' Creed reads: 'I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church.'¹⁵⁴ Here, the church has affirmed, once again, that it is impossible to talk about the mystery of its own being without referring to the Spirit.

Arising from this realization, a proposal was made by the growing number of ecclesialogists who are currently endeavouring to retrieve this lost Apostolic and patristic vision of 'Third Article' ecclesiology – the vision of the anointed church.¹⁵⁵ Their attempt to see the church through the lenses of the Spirit is gaining popularity

¹⁵⁰ This sentence is a translation of the Latin phrase: *ubi Spiritus Dei, illic Ecclesia, et omnis gratia*. See Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.24.1.

¹⁵¹ The term pneumadynamic is borrowed from John H. Coe, 'Beyond Relationality to Union: Musing toward a Chopathology', *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*, 18 (1999), 109–28. Coe uses this term when referring to 'the dynamics between the human spirit and the Holy Spirit...and how these dynamics interface with our human relationships' (p. 10). The term is appropriated and modified further by Allison, *Sojourners*, p. 353.

¹⁵² Allison, *Sojourners*, p. 353. Ernest Skublics affirms that 'the Church is in principle a creation of the Holy Spirit: a spiritual organism, in which the members participate in the life of Christ, through the operation of the Holy Spirit'. See Skublics, *Communion Ecclesiology*, p. 20. For other significant contributions to this emerging topic, which also encourages an exploration of the interplay between the Spirit and the church, see: Michael Green, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975); Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Holy Spirit: In Biblical Teaching, through the Centuries, and Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013); Karl Rahner, *The Spirit in the Church* (New York: Seabury Press, 1979); Thomas C. Oden, *Life in the Spirit* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992); Clark H. Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996); Sinclair B. Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996).

¹⁵³ A. J. Conyers, *God, Hope, and History: Jürgen Moltmann and the Christian Concept of History* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1988), p. 128; David T. Beck, *The Holy Spirit and the Renewal of All Things: Pneumatology in Paul and Jürgen Moltmann* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 2010), pp. 25–48.

¹⁵⁴ Pelikan and Hotchkiss, *Creeds and Confessions*, p. 669.

¹⁵⁵ Liston, *The Anointed Church*, pp. 7–8.

across denominational borders and is introducing new potential insights and opportunities for enriching the Christological definitions of church that have dominated the ecclesiological scene for centuries.¹⁵⁶

The main difficulty in adopting an approach based on developing a detailed pneumatological ecclesiology lies in the Spirit's 'faceless' character. As his being cannot be revealed definitively by any single, unambiguous definition, the authors of the Scriptures had to employ figurative speech.¹⁵⁷ They named this 'anonymous' and living Being by using a metaphor that describes the effects of his activity among the people of God, rather than attempting to state what he is. Thus, even the name — 'Spirit' — is a metaphor. It comes from the Hebrew term *ruach*, which means either 'breath' or 'wind';¹⁵⁸ 'It is a picture of air in movement.'¹⁵⁹ The same can be said of its Greek and Latin equivalents — *pneuma* and *spiritus*. Paul Fiddes explains:

Since moving air is invisible in itself (though its effects are not), it aptly evokes the anonymous character of the Spirit. Experiencing the mystery of God's activity among them, and searching for words, people exclaimed, 'it's like the wind', or 'it's like the breath in our bodies'.¹⁶⁰

In light of this, one can rightly conclude that the metaphors of breath and wind, along with all the other metaphors that portray the effects of the Spirit's work, point to something that transcends the human ability to comprehend. Yet, on the other hand, these figures of speech also reveal certain aspects of the movements of God that occur

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 2–33.

¹⁵⁷ See Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Pneumatology: The Holy Spirit in Ecumenical, International, and Contextual Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), pp. 23–25; Charles C. Ryrie, *The Holy Spirit* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1965), pp. 25–29.

¹⁵⁸ For a fascinating exposition of these two aspects of the concept of *ruach*, see: Fiddes, *Participating in God*, pp. 254–62.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 254.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

in human experience, in both personal and communal domains.¹⁶¹ These are movements that can – by virtue of being rooted in the concreteness of human daily life – act as an immediate ontological ground, an entry point, for believers' participation in God.¹⁶²

This dynamic involvement of human beings in the life of God – enabled by God's own engagement in our world – is brought about through the agency of the Spirit.¹⁶³ It is therefore through the activity of the Spirit that believers are drawn together into the mysterious reality of the body of Christ and – by becoming an organic part of his pneumatic body – reunited with God the Father. This then leads to the conclusion that only by active, whole-life participation in the movement of the Spirit can the church become a partaker in divine nature and reflect the truth found in him in all it does and is.

THREE DOMAINS OF THE COMMUNITY-MAKING MOVEMENT OF THE SPIRIT

I would argue that there are three principal domains of human life in which the community-making activity of the Spirit (and thereby the astonishing aliveness of God's presence) can be experienced most vividly and richly. These include the movement of the Spirit *within*, *through* and *around* us. The identification and clarification of the domains and effects of the Spirit's work may be used as a starting pointing for the analysis of the ways in which mainstream Christian theology, and CE ecclesiology in

¹⁶¹ Rahner, *The Spirit*, pp. 22–25.

¹⁶² James D. G. Dunn, 'Towards the Spirit of Christ', in *The Work of the Spirit: Pneumatology and Pentecostalism*, ed. by Michael Welker (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), pp. 21–25.

¹⁶³ Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, p. 57.

particular, can contribute towards enriching Adventist discourse on the relationship between the Spirit and the church.

The Spirit within us

According to the Apostle Paul's claim in Galatians 5.22–23, the effects of the Spirit's stirring within us are most vividly expressed in the manifestation of the so-called fruits of the Spirit — which predominantly include a change in the believer's character, attitudes, motives and mode of being. This inner transformation (or sanctification) represents a gradual movement away from 'the works of the flesh'¹⁶⁴ towards the 'fruits of the Spirit' — love, manifested in joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control and other similar Christ-like traits.¹⁶⁵ These fruits characterize the Spirit-filled life of any true member of the church.¹⁶⁶

The Spirit is also involved in making the knowledge of divine things accessible to believers. This is done by means of the Spirit-mediated events of revelation, inspiration and illumination.¹⁶⁷ The second letter of Peter presents progress in life and knowledge, and the moral and epistemic dimensions of the Spirit's work within us, as conditioning each other. By growing in love, one grows in the true knowledge of God, and increased knowledge of God results in greater love towards him and others.

This double work of the Spirit — sanctification and enlightenment — is not a merely invisible spiritual process that cannot be perceived except by special spiritual

¹⁶⁴ The phrase 'works of the flesh', according to Paul, involves: 'sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these'. See Galatians 5.19–21.

¹⁶⁵ Galatians 5.22–23.

¹⁶⁶ R. Norman Gulley, *Systematic Theology: God as Trinity* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2011), p. 74.

discernment. It leaves on the community of God important, tangible marks that are visible to the world around them. This happens most often in relationships. In other words, it takes place in the realm of believers' interaction both among themselves and with those around them. Jesus himself claimed that the realities of self-sacrificing, loving relationships that come about through the workings of the Spirit are the greatest external proof that a community of people belongs to God.¹⁶⁸ The manifestation of divine love, sublimely revealed in the paradigmatic person of Jesus Christ during his earthly ministry, is thus the ultimate goal towards which the community of believers constantly aspires.¹⁶⁹

The essence of love consists in giving oneself for the benefit of others. It shifts one's focus from self-aggrandizement and selfish ambitions to the service of other people.¹⁷⁰ By sharing in this kind of self-effacement, Christians can discover their true happiness and fulfilment.¹⁷¹ The work of the Spirit within us awakens our entire being, moves us into a more intimate relationship with Christ, and transforms us more and more into his likeness.¹⁷² We are drawn closer to each other and provided with the ultimate grounds for communal life — close interpersonal relationships characterized by love, acceptance, forgiveness, commitment, and intimacy.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁷ Richard M. Davidson, 'Biblical Interpretation', in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. by Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald Publishing Association, 2000), p. 59.

¹⁶⁸ 'By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another' (John 13.35, ESV).

¹⁶⁹ Richard Rice, 'The Trinitarian Basis of Christian Community', in *Biblical and Theological Studies on the Trinity*, ed. by Paul Petersen and Rob McIver (Adelaide: Avondale Academic Press, 2014), pp. 101–12.

¹⁷⁰ Philippians 4.2–11.

¹⁷¹ I John 1.4.

¹⁷² The true knowledge mentioned in II Peter 1.3 refers to the experiential knowledge that involves all the facets of the human being: the mind, heart and body. It implies the most intimate relationship between two or more persons (Hebrew: *yada'*; Greek: *epignosis*).

¹⁷³ Doyle, *Communion Ecclesiology*, p. 13.

To sum up, the main effect that occurs when believers willingly respond to the Spirit's movement within them is a radical transformation that includes enlightenment of the mind (producing true knowledge of divine things) and a change of character and lifestyle (producing Christ-like love) that in turn shapes the nature of their relationships (*koinonia* with God and with others). Along with some other Protestant communities, Adventists have traditionally insisted on the first two aspects — sanctification and enlightenment — while bypassing the task of explaining the implications of the Spirit's work in community-making. As a result, Adventists have discussed these two dimensions of the Spirit's work apart from the communal context in which they naturally belong and within which they find their fullest expression. So, while focusing almost solely on the transformative event that is occurring in the life of individual believers, Adventists have failed to address the wider, ecclesiological concerns and complexities that the community experiences when trying to find ways in which transformed, yet imperfect, believers are to live as a community in God.

This is why I insist on the necessity of adding discourse on the church as *koinonia* to Adventist ecclesiology — *koinonia* as generated in response to the work of God the Spirit within us (II Corinthians 13.13) and — as will be discussed later — in response to the Spirit's movement through us and around us. It is proposed that, as a result of producing a better and more rounded Spirit-laden account of *koinonia*, Adventists may also be prompted to revise their traditional, reductionist, propositional understanding of truth that has dominated the movement's theological horizon for too long. Once they adopt a more communal outlook for interpretation of the processes of sanctification and inspiration, it will be possible for Adventists to detect their modernist

blind spot and conceive ways in which the church itself can be an organic part of divine revelation, without losing its theocentric, doxological focus.¹⁷⁴

The ecclesiological and hermeneutical implications of this enriched communal understanding of the interpretation process will be further explored in Chapter VI. For now it is important to bear in mind one point. It is true that these three aspects of the Spirit's movement within us – transformation, enlightenment and the resulting *koinonia* – change the orientation of one's life from self-centeredness to other-centeredness. However, they are also to be seen together as one of the key divine means of enabling deeper participation by the church in the truth of divine revelation. They imply not only a conversion from self-centredness to other-centredness, but also a deeper participation, collective and hence ecclesial, in the truth of divine revelation. It is now possible to elaborate further on the movement of the Spirit through us – to examine how God propels us and enables us to reach out to other human beings and the universe with all its other inhabitants, with whom we are mysteriously joined into the same body – the body of Christ.

The Spirit through us

While the prime expression of the movement of the Spirit *within us* is seen in 'spiritual fruits', his work *through us* is visible primarily in the manifestation of 'spiritual gifts' (see, e.g. I Corinthians 12). This means that the same Spirit that works within us by opening up our entire being to a living relationship with Christ and other believers further manifests himself through spiritual gifts by which he draws us together into one complex pneumatic organism – the body of Christ. The Spirit sovereignly distributes

¹⁷⁴ Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, pp. 130-31; Sinn, *Participatory Community*.

these gifts, also known as *charismata*, to all the members of Christ's body, for their mutual edification and growth towards Christ-likeness. Because of this, while the transformative movement of the Spirit within us is directly reflected in the quality of the relationships that form the church, his work through us determines their formal structure.¹⁷⁵

It seems to be accepted by most contemporary CE authors that the essential characteristics of the *charismata* are important, if not indeed determinative, for the ministries and structure of the community of believers.¹⁷⁶ I must add that, if a church's ministries and modes of communal service are to properly reflect the nature of Spirit-generated charisms, five foundational characteristics of these *charisms* should be used as regulative ecclesiological principles: (1) all *charismata* in the church are a direct result of divine action through the Spirit, with (2) the Spirit functioning as their sovereign distributor. These gifts (3), joined together in a dynamic and interdependent communal entity, are given to (4) all believers in Christ and (5) are always other-centred.

Given the immense importance of these five principles in shaping the structure and ministry of the church, their implications will be explored further in Chapter VI. At this point it will be sufficient to provide a basis for these points pneumatologically and to emphasize that it is the movement of the Spirit through us (accompanied by the believers' deliberate and voluntary whole-life response to it) that is ultimately responsible for unifying and diversifying the ecclesial community. As a result of this Spirit-led initiative, the church can function as a community of believers whose pneuma-dynamic communal life is realized in the mystery of ecclesial unity – unity in

¹⁷⁵ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, pp. 228–33.

¹⁷⁶ Küng, *The Church*, pp. 173–91.

which the variety of different personal manifestations of the work of Spirit in the form of *charismata* is maintained, yet organically integrated into the mystical body of Christ.

Spirit around us

The third domain in which the effects of the mysterious movement of the Spirit can be detected belongs to the extra-ecclesial realm. The fact that the Spirit's movement is present not only within the confines of the church but also beyond its borders has been strongly emphasized by contemporary writers on *communio*.¹⁷⁷ They agree with Irenaeus's claim that '[w]herever the Spirit of God is, there is the church, and all grace'.¹⁷⁸ However, this does not mean, they repeatedly stress, that the work of the Spirit is restricted to the church alone. The Spirit is actively involved in the process of restoring the entire world to its pristine condition, within which everything is and lives for the glory of God. While involving the church as the foremost instrument in re-establishing the kingdom of God, the activity of the Spirit goes far beyond it. This, in turn, represents an invitation to the church 'to get out into the world', find out what God's Spirit is doing in the world and 'join forces with Him'.¹⁷⁹

The call to follow the lead of 'the free, sovereign, living power of the Spirit of God', who 'always goes before the church in its missionary journey', is not an easy task, however, especially if one keeps in mind that the Spirit's mission is to re-establish 'God's kingship over all human history and over the whole cosmos'.¹⁸⁰ How can the church – a

¹⁷⁷ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 129.

¹⁷⁸ This sentence is a translation of the Latin phrase: *ubi Spiritus Dei, illic Ecclesia, et omnis gratia*. See Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, 3.24.1.

¹⁷⁹ Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, p. 18.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

limited, particular and contingent social entity – follow the movement of the Spirit beyond itself, when the Spirit's mission is, as expressed by Lesslie Newbigin, 'concerned with nothing less than the completion of all that God has begun to do in the creation of the world and of humankind'.¹⁸¹

The fact that the Spirit's work is not sectional but total and universal extends the church's sphere of interest and action to involving the totality of life and the world, including the secular sector of human life. According to this holistic outlook, the responsibility of the church that wants to be true to its *pneumadynamic* essence is to look beyond itself, become aware of the Spirit's movement in a range of political, socio-economic, technological, scientific and cultural developments around it, and join forces with him.¹⁸² In view of this recent re-discovery of the extra-ecclesial work of the Spirit, it is not accidental that one finds so many different types of liberationist movements and initiatives that insist on opening up the church to the world and engaging actively in its struggle to reach the ideals of justice, mutual solidarity, tolerance, and socio-economic, racial and gender equality.¹⁸³

Furthermore, the cosmic mission of the Spirit is believed to encompass not only the province of human affairs but also the material aspect of the world. This realization

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Moltmann is one of many modern authors who affirm a close connection between the political and economic event of liberation and the experience of the Holy Spirit. See, for instance: Kärkkäinen, *Pneumatology*, p. 154; Jürgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation* (London: SCM Press, 1992).

¹⁸³ Michael Welker, *God the Spirit* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), pp. 16–17; Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991). A Belgian theologian, long resident in Brazil, José Comblin, sees a modern reappearance of the experience of the Spirit manifested in the social realm in the heightened desire to engage in social action, in the experience of freedom, in the growing need to speak out for the poor and marginalized, in the experience of community, and in a new aspiration for life. See: José Comblin, *The Holy Spirit and Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989), p. xi. Similarly, Moltmann talks about the liberating work of the Spirit in three dimensions, associating them with three classical

has fuelled recent talk about ecological/creationist spirituality, the animal rights movement, deep ecology, earth healing, ecofeminism, the Gaia-hypothesis,¹⁸⁴ ecological pneumatology, green pneumatology, and so on.¹⁸⁵ The emergence of such ecocentric vocabulary witnesses to the fact that the integral relationship between the work of the Spirit and nature has been widely acknowledged and discussed among scholars in the last few decades.¹⁸⁶

The ecclesiological implications of this cosmic dimension of the Spirit's work are more directly explored in Chapter VI, which deals with the Adventist view of the relationship between the church and the world (including interreligious dialogue, culture, politics, society and ecology). For now it is important to note that without this overarching theological vision of the work of the Spirit around us, it is not possible to talk meaningfully about the church's engagement with the world. Vatican II expressed this realization in acknowledging the Spirit of the Lord as the One 'who fills the earth'.¹⁸⁷ The council 'recognized the presence of the Spirit not only in movements for

virtues: (1) liberating faith: freedom as subjectivity; (2) liberating love: freedom as sociality; and (3) liberating hope: freedom as future. For more details, see: Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, pp. 114–20.

¹⁸⁴ Kärkkäinen explains: 'The Gaia-hypothesis posits a necessary mutual relationship between human, animal, and natural life and the state of creation.' See, Kärkkäinen, *Pneumatology*, p. 159.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Besides Moltmann there are other influential authors (such as Sallie McFague, Mark Wallace, Peter C. Hodgson, Chung Hyun-Kyung, and Elizabeth A. Johnson) who have recently argued for the significance of the work of the Spirit for the preservation and healing of the earth. The Holy Spirit, according to this strand of authors, represents the immanent presence of God in creation. See: Chung Hyun-Kyung, 'Welcome the Spirit, Hear Her Cries: The Holy Spirit, Creation, and the Culture of Life', *Christianity and Crisis*, 51 (1991), 220–23; Sallie McFague, *Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1987), pp. 169–72; Kärkkäinen, *Pneumatology*, p. 156; Sallie McFague, *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), pp. 141–50; Lynn White, 'The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis', *Science*, 155 (1967), 1203–07. While Seventh-day Adventists do not accept the pan-en-theistic assumptions that undergird some of these theological reflections, they could still benefit from engaging with some of the arguments that are put forth by the above-mentioned authors. The cosmic dimension of the Spirit's work should be given a greater prominence in Adventist theologizing.

¹⁸⁷ See article no. 11 in 'Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World: *Gaudium Et Spes* Promulgated by His Holiness, Pope Paul VI on December 7, 1965', <http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html> [accessed 03/04/2016]. The document entitled "The Church in the Modern

social and political change but also in the economic advances brought by science, technology, and labour'.¹⁸⁸ After all, in the words of *Gaudium et Spes*, 'man is constantly worked upon by God's Spirit'.¹⁸⁹

With a similar outlook and acknowledging the Spirit as the ultimate dynamic force by which God both brings creation into existence and reaches the goal of new creation, Stanley Grenz writes:

The eschatological creator Spirit is the source of life in creation. As he continually renews the natural world, he guarantees the eschatological renewal of the cosmos in the new heaven and new earth.¹⁹⁰

Like other Christians, Adventists should also make explicit their belief that the prevenient work of the Spirit beyond visible ecclesial structures is present in the lives of non-Christian people long before the Christian message reaches them. According to this logic, the Spirit moves mysteriously amidst the nations:

Now the Spirit has been acting in pagan peoples and in all religions since humanity began. The Spirit leads peoples and religions in directions we cannot know in advance. All we can do is observe the signs of the Spirit at work and go along with it. There is no way we can anticipate it. If the Spirit leads nations to Christ, we do not know what steps or ways it has actually taken; about this we are as ignorant as pagans. We in fact know less than them, since the signs of the Spirit were given to them first and not to us. We have to learn from them how the Spirit has acted in their evolution.¹⁹¹

World" broadens the traditional ecclesiocentric understanding of the Spirit: 'Christ is now at work in the hearts of men through the energy of the Spirit. He arouses not only a desire for the age to come, but, by that very fact, he animates, purifies and strengthens those noble longings too by which the human family strives to make its life more human and to render the whole earth submissive to this goal.' *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 38.

¹⁸⁸ Kärkkäinen, *Pneumatology*, p. 157; Mark I. Wallace, *Fragments of the Spirit: Nature, Violence, and the Renewal of Creation* (New York: Continuum, 1996); Peter Crafts Hodgson, *Winds of the Spirit: A Constructive Christian Theology* (London: SCM, 1994).

¹⁸⁹ *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 41; cf. Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroad, 1992); Clark H. Pinnock, 'The Role of the Spirit in Creation', <<http://www.mcmaster.ca/mjtm/1-2.htm>> [accessed 03/04/2016].

¹⁹⁰ Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), p. 492.

¹⁹¹ Comblin, *Liberation*, p. 161; Kärkkäinen, *Pneumatology*, p. 158.

Adventists should also be aware that the providential work of God in the Spirit, as seen in the passage quoted above, not only prepares the nations for receiving the gospel, but also the church, which exists in the midst of the nations. The work of the Holy Spirit among the nations stands as an open invitation for the church to cooperate with him in his outreach to the broken world. It also challenges the church to acquire learning and a humble spirit in its attitude towards others. Following from this, Healy argues:

Since the church at times learns from the work of the Spirit working in what is non-church, it seems reasonable to propose that the church should make a habit of listening to the non-church, of trying to discern the Spirit's action in its challenges, of seeking out its wisdom in case Christ's word is spoken there.¹⁹²

That following the Spirit's movement beyond the church requires a radical change in the triumphalist and occasionally self-righteous attitude of the Adventist church is a view supported by the well-known story of the meeting between Peter and Cornelius. Newbigin rightly claims that this narrative is not only the story of 'the conversion of Cornelius but also of the conversion of Peter and of the church'.¹⁹³ Peter initially rejected what seemed to be 'an assault on his fidelity to the law' (Acts 10.9–16).¹⁹⁴ However, when faced by a 'power greater than his own', of which he was not in control, Peter humbly yielded to the guidance of the Spirit and accepted uncircumcised pagans into the fellowship of the church (Acts 1.47–48).¹⁹⁵ What he learned from following the mysterious movement of the Spirit that extended beyond the visible borders of the early community of believers was, at first glance, 'a clear breach of the law' under which Israel had lived for centuries.¹⁹⁶ Nevertheless, when defending his action before the

¹⁹² Healy, *Church*, p. 69.

¹⁹³ Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, pp. 59–60.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

church, he simply recounted 'the undeniable activities of the Spirit' by which he had been led, and concluded: 'Who was I that I could withstand God?' (Acts 11.17).¹⁹⁷

The principle clearly expressed by this story is that 'the mission changes not only the world but also the church'.¹⁹⁸ Lesslie Newbigin concludes:

Quite plainly in this case there is a conversion of the church as well as the conversion of Cornelius. It is not as though the church opened its gates to admit a new person into its company, and then closed them again, remaining unchanged except for the addition of a name to its roll of members. Mission is not just church extension. It is something more costly and more revolutionary. It is the action of the Holy Spirit, who in his sovereign freedom both convicts the world (John 16,18-11) and leads the church towards the fullness of the truth that it has not yet grasped (John 16.12-15).¹⁹⁹

After this encounter the church became a different kind of society from what it had been before Peter and Cornelius met, explains Newbigin:

It had been a society enclosed within the cultural world of Israel; it became something radically different, a society that spanned the enormous gulf between Jews and pagan and was open to embrace all the nations that had been outside the covenant by which Israel lived.²⁰⁰

The story of Peter and Cornelius is just the preface to a 'much wider and more costly struggle' that the present-day church needs to go through if it is to remain faithful to the mysterious movement of the Spirit.²⁰¹ Only the church that stands in complete humility and poverty and is ready to learn and advance towards the revealed truth of God in the totality of the Spirit's work, including all his dealings with the created world and its inhabitants, can be regarded as the church that is true to its essence. In this

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 60.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

sense, the movement of the Spirit around us, along with the Spirit's work within us and through us, forms an intrinsic part of the church's pneuma-dynamic *esse*.

To conclude, one can affirm that being a person-in-*koinonia* means not only being a part of the Spirit's work in forming the ecclesial *koinonia*, but also being in *koinonia* with the entire creation of God. One should therefore never limit the Spirit's action or confine him to the church only. The Holy Spirit was given to the people of God. It was given not only for their sake but also for the sake of the world. It is by following the manifold work of the Spirit around us that the church participates in the cosmic *koinonia* of Spirit that extends to the entire creation of God.

Like a wind, the Spirit moves beyond the church and catches it up in its onward momentum.²⁰² By transforming it into the likeness of Christ ('Spirit within us'), incorporating it into his mysterious spiritual body ('Spirit through us'), and enabling its participation in Christ's movement towards the world and back 'to the bosom of the Father'²⁰³ ('Spirit around us'), the Holy Spirit orients the church towards the ultimate ground or *telos* of its being — Jesus Christ Himself. In Christ, the entire universe, as well as all aspects of the church's *koinonia* in truth, are united and taken into the triune life of God that gradually unfolds in the arena of cosmic history. It is by virtue of this on-going spiritual union with its head, Jesus Christ, and through him with the Father, that the community of believers stands in the world as a truthful witness, a 'foretaste' and 'prophetic sign' of the coming kingdom of God.²⁰⁴

²⁰² Fiddes, *Participating in God*, p. 256.

²⁰³ Cf. John 1.18.

²⁰⁴ The Spirit's indwelling in the church seals it and transforms it into a 'first instalment' and 'first fruit' of the realized cosmic reign of God. For an explanation of these anticipatory analogies, see: David Ewert, *The Holy Spirit in the New Testament* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1983), pp. 280–300.

Furthermore, it is in this way that the community of believers, called by God the Father into the *koinonia* of his Son (I Corinthians 1.9) through His Spirit (II Corinthians 13.13), is enabled to become not merely the witness to, but also an organic part of the truth of divine revelation. As a result, the mysterious reality of the truth as *koinonia*, the reality that has long been anticipated by God and all his creatures (Ephesians 3.10), can finally find its visible manifestation in the world. This expression, although imperfect and incomplete at present, can nonetheless provide an opportunity for the fragmented world to experience a glimpse of the future glory that will reach its final completion when the Bride meets the Bridegroom (cf. Revelation 19.7).

THE SPIRIT-GENERATED KOINONIA WITH THE SON

Setting Christ-centred remnant ecclesiology in a pneumatic framework is a clear, yet challenging mandate for present-day Adventist theology. The complexity of this task is immense and it requires one to ask questions that have not been put to the denomination's theologians before. The first area of complexity involves the relationship between the work of the Spirit and the other Persons of the Trinity. The second has to do with the intricate relationship between God's Spirit and man's spirit (Spirit anthropology). These two relationships are further complicated by the multifaceted interface that exists among believers (the interrelationship of human spirits) as they are immersed together in the Spirit-mediated life of their triune God (Spirit ecclesiology).

The pneumatological reformulation of the Christian faith presents a major challenge, not only to Adventists, but also to other Christian theologians.²⁰⁵ Karl Barth noted that a systematic articulation of the aforementioned highly delicate and compound relationships was, unfortunately, not possible within the nineteenth and twentieth century theological framework.²⁰⁶ Yet he also argued that the failure of previous generations of theologians should not discourage present and future scholars to explore the possibilities and prospects of this methodological pathway:

What I have already intimated here and there to good friends, would be the possibility of a theology of the third article, in other words, a theology predominantly and decisively of the Holy Spirit. Everything which needs to be said, considered, and believed about God the Father and God the Son in an understanding of the first and second articles might be shown and illuminated in its foundations through God the Holy Spirit, the *vinculum pacis inter Patrem et Filium*.²⁰⁷

These words, coming from one of the greatest Christocentrists of the twentieth century, are significant for the advancement of Adventist ecclesiology. The clarification of the relationship between Christ and the Spirit will have a direct impact on the way one deals with the domain of ecclesial relationships.²⁰⁸ This pneumatological enrichment of Christology may even represent a basic prerequisite for any rounded Christian CE account of the church's participation in the life of the Trinity.

²⁰⁵ Dunn, 'The Spirit', pp. 18–26.

²⁰⁶ For instance, in 1963, Karl Barth stated: 'I personally think that a theology of the Spirit might be all right after AD 2000, but now we are still too close to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It is still too difficult to distinguish between God's Spirit and man's spirit.' Karl Barth and John D. Godsey, *Karl Barth's Table Talk* (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1963), p. 27.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 28. Myk Habets claims that Karl Barth's 1923/24 Göttingen lectures strongly endorsed 'the possibility of a thorough Spirit Christology that would complement the dominant Logos Christology: a Christological programme pursued from a Trinitarian perspective, highlighting the mutual relations between the Son and the Spirit in the incarnation.' Quoted in Liston, *The Anointed Church*, p. 8.

²⁰⁸ As demonstrated in Karl Barth, *The Theology of Schleiermacher* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), p. 278.

Many contemporary Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant theologians have already understood the importance of such a synthesis and have taken up the challenge posed by Karl Barth.²⁰⁹ They have tried to articulate the relationship between the Spirit and Christ in the process of developing a more comprehensive and thorough understanding of the work of the triune God.²¹⁰ They have then moved on to incorporate ‘Trinitarian doctrine into all of the various loci of theology’, including ecclesiology.²¹¹

It is time for Adventism to wake up to this fresh pneumatological development and search for ways to enrich its own theological interpretation of the church by conversing with other (non-Adventist) ecclesiologists who have already taken the development of this project quite a long way. Of course, this does not mean that the Spirit-centred approach should automatically replace the existing Logos-centred one. The two should be seen as complementary methodological pathways which, when pursued jointly, can facilitate the generation of a balanced, ‘pneuma-logo-dynamic’ interpretation of the nature of the church’s participation in God.

Jesus and the Spirit

All theology that opts to be biblical ought also to be Trinitarian. Among other things, this means that if it is to be faithful to the totality of scriptural witness, it has to find a

²⁰⁹ Myk Habets, *The Anointed Son: A Trinitarian Spirit Christology* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2010), p. 2.

²¹⁰ A detailed overview of the literature dealing with the project of articulating a balanced Spirit Christology is available in: Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, pp. 123–42.

²¹¹ D. Lyle Dabney, ‘Why Should the First Be Last? The Priority of Pneumatology in Recent Theological Discussion’, in *Adventists of the Spirit: An Introduction to the Current Study of Pneumatology*, ed. by Bradford E. Hinze and D. Lyle Dabney (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2005), pp. 240–61.

way 'to maintain the integrity of Jesus and Spirit, not Jesus versus Spirit'.²¹² This synthesis, which examines closely the reciprocal relations between Jesus and the Spirit, is vital for the interpretation of ecclesial *koinonia*.²¹³

Understanding the importance of this pneuma-*logo* dynamic integrated vision, Yves Congar begins his famous book *The Word and the Spirit* by presenting his principal assertion, 'If I were to draw but one conclusion from the whole of my work on the Holy Spirit, I would express it in these words: no Christology without pneumatology and no pneumatology without Christology.'²¹⁴ Congar repeatedly stresses the idea (from Irenaeus of Lyons) that the Spirit and the Son (or the Word) should be seen as the 'two hands' of the Father.²¹⁵ Neither should be studied in isolation, nor given priority.²¹⁶

As early as New Testament times, believers became aware of the close personal presence of one divine Person in the life of the other.²¹⁷ On the one hand, they claimed that 'the Spirit is given by Christ, particularly the risen and ascended Christ'.²¹⁸ The Apostle John, for instance, attests to the truth of this claim by stating that 'there was no Spirit yet, for Christ had not yet been glorified' (John 7.39). This and the plethora of other similar statements in the Apostolic writings make the Spirit's work conditioned by the work of Christ.

²¹² Bryant, *Spirit Christology*; Ralph Del Colle, *Christ and the Spirit: Spirit-Christology in Trinitarian Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Paul W. Newman, *A Spirit Christology: Recovering the Biblical Paradigm of Christian Faith* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1987).

²¹³ This connection is well established by now in the writing of contemporary theologians, including D. Lyle Dabney, Jürgen Moltmann, Clark Pinnock, Ralph Del Colle, David Coffey, Philip Rosato, John Zizioulas and Gregory J. Liston, among many others.

²¹⁴ Habets, *The Anointed Son*, p. 2.

²¹⁵ S. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* (OrthodoxEbooks), III, vols. V, 6, 1. See also: Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 2, p. 9.

²¹⁶ Congar, *The Word and the Spirit*, p. 21.

²¹⁷ See the study of the NT vision that is well presented in: Habets, *The Anointed Son*, p. 3.

²¹⁸ Yves Congar, *The Word and the Spirit* (London: Chapman, 1986), p. 1.

On the other hand, the early Apostles were also aware that 'there is, so to say, no Christ until the Spirit is at work, not only as a *forerunner* announcing his coming, but also as the one who *constitutes his very identity as Christ*, either at his baptism (Mark) or at his very biological conception (Matthew and Luke)'.²¹⁹ This renders the being and the work of Christ unimaginable apart from the constitutive work of the Spirit. Congar, Zizioulas and others meant exactly this when claiming that one cannot talk about Christology without reference to pneumatology, or pneumatology without reference to Christology.²²⁰

This principle, once established, opens up a series of practical questions regarding the church's participation in the union of the Spirit, the Son and the Father: How does pneumatologically enriched Christology, or Christologically conditioned pneumatology, influence one's concept of church? Or, applied more directly to the Adventist context: in what way can the articulation of the more balanced Trinitarian vision help Adventists to explain more adequately the complex relationship that exists between Jesus and his followers? Can the tensions inherent in the Adventist vision of the church as the Christ-generated and Christ-maintained remnant people of God be further clarified and resolved by a deeper understanding of the work of the Spirit as the key agent of this divine-human mysterious union?

Church as the pneumatic body of Christ

Adventist theologians are generally in agreement with those CE authors who claim that the most distinguishing characteristic of the Son's economy in relation to the church's

²¹⁹ Ibid; Congar, *I Believe*, 2, p. 12.

²²⁰ Newman, *A Spirit Christology*.

esse seems to be the event of incarnation.²²¹ Only Christ was sent to embody human nature in all its faculties and so he became an organic part of history as known to us. By fully entering the realm of time and space, he 'tabernacled Himself',²²² and became the living sanctuary of God among us, bringing God's nearness to the world.²²³

They also agree that by assuming history in his being Christ became the centre of it. He is its beginning and its end, the goal towards which everything else tends, the unifying being in whom the world is reconciled with God and taken back into his life (cf. Colossians 1.15–20). With this in mind, it is not hard to understand the reason that Adventists ascribed the central role to the Son of God in enabling believers' participation in God. As established earlier, they concur that the generative event of Christianity – Christ himself – should stand at the core of any ecclesiological project.²²⁴

Adventists rightly make such claims. What they may not yet recognise is that these claims in themselves presuppose an ecclesiology rooted in pneumatology: in a presence of God in history going beyond what can be identified with Jesus of Nazareth. In the present thesis, two ecclesiological ramifications stemming from this Christological claim require special attention, and both of them would benefit greatly from a richer theology of the Spirit. The first has to do with the epistemological contribution of Christ's incarnation that directly feeds into one's understanding of what the church should be like; the second belongs to the domain of ontology and provides the grounds for explaining the interface between church's and Christ's identities – an ontological union that forms the essence of what the church is.

²²¹ Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, pp. 127–28.

²²² 'The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us' (John 1:14a). The phrase 'made his dwelling among us' can be also translated 'He tabernacled among us'.

²²³ Norman Hook, 'A Spirit Christology', *Theology*, 75 (1972), 226–32.

(1) **EPISTEMOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTION.** According to Adventists, the first, epistemic contribution of Christ's incarnation is that Jesus Christ represents the ultimate paradigmatic being in view of whom the church can begin to grasp not only the essence of God's Triune life but also the mystery of its own communal being.²²⁵ It was by witnessing his earthly life that the community of his early followers would have experienced what it means to be one with God and with others. Subsequently, this experience profoundly shaped their language about the mystery of church, whose identity is defined through its close organic connection to Christ.

Adventists rightly insist on the importance of the written Word for maintaining continuity with Christ's past revelatory actions. They have tried to remain within the revelation of God by developing an elaborate system of distinctive hermeneutics (as explained in Chapter I).²²⁶ However, increasingly, Adventist scholars are becoming aware that the challenges of new situations often require one to go beyond the example set by Christ and his followers. The church, in its faithfulness to its divine calling, and in the absence of the physical/visible presence of Christ, is in constant need of active engagement in Spirit-led improvisation when deciding which particular route to take in

²²⁴ See Chapter III for an analysis of an Adventist interpretation of the Christ-centredness of all divine revelations. Also, Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, p. 130.

²²⁵ This is a basic assumption that underpins the Adventist Trinitarian outlook. See, for instance, a more recent exposition of the Adventist Christ-centred approach to the Trinity: Gulley, *Systematic Theology: God as Trinity*, pp. 439–67.

²²⁶ For a detailed list of the most important Adventist literature in the field of hermeneutics, see: Frank M. Hasel, 'Christ-Centered Hermeneutics', *Ministry*, (2012) <<https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/2012/12/christ-centered-hermeneutics>> [accessed 24/03/2016]. See also: Timothy Alan Floyd, 'An Alphabetized Bibliography for the Adventist Hermeneutics Discussion', *Spectrum*, (2015) <<http://spectrummagazine.org/article/2015/07/27/alphabetized-bibliography-adventist-hermeneutics-discussion>> [accessed 23/03/2016]; Mervyn C. Maxwell, 'A Brief History of Adventist Hermeneutics', *JATS*, 4 (1993); Richard M. Davidson, 'Interpreting Scripture According to Scripture', *Perspective Digest*, (2012) <<http://www.perspectivedigest.org/article/69/archives/17-2/interpreting-scripture-according-to-scripture>> [accessed 25/03/2016]; Canale, 'Sanctuary and Hermeneutics'.

a given situation.²²⁷ Adventists will need to show a greater appreciation of the fact that it is only through the Spirit that the church can confess that Jesus is its Lord. The saving work of Christ essentially involves an act of incorporating the whole of creation into his spiritual body.

(2) ONTOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTION. One of the tasks facing *communio* ecclesiology is to articulate what the church actually is. Is there a sense in which, by analogy with the Logos's incarnation in Jesus of Nazareth, there is a real presence of divine reality within the church? When trying to explain the ways in which Christ's and the church's identities are interwoven into one distinguishable, yet inseparable whole, *communio* ecclesiologists have often used the famous Pauline metaphor of the body of Christ.²²⁸

Two basic explanations have surfaced over time. The first insists that this phrase is a very useful didactic tool, a functional and ethically driven metaphor.²²⁹ The second sees it as a qualifier that touches deeply on the very core of what the church is.²³⁰ Traditionally, Adventists have followed the former view and have treated the Pauline metaphor as a useful pragmatic tool for regulating and explaining their internal relationships. According to them, the chief purpose of this metaphor is to define the place and the role of individual believers and their Spirit-given gift(s) in relation to their common goal, to become Christ-like.²³¹

²²⁷ In terms of mainstream Christian writing, a very creative attempt to address this issue was undertaken by Gabriel J. Fackre in his book *The Church: Signs of the Spirit and Signs of the Times* (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 2007), p. 17.

²²⁸ I Corinthians 12.12-27; 6.13-20; 10.14-22; 11.17-34; Romans 12.3-8, Ephesians 1.22-23; 2.14-16; 3.6; 4.4, 11-16; 5.23, 30; Colossians 1.18, 24; 2.16-19; 3.15.

²²⁹ Wright, *Scripture and the Authority of God*.

²³⁰ Ratzinger offers a highly ontological definition of this NT phrase. According to him, the church represents a 'single subject with Christ'.

²³¹ John A. T. Robinson, *Body: A Study in Pauline Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1952), p. 49.

However, I propose that a specific interpretation of the nature of truth, along with a richer theology of the Spirit – both of which are regarded in this thesis as a necessary supplement to conventional Adventist theology – may help Adventists to venture beyond simple binary contrasts between the ontological and the functional.

Adventists are right to want to maintain ontological distance between the created and non-created orders of beings. However, by following their pious instinct that demands that Christ be exalted above all (*solus Christus*), and by trying to avoid the snares of ecclesiolatry, Adventists have downplayed and even ignored the complex communal realm that characterizes believers' participation in Christ (*en Christou*). Consequently, from fear of saying too much about the church, they have said too little.

Adventists' general nervousness about bringing Christ and his people into a too closely defined organic union might be reduced by a more advanced understanding of the action of the Holy Spirit. A useful starting point might be to acknowledge, along with other *communio* authors, the interrelationship between Christ and the Spirit that has been discussed above. This move would provide the church with the necessary theological tools for explaining the complex ontological union between Christ and his faithful followers, without automatically fusing their identities into an undifferentiated entity.

To avoid exaggeratedly physical interpretations, yet maintain the realism of this Pauline ecclesial descriptor in depicting the essence of the church's personal communion with Christ, CE authors have often extended their account to include pneumatological insights. One of the finest examples of this kind of Spirit-laden explanation of Christ's collective body is the synthesis provided by an Eastern-Orthodox theologian, John Zizioulas. He writes, for instance, about the idea of Christ as a

‘pneumatic being’ or ‘corporate being’.²³² Clearly, in doing this, he goes beyond merely functional, figurative or moral categories.²³³ According to Zizioulas, ‘church’ is the real, eschatological body of the Risen Christ, yet it exists as a core part of his identity only through the *koinonia* of Spirit.²³⁴

According to Zizioulas, it is simply impossible to imagine ‘the corporate personality’ of Christ apart from the workings of the Spirit, who, due to his or her non-material and trans-temporal being, liberates the Son and his economy from the bondage of history. He makes of Christ ‘an eschatological being’, or ‘the last Adam’, to use the words of the Apostle Paul (Romans 5.14).²³⁵ As such, Christ is not just an individual, not ‘one’ but ‘many’. From this it can be deduced that it is the contribution of the Holy Spirit to the Christ event that makes it possible for one to speak of Christ as having a spiritual ‘body’ – that is, to speak of ecclesiology, of the church as the body of Christ. Given that one of his foremost functions in relation to the church is the unification and diversification of the body of believers, according to Zizioulas, it is hardly surprising that, since the time of Paul, the Spirit has often been associated with the notion of communion or *koinonia*.²³⁶

²³² For instance, Joseph Ratzinger, ‘Theologie und Kirche’, *Internationale Katholische Zeitschrift "Communio"*, 15 (1986), 519.

²³³ Zizioulas’ point is that the understanding of unity and salvation in the body of Christ in the New Testament is not moral in the sense that it is a unity of like-minded people who practise a shared ethical praxis. For further explanations, see: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, ‘Church: Unity in the Body of Christ’, <<https://www.adventist.org/en/beliefs/church/unity-in-the-body-of-christ/>> [accessed 23/03/2016].

²³⁴ Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, pp. 124–25; Zizioulas, ‘Communio’, p. 6; Volf, *After Our Likeness*, pp. 84–88. See, also: Aristotle Papanikolaou, ‘Apophaticism Vs. Ontology: A Study of Vladimir Lossky and John Zizioulas’ (unpublished doctoral dissertation, The University of Chicago, 1998), pp. 206–08.

²³⁵ Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, pp. 130–32; Zizioulas, *The Eucharistic Communion and the World*.

²³⁶ II Cor. 13.13; Jerry Zenon Skira, ‘Christ, the Spirit and the Church in Modern Orthodox Theology: A Comparison of Georges Florovsky, Vladimir Lossky, Nikos Nissiotis and John Zizioulas’ (doctoral thesis, University of St. Michael’s College, 1998), p. 138.

Miroslav Volf has tried to further clarify the dynamics inherent in this personal communion between Christ and church. According to him, this communion is best described as ‘personal interiority’; ‘Christ dwells in every Christian and is internal to that person as a person.’ Volf explains:

Rather than being thereby suspended, the specifically Christian juxtaposition of Christ and Christians is actually first constituted through the Holy Spirit. If this is correct, then Paul’s statement that ‘all of you are *one* in Christ Jesus’ (Galatians 3:28) does not mean that this ‘one’ is ‘Christ himself’; they are ‘one’ insofar as they are ‘in Christ’ or insofar as ‘Christ’ dwells ‘within’ them.²³⁷

In order to avoid ‘the total identification of Christ with the church’ (Zizioulas) and the view that the church is a ‘single subject with Christ’ (Ratzinger), Volf interprets *soma Christou* from the perspective of Genesis 2.21–24:

Just as the man is not the subject of the woman (even if from the biblical patriarchal perspective he may be her master), so also can Christ *a fortiori* not be the subject of the church, which does after all consist of several persons. But if Christ is not the subject of the church, then neither is the church a subject, since it cannot be a subject of its own over against Christ.²³⁸

Finally, this leads Volf to conclude that

the church, both the universal *communio sanctorum* and the local church, is not a collective subject, but rather a communion of persons, though the latter are indeed not self-contained subjects, but rather are interdependent in a twofold fashion. First, they live only insofar as Christ lives in them through the Spirit (see Galatians 2:20; 1 Corinthians 6:19). Second, the Christ lives in them through the multiple relations they have with one another (see 1 Corinthians 12:12-13). Yet even though Christians are bound into this complex network of relationships, they still remain subjects; indeed, their being subjects is inconceivable without these relationships (see Galatians 2:20). This is why one must also conceive the ‘one’ who Christians are in Christ (Galatians 3:28; see Ephesians 2:14-16) not as a ‘unified person’ who ‘has transcended all differentiation,’ but rather precisely as a differentiated unity, as a communion, of those who live in Christ.²³⁹

²³⁷ Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, p. 130.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 130–32.

²³⁹ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, pp. 143–44.

I submit that, like Zizioulas, Volf and others, Adventists could ground their vision of the church on the basic Christological assumption that, through the Spirit, Christ is present in his church in a real way. In the action of Christ's self-presencing that is made possible through the work of the Spirit, the church becomes an organic part of his pneumatic body. This Spirit-mediated relationship with Christ makes his followers one with him, and through him they are received as participants in the historically revealed life of the triune God.

Looking at the church from a pneumatologically informed perspective, however, one is able to see that this unity (*koinonia*) does not merge human and divine agencies in such a way as to dissolve them into one undifferentiated whole. Instead of dissolving the human subject, the Spirit-generated *koinonia* refines it and enhances its potential to help believers achieve their authentic self, which above all entails being a person-in-relation – a mystery that has not been grasped by human beings yet. It will not be fully known before the final glorification of the church.

This elevated experience of 'mutuality' and 'togetherness' is reached not through the suppression of believers' 'distinctiveness' and 'otherness' but precisely through a more complete expression of these qualities in the Spirit-generated web of relations. It is through the work of the Spirit, therefore, that it is possible to talk about the miracle of the living body of Christ in which 'one' is 'many' and 'many' are 'one' – the mystery of ecclesial *koinonia* in which Christ and his followers are united closely, yet without identity confusion.²⁴⁰

To put this in the context of a traditional Adventist Christ-centred remnant framework, it can be said that by virtue of believers' rootedness in and sensitivity to the

currents of the Spirit, the followers of Christ are given an opportunity to discover their unique role in relation to Christ's restorative pre-Advent mission in the heavenly sanctuary, while maintaining their otherness-in-grace. Therefore, instead of being merely imitators, clones or copies of Christ, they are seen as his close human companions. These companions are enabled to discover their new and unique relational identity by the community-making initiative of the Spirit, who works within, through and around them in order to bring them into life-giving union with Christ.

It is also important that Adventists take into account the full expressiveness of the biblical and ecclesiastical metaphors.²⁴¹ They should not treat the 'body of Christ' as the only paradigm for structuring the church's life. Instead, when articulating the intricate relationship between believers and Christ, they should view it alongside other equally valuable metaphors. For example, the image of the church as the bride of Christ seems to maintain an important distinction between identities. When used jointly, the corporeal and marital metaphors complement each other, one explaining the aspects of church's identity that the other fails to elucidate.²⁴²

I would even argue that it would be appropriate to make 'the love of God made manifest in Christ our Lord through the Spirit' one of the central principles for reflecting about the nature of the church's *koinonia* in God. That would leave space for other ways in which this love of God can be realized, ways that are not just attempts to replicate Christ.²⁴³

²⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 144.

²⁴¹ This should help them to avoid a yet another form of single-metaphor approach (Inadequacy One; see Chapter III).

²⁴² Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 145.

²⁴³ For the most recent Adventist ecclesiological proposal that centres around the notion of divine love, see: Ibid., pp. 142-45. Rice's synthesis, although yet in a very early stage, might have the potential to be developed further into a more systematic and comprehensive vision of church.

These various suggested strategies, refined and complemented by an enriched pneumatology, could help Adventists to avoid two basic extremes. The first such extreme position is a form of ecclesiolatry in which the church, by seeing itself as identical to Christ, claims too much about itself and thus becomes the object of its own worship. The second one, by separating Christ and the church too sharply, fails to see the church as an organic element of God's revelation in Christ. Consequently, the important process of ontological transformation in which the autonomous unit – 'I' – is changed into 'We' (an authentic human personhood as achieved in Christ through the Spirit) – remains barely noticed.

Is the traditional Adventist interpretation of the nature of the union between believers and Jesus Christ enriched by a more pneumatologically informed theory of church? If it is, in what way is it enhanced? My answer is a definite 'Yes'. Not only does a richer theology of the Spirit allow for a more nuanced Adventist articulation of the relationship between Christ and his companions; it opens up a new theological opportunity for a fuller Trinitarian expression of Adventist faith.²⁴⁴

(IV) TRUTH AS KOINONIA: THE ESSENTIAL ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN GOD'S SELF-REVELATION

The Adventist concept of truth has been a recurring motif throughout this thesis. Chapter I emphasized its importance for the understanding of Adventist communal identity. Chapter III explained the particular propositional conceptualization of truth

²⁴⁴ A pneumatological approach can also deepen Adventist understanding of the Father's role in ecclesiology, of the relationship between the Church and Israel, of believers' participation in the weekly experience of Sabbath rest, and the nature and scope of their involvement in the end-time work of Christ that was foreshadowed by the Old Testament sanctuary rituals. Such a reflection

conventionally presupposed by Adventists, and described its negative impact on Adventist ecclesiology. This framework has conditioned Adventists to see the church as a messenger proclaiming the content of divine revelation — the corpus of beliefs that form the 'present truth'. It was pointed out that, in order to be consistent in their theological commitment to the Divine Word, Adventists need to recognize the communal, relational and personal dimensions of truth.

Such theological approaches to truth, although new to Adventism, have already been widely accepted by other Christian traditions. Here too, reflection on the nature of God's *communio* can enrich Adventist self-understanding. Since the *koinonia* framework insists that the church community is itself a manifestation of divine revelation, it implies a radical redefinition of the individualistic and propositional notions of truth currently dominating the theological scene in Adventism. The church is not just a conveyer of the three angels' messages; it is an active participant in the life of God, and thereby, the locus of his self-disclosure.

One of the principal agreements among contemporary *communio* ecclesiologists is that the church 'is not simply the receiver of revelation, but as the Mystical Body of Christ is bound up with revelation itself'.²⁴⁵ Therefore, by its immersion in divine life that is made accessible to it in Christ through the Holy Spirit, the church not only professes and witnesses to the truth that is exterior to its own life, but also actively participates in it as the living sign of the coming kingdom of God.²⁴⁶

would deepen a sense of Adventism's distinctive position in Christian theology. Considerations of space prevent full discussion of such points.

²⁴⁵ Doyle, *Communion Ecclesiology*, p. 12.

²⁴⁶ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen and Amos Yong, *Toward a Pneumatological Theology: Pentecostal and Ecumenical Perspectives on Ecclesiology, Soteriology, and Theology of Mission* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2002), p. 100.

But what does the notion of truth as *koinonia* really mean? What elements does it contain? How does it influence one's perception of the nature and role of community in relation to divine revelation? What are the practical implications of this approach for the life and structures of the church? How does this shift inform one's understanding of the church's organization, its ministry, mission, reform initiatives, and interfaith relations? These questions outline the task that will guide the remaining part of this thesis.

PART III

REMNANT IN *KOINONIA*: CONFRONTING THE ISSUES

CHAPTER VI

OVERCOMING ADVENTIST ECCLESIOLOGICAL IMPASSES

The final part of this thesis attempts to demonstrate some practical ways in which the CE participatory framework can enrich Adventist ecclesiology. It is hoped that the reader will be able to perceive the plausibility and usefulness of the proposed theoretical framework when it is applied successfully to the resolution – or, at least, to a richer theological interpretation – of some of the most divisive Adventist tensions.

Five case studies will be presented. These involve some of the most contentious issues that characterize the denomination's interpretation of the nature and role of the church's structure, ministry, communal interpretation, mission, and reform.¹ However, in order to unify my treatment of these practical ecclesiological issues, I should first like to name some basic criteria that ought to inform this, as well as any other Adventist reflection about the church.

¹ While I found that the pneumatologically rich Adventist theology of participation discussed above was very useful in advancing the contemporary Adventist debate about the nature and role of church ordination and ordinances, considerations of space prevent these two issues from being incorporated into the present chapter.

(I) SOME GENERAL CRITERIA FOR IMPLEMENTING THE COMMUNIO APPROACH

The previous chapters suggest four theological principles that need to be respected in any attempt to address ecclesiological issues in the light of Trinitarian *communio*.

(1) **THE PRINCIPLE OF THE INDIVISIBILITY OF THE DIVINE PERSONS' WORK *AD EXTRA*.** The activity of God in Christ through the Holy Spirit *ad extra* is always one and indivisible. Therefore, assenting to well-attested patristic insights, both Eastern and Western, Adventists should acknowledge that 'Wherever the Son is there is also the Father and the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit is there is also the Father and the Son'.² This indivisible wholeness of God is the real source of the mystery of human oneness as reflected in the life of the community of believers. There is one God and therefore one church. Any attempt to dissociate the work of one divine person from the work of the other would render incomplete one's exposition of the nature of church.

(2) **THE PRINCIPLE OF BALANCE BETWEEN THE WORK OF THE SON AND THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT.** In any ecclesiology, the work of Christ and the Spirit must be given equal weight. It is not possible to provide a comprehensive vision of the church by neglecting the work of either of these two Persons, or treating the work of one of these as somehow inferior or secondary to the work of the other. A well-developed ecclesiology will find a way to safeguard this balance. Once an integrated account of the organic relationship between these two (and the third) persons of the deity has been developed and their close personal involvement in the community-making processes is

² Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, pp. 67-122.

recognized, a more comprehensive and adequate portrayal of various facets of the church's life will become possible.³

(3) **THE PRINCIPLE OF COMPREHENSIVENESS.** When trying to discern the nature of the Trinitarian contribution to the life of the ecclesial community, one should maintain openness towards the *entire* scope of the multi-dimensional, church-making activity of the Father, Son and Spirit.⁴ For instance, one cannot selectively emphasize the Spirit's work of enlightenment and sanctification in human life, while at the same time ignoring his equally important works of gathering of a community and bringing about the eschatological kingdom of God. Similarly, one cannot build a balanced ecclesiological synthesis by grounding it only in the 1844 restorative work of Christ, while neglecting the role of his incarnation, or his death and resurrection, in the incorporation of the believers within the life of God. This principle – the principle of comprehensiveness – requires an ecclesologist to embrace the wholeness of the divine activity *pro nobis*, in all its variety and richness, when articulating his or her theology of church.⁵

(4) **THE PRINCIPLE OF ONTOLOGICAL EMBEDDEDNESS.** Undergirding these three principles is the general conviction that it is not enough to speak about the work of the

³ Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, p. 129. In his book *The Open Secret*, Lesslie Newbigin gives a useful synopsis of how this synthesis might look like in the context of the church's mission to the world: J. McIntyre, 'The Holy Spirit in Greek Patristic Thought', *The Scottish Journal of Theology*, 7 (1954), 357.

⁴ Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, pp. 126–29; Congar, *The Word and the Spirit*, p. 1. Too often – for the sake of creating a neat and tidy account of the church – ecclesologists fail to provide an adequate account of the complex and multifaceted nature of God's involvement in members' communal life.

⁵ Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, pp. 57–58; Kärkkäinen and Yong, *Pneumatological Theology*; Bryant, *Spirit Christology*, pp. 512–16. One should be clear, not only on what *particular* aspects of Christian doctrine and existence one has in mind when speaking of Christology and pneumatology, but also what exactly the ecclesiology suffers from if this content is deficient. The importance of the question of content is also acknowledged by Zizioulas. Grappling with the issue of content, Zizioulas affirms that 'the contribution of each of these divine persons bears its own distinctive characteristics which are directly relevant for ecclesiology in which they have to be reflected. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, p. 129.

Father, the Son and the Spirit, in regard to the church, merely as one aspect of ecclesiology among others, albeit a particularly significant one. On the contrary, the union of believers with the three Persons is constitutive of the church, and therefore represents a foundational assumption implicit in any ecclesiology. The work of each person of the Trinity 'must qualify the very ontology of the church'.⁶

Although a certain level of mystery and vagueness in the description of *koinonia* in both inter-Trinitarian and theo-andric relational contexts will always persists, it continues to be axiomatically true that the divine actions *pro nobis* are constitutive of the church's *esse*, not merely accidental or peripheral, and should remain fully endorsed. Divine initiative is not something that 'animates' a church that already exists. Father, Son and the Spirit make the church be.⁷

* * *

These four principles can serve as basic guidelines, or correctives, as Adventists attempt to expand their existing remnant-based ecclesiology into a more rounded and well-developed synthesis. These regulative principles safeguard the integrity of the believers' witness about who God is and how he is involved in originating, maintaining, and completing the life of the church. In so doing, they shed light on the nature, form and extent of believers' personal and communal participation in the mysteries of divine life.

A full realization of the ecclesiological ideals is not possible. The current reality of the church is too messy, sinful and fragmentary. The discrepancy between the ideal

⁶ Bryant, *Spirit Christology*, pp. 512-20; Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, p. 129.

⁷ According to Zizioulas, the church is constituted in and through the action of the Father, Son and the Spirit, forming an ontological category in ecclesiology. See Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, p. 132; Elizabeth Teresa Groppe, 'The Contribution of Yves Congar's Theology of the Holy Spirit', *Theological Studies*, 62 (2001).

vision and the less-than-ideal daily actuality of the church will remain until the eschaton.⁸

This does not, however, render the attempt to clarify the ecclesiological ideal an entirely futile intellectual exercise. The pilgrim community of God remains ‘under construction’ and needs these ideals as goals to strive towards, as guidelines, or correctives, encouraging and facilitating the church’s attempts to reach final union with God through a process involving the permanently improvised, delicate balances between the individual and the community.

The focus in the ensuing five case studies is on the ecclesiological ramifications of the activity of the Holy Spirit *within*, *through* and *around* the community of believers. Considerations of space prevent exploration of other aspects of these four principles. That remains a task for further research within the Adventist tradition.

(II) STRUCTURE

There are numerous questions that present-day Adventists ask in regard to church structure. The following three seem to have generated the most diverse and often divisive proposals: (1) ‘Is the structure of the church part of its *esse* or *bene esse*?’; (2) ‘What should the formal structure of church look like?’ and (3) ‘What is the relationship between the global and the local church?’

⁸ This thesis has been convincingly established in: Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, p. 132.

THE NATURE OF CHURCH STRUCTURE

There is no unanimous opinion among Adventists on whether the issue of church structure should be treated as something that is part of the church's general well-being (*bene esse*) or of its very being (*esse*).⁹ As seen in Chapter II, emerging from the controversy surrounding the reorganization of the administrative structure of the Adventist church (1901–1903) were two dominant ecclesiological perspectives — functional and ontological. The functional view prevailed from early in the movement's history and contributed to the present shape of Adventist polity.¹⁰ Each of these perspectives advances a different proposal as to how the structures of the church should be perceived in relation to its being. In broad strokes, these schemes may be summed up as follows:

Functional perspective

The majority of present-day Adventists subscribe to the functional perspective and see the institutional aspect of the church as something that is flexibly and provisionally defined, in function of the general well-being (*bene esse*) of the community of believers. The certainty and imminence of the return of Jesus Christ, as well as the urgency of mission, are the main theological concerns that inform this view of the church's structure.¹¹ Also contributing to this vision is the spirit of pragmatism and activism that prevails in the Adventist outlook in general. Evaluating the institutional aspect of the

⁹ Here I refer to the structure in general, not to a particular form of it.

¹⁰ Barry, *Organizational Structure*, pp. 443–53. See also: Chapters 6, 10, 17 and 23 in Schwarz, *Light Bearers*.

¹¹ Some of the key Scriptural passages that are employed to substantiate their position of urgency are: I Thess. 4.16–18; John 14.1–3; Acts 1.7–9; Matt. 24.14; 28.19–20; Mk 16.15–16; Rev 14.6–14.

church in relation to the task or mandate that the church is expected to fulfil, adherents of the functional view favour those structural patterns and strategies that have proved to be the most efficient, both in catering to the needs of its members and in aiding their efforts in evangelizing the world.¹² According to this line of reasoning, the church should be free at all times to modify its structures in order to maximize its efficiency in proclaiming 'the present truth' to the world. In other words, it should be free to adapt to the cultural and social influences of its time and to adopt those structures that currently best facilitate its God-given mandate.

Ontological perspective

On the other hand, the proponents of the ontological view — not so numerous in Adventist circles¹³ — insist that the personal relationship of the individual with Christ should be the most salient feature of any given ecclesiology and should therefore take precedence over any eschatological and missiological concerns. Unlike functionalists, the proponents of this view define the church as the sum of all the individuals who are in a saving relationship with Christ.¹⁴ According to them, the global church should invest its utmost efforts in allowing each member his or her complete independence, originality and individuality in the exercise of rights in relation to God.¹⁵

While the proponents of this view saw the relationship of the believers with Christ as foundational in determining the church's structure, they failed to create a

¹² Barry, 'Reorganization', pp. 443–54.

¹³ As seen in Chapter II, this perspective was originally articulated by A. T. Jones, E. J. Waggoner, D. J. Paulson, Percy T. Magan, and, for a time, W. W. Prescott, during the period of reorganization (1901-1903). *Ibid.*, pp. 435-43.

¹⁴ The 1889 Camp Meeting Sermons: As Found in the Topeka, Kansas Daily Capital May 7–28, 1889 (St. Maries, ID: LMN Publications, 1987).

strong theory of the structure of the church which specifies what can and cannot happen in the ontological account of a church centred on Christ.

Due to its strong docetic leanings and individualistic overtones, this perspective — which regards organization as part of the church's *esse* — was rejected at the beginning of the twentieth century as the ruling structural paradigm in Adventist communities. It is only recently that the denomination has realized that one cannot have a comprehensive account of the church's structure without elucidating the intrinsic connection that exists between the church's being and its structural form.¹⁶

Integrative perspective

In this thesis a third option is proposed — the integrative perspective. If Adventists are to revisit the idea that the structure of the church is inextricably related to its being, a better integrated account of the activity of the Spirit in domains of Christology, anthropology and ecclesiology is of the utmost priority. As it stands, the Adventist theory of church tends to link the structure directly to Christ and to leave the Spirit institutionally underdetermined. This approach goes against the principles of the indivisibility of the Triune work of God and the principle of balance. Besides this, it assumes a dichotomy between the charismatic and the institutional elements of the church.

It is suggested here that a more well-rounded view would, as is the case in the ecclesiologies of Yves Congar and Charles Journet, see these two elements as complementary realities — both resulting from the Spirit's activity among the believers

¹⁵ A. T. Jones, *Church Organisation: Sermon by Elder A. T. Jones* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1901), pp. 18–9.

in a particular time and space.¹⁷ By viewing the Spirit as the most immediate cause of the church — the agent behind ecclesiogenesis — Congar's pneumatological ecclesiology reconciles the artificial dichotomy that positions the Spirit and charismata in direct opposition to the 'unfortunate' processes of institutionalisation and routinization.¹⁸ His main thesis is that fully orbed pneumatology, in which the Spirit is not merely an animator, but also a co-institutor of the church's structure, defies this kind of binary thinking.¹⁹

This, of course, does not mean that every human institution should be seen as directly originated by the Spirit and thereby 'infallible', 'timeless' and 'unreformable'. To safeguard against this ecclesial fallacy, it is useful to maintain a distinction between the essential and the historically conditioned aspects of the church's structure, or between permanent and changeable elements.²⁰ Irrespective of the way one envisions the exact shape of the church's organization and its temporary expressions, the work of the Spirit is undeniably manifested in a variety of virtues, fruits and gifts. This 'harvest' of benefits should be seen as the master key to the appropriateness of all the juridical institutions intended to manifest and sustain believers' *koiononia* in Christ — a dynamic fellowship that is animated by the Holy Spirit.²¹

This proposal demands that the highly individualistic presentations of the work of the Spirit that have been the vogue in Adventist literature over the years should be replaced by a far more communal perception of the Spirit's life for, among and through

¹⁶ Barry, 'Reorganization', pp. 454–55.

¹⁷ Congar, *The Word and the Spirit*, pp. 78–84; Dennis M. Doyle, 'Journet, Congar, and the Roots of Communion Ecclesiology', *Theological Studies*, 58 (1997).

¹⁸ Gabriel Flynn, *Yves Congar: Theologian of the Church* (Louvain: Peeters, 2005), p. 314; Congar, *I Believe*, 2, pp. 165–69.

¹⁹ Congar, *The Word and the Spirit*, p. 57; Groppe, *Yves Congar's Theology of the Holy Spirit*, p. 102.

²⁰ Doyle, *Communion Ecclesiology*, p. 49.

believers. This Spirit-sensitive account should embrace the variety of forms in which inner mystical communion is realized (in a particular locale and in a particular period of Christian history), not as necessarily conflicting organizational models, but as genuine manifestations of the same essence, the same Spirit-generated ontological structure of the church. Once developed properly, the ontological perspective will be recognized as useful in complementing the currently prevalent functional view. It might also provide better theological grounds for recovering the original vision and responding more successfully to 'the new questions raised by a new situation'.²²

Looking at the variations in the historical structure of the church in all its concrete renderings, one should thus be able to discern the remarkable unity of the mysterious work of the Spirit, who elevates believers of all times and all places into one, unified and unifying, Spirit-generated-and-animated body of Christ.²³ It follows that the structural reform would consist not only of revising, updating and rearranging the existing institution, but also in asking 'deeper, long-term questions [that] were never asked'.²⁴

Revealing the ways in which the invisible aspects of the interwoven Spirit-mediated relationships with God and with other members find their visible and tangible expression in the domain of the church's structure is, therefore, more than necessary if Adventists are to respond successfully to their current challenges.²⁵ In this context, Adventists will find it useful to learn from great *communio* ecclesiologists, such

²¹ Ibid.

²² John R. Quinn, 'The Exercise of the Primacy', *Commonweal*, 123 (July 12, 1996), 13; Doyle, *Communion Ecclesiology*, p. 47.

²³ Yves Congar, *The Mystery of the Church* (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1969), p. 160.

²⁴ Quinn, 'The Exercise of the Primacy', p. 13. This thesis will be further elaborated in the section, below, about the nature of true ecclesial reform.

²⁵ Ibid.

as Yves Congar, John Zizioulas and Miroslav Volf, who consider church structure from the perspective of the work of the Spirit (and the Trinity in general) and see the essential connection between the structure and the being of the church.

STRUCTURES OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT

Once the ecclesial structure is seen as an intrinsic part of the church's being (*esse*), key questions emerge: 'What exact structural shape should the community of believers assume? What is the most adequate polity to be adopted in light of the nature of the church?' At first it might appear that there exists a general agreement among Adventists on defining the church's internal governance as 'representative' in form.²⁶ However, a closer analysis reveals that when describing the way in which this 'representative' structure should function in practice, different and often divisive proposals emerge.²⁷ Two dominant approaches from opposite sides of the spectrum drive Adventist thinking about the form of the church's organization; one sees the governance of the church as a democracy, while the other emphasizes its hierarchy.²⁸

²⁶ Dederen, 'The Church', p. 554.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 553–54. There are those who argue that Adventist structure is a hierarchical ecclesial polity, resembling that of the Roman Catholic Church. See, for instance, the article written by the former Associate Editor of the *Adventist Review* and the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*: Raymond Cottrell, 'The Varieties of Church Structure', *Spectrum*, 14 (March 1984), 42. Walter Scragg, President of the South Pacific Division of the Seventh-day Adventist church, argues that '[t]he structure of the Seventh-day Adventist church is essentially hierarchical. [...] The pyramid of church organization maintains equilibrium and sustains growth'. See: Walter Scragg, in the *Adventist Review*, June 23, 1990, pp. 4-5. On the other hand, most of the official church websites interpret the representative form of church government as a type of government that 'reflects a democratic process of formation and election'. See, for example, 'Organizational Structure', <www.nadadventist.org/article/19/about-our-church/organizational-structure>, [accessed: 01/01/2016].

²⁸ An Adventist scholar, Darius Jankiewicz, expresses this tension in different terms. He argues that throughout its history Adventism has oscillated between two mutually exclusive forces – dependence and independence. While the dependence model tends to bypass the role of the individual believer in decision-making processes, the independence model ignores the essential role of the community in believers' participation in God. Neither of these two approaches incorporates the full range of

Democracy

On one side, keen to maintain the rights and freedoms of individual believers, some have claimed that this 'representative' system of governance should be seen as essentially democratic. The proponents of this view claim that the ultimate authority of the church rests in the local congregation, which is then 'expressed through duly elected representatives'.²⁹ By means of a democratic vote, the individual members delegate executive responsibility for governing the church to representative bodies and officers.³⁰ This view draws on the general understanding of democracy as 'a relation of governance among people who are all of equal stature and have equal voice'.³¹ It assumes that 'people are the origin of all just power' (David Hume) and that 'power is inherent in the people' (Thomas Jefferson).³²

To ground their views theologically, the representatives of this strand of opinion frequently appeal to the notion of the headship of Christ and the priesthood of all believers as principles that eliminate the distinction between 'clergy' and 'laity'. They emphasize the importance of participation in the government of the church by all its members — participation that is ultimately based on the giftedness and freedom of

structural concerns and needs. In order to maintain the balance between the individual and communal aspects of church life, he proposes a third model — that of 'interdependence'. Although the route he proposes seems a promising one, he has not developed a full account of how it would translate into the reality of church life, or structure in particular. See, Darius Jankiewicz, 'Models of Religious Authority', *Journal of Adventist Theological Society*, 18 (2007), 16.

²⁹ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2015), pp. 26–28. There is a general tendency among the administrators of the church to emphasize repeatedly that every believer should participate in the government of the church. Ostensibly, they are aiming for fuller democratic engagement, yet the reality often looks quite different.

³⁰ See, Ellen G. White, 8T, 236, 237.

³¹ Groppe, 'The Contribution of Yves Congar's Theology of the Holy Spirit', pp. 473–74.

³² See Thomas Jefferson's letter to W. J. Cartwright in *Thomas Jefferson on Democracy*, ed. by Paul K. Padover (New York: New American Library, 1939), p. 33. The quotation from Hume can also be found in this letter by Jefferson.

individual members.³³ The main thesis of this approach is that the church is structured as a 'discipleship of equals' and should therefore embrace the contribution of *all* to the administrative, doctrinal, and liturgical aspects of the church's communal life.³⁴

Hierarchy

According to Elizabeth Teresa Groppe, in common present-day parlance the term hierarchy 'refers to a social body organized by gradations of rank and authority; the word often connotes inequality and the dominance of those in superior positions over those who are subordinate'.³⁵ This notion carries the same connotations in ecclesiastical discourse.³⁶ Arguing from this more authoritarian and hierarchical perspective, there are Adventists who emphasize the fact that, once chosen, the representatives of ecclesial offices hold positions of authority over the other members of the church.³⁷ Receiving their empowerment directly from Christ through the act of ecclesial ordination, appointment or commission, ministers (pastors), elders, and deacons have the duty to govern the church and protect its doctrinal and moral integrity. While no Adventist

³³ Rex Edwards, 'Priesthood of Believers', *Biblical Research Institute Release*, (2009) <https://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/sites/default/files/pdf/EdwardsPriesthood_of_believers.pdf> [accessed 01/04/2016].

³⁴ The phrase 'discipleship of equals' is famously expounded in mainstream Christianity by an eminent feminist author, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Discipleship of Equals: A Critical Feminist Ekklesia-logy of Liberation* (New York: Crossroad, 1994).

³⁵ Groppe, 'The Contribution of Yves Congar's Theology of the Holy Spirit', p. 473. See also: James Schubert, 'Hierarchy, Democracy and Decision Making in Small Groups', in *Hierarchy and Democracy*, ed. by Albert Somit and Rudolf Wildenmann (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University, 1991), pp. 79-101.

³⁶ Michael Richards, 'Hierarchy and Priesthood', *Priests and People*, 7 (1993), 228.

³⁷ See the statements made by Douglas Devnich, President of the Canadian Union of Seventh-day Adventists, in the *Messenger* (Official Journal of the Canadian Union Conference), December, 1993, p. 2. Dr Philip Endean argues that those advocating the Roman Catholic version of this structural model would reject a simple argument between autonomy and heteronomy, a trade-off between the individual's power and others' power. They would say, instead, that to be a Christian is to be in dependence on Christ – and that there therefore needs to be an office in the church to which Christians freely entrust themselves. In other words, office is not just an administrative mechanism; it actually reflects a relationship of giving and receiving that is essential to the life of grace.

would argue for the apostolic succession, multi-level ordained clergy or primacy in the classical sense, in reality levels of authority tend to be ascribed, more or less explicitly, to offices that are regarded as especially significant for maintaining the vitality of the church over time.³⁸ As a result, when a position ranks higher in the supra-local context (in other words, at the level of conference, union, or division), the governing spheres of influence and power also escalate.³⁹

Communion

Given that the participation of the community of believers is in the life of God, it is sensible to expect that there will be some structural differences between the foundational institutions of the church and those of other political and secular bodies. It has already been suggested that in the ambit of the church human relationships take on a different cast, due to the members' active participation in the life of God. Therefore, it can be expected that neither 'democracy' nor 'hierarchy' (in their common, secular sense) can be employed, without qualification, to express the shape of the church's structure. The church cannot be seen as a hierarchy since the relationships within it are not structured on the basis of superiority and subordination.⁴⁰ Neither can it be viewed as a democracy in the sense of 'an organization of equals in which power is

³⁸ Malcolm Bull and Keith Lockhart, *Seeking a Sanctuary: Seventh-day Adventism and the American Dream* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), p. 134.

³⁹ In this regard, the proponents of this view strongly resemble the episcopalian form of church government, as seen in some other Christian traditions (e.g. Roman Catholic, Anglican, Episcopalian, and some Orthodox and United Methodist churches).

⁴⁰ Congar insists that members with special roles in the church's hierarchy should carry out their duties with a profound sense of humility and self-sacrificial service. See: Yves Congar, *Power and Poverty in the Church* (Baltimore: Helicon, 1964).

inherent in the people'.⁴¹ The power of the ecclesial community is not inherent in the people, but is derived from God's Spirit.⁴²

It is, therefore, more meaningful to speak of the church as a communion in the Spirit of Christ than as a democracy or a hierarchy. This principle of *pneumatocracy*, while articulated differently by different theologians, can be found within various recent versions of *communio* ecclesiology.⁴³ For instance, in his extensive writing on the subject, Yves Congar tries to suggest a middle position when addressing a similar dilemma in the Catholic context. He openly criticizes the conventional notion of hierarchy, with its emphasis on superiority and subordination. However, he does not attack the existence of hierarchy *per se*. His concern is with its abuse. According to Congar, Christians should acknowledge that those believers who hold a ministerial office in the church are by no means superior to those who do not. Even in exercising their leadership and administrative responsibilities, ecclesial officers 'stand with the baptized in a relation of mutuality and communion to one another and a relation of dependence upon the indwelling Spirit of Christ'.⁴⁴

Congar also insists that the ordained minister cannot exercise his God-given authority apart from the community as a whole, nor serve the church adequately apart from the activity of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁵ Hervé-Marie Legrand, an eminent French

⁴¹ Groppe, 'The Contribution of Yves Congar's Theology of the Holy Spirit', p. 474.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Philip Kariatlis, *Church as Communion: The Gift and Goal of Koinonia* (Hindmarsh, Adelaide, South Australia: St Andrews' Orthodox Press, 2011), p. 151.

⁴⁴ This sentence represents Groppe's summary of Congar's position: Groppe, 'The Contribution of Yves Congar's Theology of the Holy Spirit', p. 474. This radical redefinition of the traditional notion of hierarchy is also attempted by the current pope, Francis (born Jorge Mario Bergoglio). He depicts the synod as primarily a 'listening event' and explains that the pope, as the guarantor of unity, has the 'last word' in the synod. See: <http://www.johnthavis.com/pope-says-synod-is-a-listening-event-as-guarantor-of-unity-pope-has-last-word#.VkjACd_hCV7> [accessed: 15 November 2015].

⁴⁵ Ibid.

ecclesialogist who was Congar's student and colleague, appositely observes when reflecting on the role of the Holy Spirit as the main agent in the rite of ordination, 'All Christians are equal within the variety established by the Spirit.'⁴⁶

This does not necessarily mean, however, that the church should be described as a democracy. Power should not be regarded as inherent in the people and equally distributed to all. Only God holds absolute authority and power in the universe and thus in the church. Being co-instituted by Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, the church, according to Congar, is completely oriented towards the on-going activity of the Spirit of the glorified Christ for, within, through, and around the body of believers. It is God in Christ, through the Spirit, who reigns over the church, not human beings. In this sense, the church should not be too closely compared to secular models of government.⁴⁷

While the Adventist Church's explanations of the various facets of its communal life, including its insistence on conciliarity, synodality and reception, can at times greatly resemble pronouncements that are commonly associated with democratic systems of government, it would be wrong to simply call it democratic.⁴⁸ It is a pneumatic *communion* of believers that derives its life 'from above' and is at all times committed to orienting its efforts and structural forms in response to the activity of God's Spirit.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Hervé Legrand, 'Theology and the Election of Bishops in the Early Church', in *Election and Consensus in the Church*, ed. by Giuseppe Alberigo and Anton Weiler (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), p. 38.

⁴⁷ Catherine LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991), p. 401.

⁴⁸ Groppe, 'The Contribution of Yves Congar's Theology of the Holy Spirit', p. 475.

⁴⁹ Legrand, 'Theology and the Election of Bishops in the Early Church', pp. 40-41.

So far it has been noted that the church cannot fit secular organizational blueprints in every way. However, there remains the need to affirm what is true in both interpretations of the Adventist representative form of government. Along with those who opt for more hierarchical explanations, it is important to recognize the divine origin of the church as a whole (from above) and the importance of the establishment of various offices, or modes of service, that facilitate the unity, universality and continuity of the church over time. If 'hierarchical' is understood as a pointer towards the church's divine origins (since the Greek prefix, *hier* means 'sacred')⁵⁰ and not as a justification for social inequality and subordination, one might readily describe some aspects of the church's structure as hierarchical.⁵¹ At the same time, along with the advocates of a democratic interpretation, it is important to acknowledge that the Spirit of Christ actively dwells in all the faithful.⁵² Whereas there may be distinctions between the exact modes of communal service that different believers are called to undertake, these ministries should never function apart from the faithful. The only proper way to exercise one's gifts and rights, it appears, is in a relationship of mutuality and communion with fellow believers.⁵³

In this thesis it is proposed that, rather than trying to oversimplify the complexity of the dynamics that characterize the church's structure by opting for one of the two explanations presented above, Adventists should explore a theocentric framework within which these structures can make more sense. The first task should be to

⁵⁰ LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life*, pp. 388-400. For an ecclesiological reformulation of the secular concept of hierarchy, see: Terence L. Nichols, *That All May Be One: Hierarchy and Participation in the Church* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1997).

⁵¹ Yves Congar, *Lay People in the Church: A Study for a Theology of Laity* (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1965), p. 34.

⁵² Groppé, 'The Contribution of Yves Congar's Theology of the Holy Spirit', p. 476.

recognize the linguistic limitations to be met in describing the church organization by means of these two notions and to acknowledge the underlying truths in these seemingly opposing positions. This would enable the exploration to go beyond human political constructs when one seeks to understand the nature of the personal indwelling of the Spirit in all believers and to embrace the variety established by it.

Once this indwelling is carefully elucidated, it would become easier to track its important implications for the life, structure, and mission of the church. Because of this, rather than being divided on the issue of hierarchical versus democratic modes of government, believers would focus on discerning their common responsibility for continuing the reform of the church. The result would be that the 'ecclesial practices and structures would faithfully express the church's sacred rule and origin (*hierarchie*) and the communion of all members in the one indwelling Spirit of Christ'.⁵⁴

Since Congar's theology of the Holy Spirit makes a significant contribution to this end, it would be advisable for Adventist scholars to consult the work of this prominent French Dominican. By reintegrating pneumatology with theological anthropology and ecclesiology, Congar uncovered an important theological tradition that had been neglected since the early apostolic and patristic period. In this tradition, the Holy Spirit represents the main structural principle (*Ordnungsprinzip*) of the church and should be given a greater prominence in the theological account of the church.⁵⁵

⁵³ Yves Congar, *Challenge to the Church: The Case of Archbishop Lefebvre* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 1976), p. 39.

⁵⁴ Groppe, 'The Contribution of Yves Congar's Theology of the Holy Spirit', p. 474. For a better appreciation of Congar's influence on thus formulated reform at the Vatican II council, see: Avery Dulles, 'Yves Congar: In Appreciation', *America*, 173 (15 July 1995), 6.

⁵⁵ Congar borrowed this principle from Hasenhüttle and qualified it further. Gotthold Hasenhüttle, *Charisma, Ordnungsprinzip Der Kirche* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1970). David Watson, a British pastor and author, emphasized the need to revive dying churches in the mid-1960s. He made the following insightful statement: 'Take Him [the Holy Spirit] away, and you have no church: an

When explaining the essence of this *Ordnungsprinzip*, Congar emphasizes that the life of the church is both an expression of believers' new life in the Spirit and a means toward their transfiguration.⁵⁶ It is in this Spirit-mediated *koinonia* with God and with others that human beings find their fulfilment as creatures made in the divine image.⁵⁷ This charismatic interpretation of *Ordnungsprinzip* is based on the principal assumptions that the church 'grows and thrives through the charisms of the Spirit'⁵⁸ given to its members.⁵⁹ These gifts of both nature and grace, claims Congar, are not only given for the upbuilding of the body of believers, but also for the fulfilment of their mission in the church.⁶⁰ Inspired by Congar's work, Elizabeth Teresa Groppe proposes that

The Spirit awakens natural human talents — gifts for teaching, healing, advocacy for justice, reconciliation, music, and so forth — and elevates them to a new level of orientation toward God in the love and service of others. Charisms are given to all the faithful and take many different forms.⁶¹

In his writings, Congar argues that the church, as a Spirit-gathered community of believers, 'receives the fullness of the Spirit only in the totality of the gifts made by all Her members'.⁶² This implies that the church cannot be understood as 'a pyramid whose passive base receives everything from the apex'.⁶³ Congar frequently stresses that the charisms 'should be treated not simply as gifts for personal spiritual enrichment or

institution, an organization, a building, a structure, perhaps; but no church of the living God.' See: Groppe, 'The Contribution of Yves Congar's Theology of the Holy Spirit', p. 477.

⁵⁶ Yves Congar, 'Renewed Actuality of the Holy Spirit', *Lumen*, 28 (1973), 19. Yves Congar, 'Pneumatology Today', *AER*, 167 (1973), 445.

⁵⁷ Congar, *The Word and the Spirit*, pp. 78–84. Volf, *After Our Likeness*.

⁵⁸ Groppe, *Yves Congar's Theology of the Holy Spirit*, p. 105; David Watson, *I Believe in the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985), p. 166.

⁵⁹ 'The institution is based on charisms', according to Congar, 'and operation of those charisms produces the institution.' Congar, *The Word and the Spirit*, p. 130.

⁶⁰ Congar, *I Believe*, 2, p. 26.

⁶¹ Groppe, *Yves Congar's Theology of the Holy Spirit*, p. 105.

⁶² Congar, 'Pneumatology Today', p. 439.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

additions to a self-sufficient ecclesial institution but rather as a contribution to the church's very constitution'.⁶⁴ In other words, instead of viewing the charisms as merely a matter of personal vocation, as Adventists often do, one should regard *charismata* as the main impetus ordering the church's multifaceted life.

Given the Christological balance, and viewed in conjunction with the antecedent work of the Spirit in the life of Christ and the early apostolic church, the charismatic constitution of the present-day church should not stand in opposition to the ecclesial institution.⁶⁵ Inevitably, given the broken state in which humanity exists at the moment, there will be some tensions between the charisms and the institution.⁶⁶

However, if various established ordained ministries are determined on the basis of the nature of their charismatic dimension, the tensions should be significantly relieved. This, in turn, will reduce the anti-institutional sentiment of the present-day believers who would like to be seen as 'spiritual, but not necessarily religious' — the term 'religious' here connoting the institutionalised and formalized aspect of Christian life. The same applies to the recent phenomenon of 'churchless spirituality' — a trend introduced by people who leave the church for the sake of their own spiritual growth. They look at the ecclesial structure and institution with suspicion, seeing it as something that hinders their personal freedom in the Spirit and stands in the way of their true spiritual progress. This position is rendered untenable if the structure is defined charismatically.

⁶⁴ Groppé, *Yves Congar's Theology of the Holy Spirit*, p. 105. Congar, *I Believe*, 2, p. 128.

⁶⁵ Kärkkäinen and Yong, *Pneumatological Theology*, p. 112.

⁶⁶ Congar, *I Believe*, 2, p. 11.

If one accepts the proposal that the form of church structure should ultimately be determined on a pneumatological basis, then the main task of ecclesiology is not to adjudicate structural issues on a merely pragmatic and functional basis — although this will inevitably be involved — but rather to discover the nature and type of Spirit-generated charisms that are endowed to the ecclesial community in any particular time and space. At times, this dynamic participation by believers in the Spirit will require dominant (and hierarchically structured) leadership of the community *via* the ordained offices, whereas, on other occasions, administration can be exercised more democratically. The sovereignty of the Spirit in the distribution of spiritual gifts should at all times be respected.

This, furthermore, implies that the church should not try to create the 'perfect' static structural blueprint, with the idea that it should be exactly replicated in other worldwide ecclesial communities in the future. The dynamic nature of believers' communal participation in the Spirit requires much more than that: a continual openness to the leading of the Spirit, who draws them together in participation in God. In responding to the Spirit's movement within, through and among them, the believers will learn that the *communio* for a church *in via*, as already mentioned, involves a delicate, continually improvised balance between the person and the community. This balance is achieved by the Spirit's work that unifies and diversifies the community. As a result, the church can function as a unified and unifying *koinonia* of believers, in which the abundance of different personal manifestations of the work of Spirit (*charismata*) is maintained and yet organically integrated in the mystical body of Christ. This leads one to inquire about the ways in which this ideal ecclesial type translates into the concrete reality of both local and global expressions of the body of Christ.

GLOBAL AND LOCAL EXPRESSIONS OF ECCLESIAL KOINONIA

Another point on which Adventists (like many other Christians) are not in agreement is interplay between the global and local expressions of the church. The issue becomes especially divisive in connection to the following questions: Does the local church derive its identity from the universal church, or is the universal church just the sum of the local churches, and therefore constituted by the will of the local churches? Or, to put it differently, is the church formed by its relationship to the whole, or is the whole to be seen as a reality dependent upon its parts?⁶⁷

While some may see these questions as a matter of inconsequential nuances, they have immense practical implications for the life of any worldwide community trying to achieve greater trans-local administrative cohesion. There are administrative and logistical issues here; but there is also a theological one about the kind of body of the church should be.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ There was a major debate in the Roman Catholic Church between Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger and Cardinal Walter Kasper about the nature of the relationship between the universal and local expression of church. For a brief review of this well-known debate, see: Kilian McDonnell, 'The Ratzinger/Kasper Debate: The Universal Church and Local Churches', *Theological Studies*, 63 (2002). In contrast to Kasper, Ratzinger ardently defended the position that the universal church has a temporal and ontological precedence. See: Joseph Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics* (New York: Crossroad, 1989), p. 75; Joseph Ratzinger, *Call to Communion* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), p. 44; John Paul II, 'Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Church Understood as Communion', *Origins*, 22 (June 25, 1992). This last reference represents the CDF 1992 letter that was directly influenced by Ratzinger's personal formulation. Walter Kasper, 'Zur Theologie Und Praxis Des Bischöflichen Amtes', in *Auf Neue Art Kirche Sein: Wirklichkeiten-Herausforderungen-Wandlungen* (München: Bernward bei Don Bosco, 1999), pp. 32–48. In the heat of this debate, Ratzinger even labelled Boff's position as 'ecclesiological relativism' and compared its sociological understanding with Kasper's empirical church. Boff, *Ecclesio-genesis*. Joseph Ratzinger, 'On the Relation of the Universal Church and the Local Church in Vatican II', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, December 22, 2000, p. 46.

⁶⁸ The importance of this issue for the ongoing Christian quest for unity is also recognized by CDF, 'Historical-Theological Synthesis of the Relation between Primary and Episcopacy During the Second Millennium', in *Il Primato Del Successore Di Pietro: Atti Del Simposio Teologico, Roma, Dicembre 1996*, (Vatican City: Editrice Vaticana, 1998), pp. 228–29.

Raoul Dederen writes that the church of Jesus Christ is always a universal church, and yet a church of a particular place or places.⁶⁹ Dederen argues that a church represents a community of believers which is always manifested in a certain time and locality. In this, he declares, the local congregation should not be regarded

as merely a part or component of the whole church, but as the church in its local expression. The whole is in the part. The local visible *ekklēsia* is the whole church expressed locally in a particular time and space.⁷⁰

This statement expresses an Adventist consensus that the body of Christ is one and cannot be divided. This demands from the current church that it find a way in which the local churches are not seen as separate and unrelated entities, but as part of the one, global church of Christ. At the same time, Dederen claims that the local church, while part of the wider body of Christ, also possesses full ecclesial status in itself.⁷¹ To support the ecclesiality of the local church, Adventists have often quoted Matthew 18.20. This text promises the fullness of the presence of Christ in the local assembly of believers 'where two or three are gathered' in his name.⁷²

When it comes to actual church praxis and the way in which administrative decisions are made at various levels of the church's organization, any consensus behind

⁶⁹ An example of this ambivalence will be discussed in the section about the differences between ontological and functional perspectives within Adventism.

⁷⁰ Dederen, 'The Church', p. 542. It has been customary in Adventist literature to acknowledge the legitimate existence of both local and universal expressions of ecclesial community by undertaking a survey of the word *ekklēsia* in the New Testament writings and claiming that this term was used to designate the assembly of believers at a local level, but also in a supra-local context (that is, in regions, worldwide - as known at the time). Assuming that this was the case in Apostolic times, Adventists use this as biblical grounds for embracing the totality of local churches as well as the need for a more universal expression of the body of Christ. Other Christian authors adopt similar arguments. See, for example: Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007), p. 94.

⁷¹ Dederen, 'The Church', p. 542.

⁷² Matthew 18.20 is a text that Adventist and other Protestants routinely quote to support their thesis that the local church indeed represents the real expression of the universal church. See, for example, Volf, *After Our Likeness*, pp. 135-37.

the kind of paradoxical formulations put forward by Dederen vanishes, and a very different picture emerges.

This is nicely illustrated by what took place during the sixtieth General Conference session of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, held between 2 and 11 July, 2015 in San Antonio, Texas. One of the items on the agenda was a vote on the following policy question: 'Is it acceptable for division executive committees, as they may deem it appropriate in their territories, to make provision for the ordination of women to the gospel ministry? Yes or No.'⁷³ By a margin of 1,381 'no' votes to 977 'yes' ones, and with five abstentions, a secret ballot ended a five-year long process of 'vigorous and sometimes acrimonious debate'.⁷⁴ To the disappointment of many, the majority of the delegates turned down a motion that would have allowed each division of the church to adjudicate the case for itself. Immediately after the vote, General Conference president, Ted N. C. Wilson, appealed to church members 'to unite in the mission of the church'.⁷⁵ He did so by reiterating a well-known Adventist conviction that the voice of the majority of delegates represents 'the voice of God' that the church, including all its numerous divisions, unions, conferences, local churches and members, should humbly obey.⁷⁶

This top-down approach, while firmly defended by the reversionist Adventists, immediately provoked strong reactions in many members from those cultures that are

⁷³ See the official news website of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist church: <<http://news.adventist.org/all-news/news/go/2015-07-08/delegates-vote-no-on-issue-of-womens-ordination>> [accessed: 01/01/2016].

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ For further exposition of the nature of the authority of the General Conference in session that Elder Ted Wilson clearly assumes, see the following sources: Ellen White, *Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 260; Ellen White, *Sermons and Talks*, vol. 2, p. 159; George E. Rice, 'The Church: Voice of God?', *Ministry*, (December 1987) <<https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/1987/12/the-church-voice-of-god>> [accessed 01/01/2016]; Adventists, *Church Manual*, pp. 29–30.

not accustomed to an authoritarian model of government (the United States, Canada, Australia, and the majority of European countries). Sensitive to the cultural values that affirm individual freedom, diversity, justice, and gender equality, representatives of progressive Adventism stood dumbfounded by a decision with which they are now expected to fully comply within their own contexts.⁷⁷

The argument against local churches proceeding on their own regarding the ordination of women turns, ecclesiologically, on the principle that the body of Christ is one. The temporal and ontological priority is, consequently, given to the global church rather than to its local expressions. According to them, the church is, first and foremost, one church, and then many churches. What they fail to see is the element of diversity intrinsic to the type of unity that is inaugurated by the work of Christ and His Spirit. Treating the global church as the primary entity, they require conformity from the local churches, which are expected to yield their individual judgements and interpretations to the doctrinal and administrative resolutions made by the universal body of believers.

The fact that this decision is considered as binding worldwide, regardless of the manifold cultural, social and religious differences within the denomination, reveals more clearly than any other action or statement, the prevailing theological and administrative priorities with which Adventist members operate. In other words, they assume the centralized concept of church and therefore view its global expression as the

⁷⁷ The official website of the journal of the Association of Adventist Forums, *Spectrum*, was replete with the wide range of reactions to this event in San Antonio (<www.spectrummagazine.org>).

primary entity. In the context of the present study, this and several other similar decisions point to the pneumatological deficit described in previous chapters.⁷⁸

It is proposed in this thesis that the divide between Adventist theological ideals (as expressed by Dederen) and administrative reality can be reduced by acquiring and implementing a more Spirit-sensitive theological outlook. Along with some of the greatest mainstream *communio* ecclesialogists, such as John Zizioulas and Yves Congar, Adventists could discover that viewing this conundrum from the perspective of the church's participation in the life of the Spirit would equip them more adequately for dealing with the tensions between the local and global embodiments of the church.⁷⁹

Adventists could find it enriching to engage in a Spirit-sensitive discourse in which the local church derives its wholeness (catholicity) from the participation of its members in the life of the Spirit, which in turn unites them with God and other believers in the body of Christ.⁸⁰ At the same time the account should also affirm that, by means of the same union with the Spirit, the community of believers transcends its local and temporal bounds. While embracing the full ecclesial status of a local church, this outlook also maintains that individual churches are not founded and do 'not grow in a vacuum or without close ties with one another'.⁸¹ The invitation to the local church

⁷⁸ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Christology: A Global Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), p. 110; Congar, *The Word and the Spirit*, p. 110. It seems appropriate to note here that members of those Christian traditions that include a strong theology of sacraments would at this point argue that ordination, precisely as representing Christ sacramentally to people, is not something that can be varied locally. It is like water for baptism, or bread and wine for the Eucharist; it is just given. Adventists, however, operate (or at least claim to operate) under a different set of assumptions about the nature of the rite of ordination.

⁷⁹ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, pp. 274–75. Congar, *I Believe*, 2, p. 26.

⁸⁰ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Source of Life: The Holy Spirit and the Theology of Life* (London: SCM Press, 1997), pp. 89–102.

⁸¹ Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, pp. 134–35.

is not to submit to a higher authority, but rather to see itself as an intrinsic part of a larger communion of churches.

Viewing the Spirit as the essential contact point between the church and God, as well as a necessary intermediary in the relationships among the believers themselves, Adventists might find a more promising theological basis for embracing the Spirit-generated unity of the global church, while maintaining the variety and richness of spiritual life manifested in the local communities.⁸² By taking this theological path, Adventists might be able better to conceptualize the administrative cohesion that they are trying to achieve. Not only might this outlook provide a more coherent rationale for their existing ecclesial practices (the four-tier supra-local structure); it might also open up new ways of appreciating the fullness of ecclesial unity in both its global and its local expressions.⁸³

(III) MINISTRY

Zizioulas, Congar, Volf, and Moltmann have made it clear that without recognizing the constitutive character of pneumatology in both Christology and ecclesiology one cannot appreciate the importance of the local church in ecclesiology.⁸⁴ Neither can the structure of the local church or its simultaneity with the universal church be properly justified theologically without referring to pneumatology. The same applies to the issue

⁸² For further discussion, see: Bruinsma, *The Body of Christ*, pp. 97–98.

⁸³ 'Particular church and universal Church are in a relation of mutuality; they are perichoretically in one another. This means that the structure of the Church cannot be grasped by secular categories, and belongs to the realm of mystery. "She [the Church] can only function through a miracle because of the work of the Holy Spirit.'" See, McDonnell, 'The Ratzinger/Kasper Debate: The Universal Church and Local Churches', p. 230. McDonnell's statement contains the quotation from Kasper, 'Auf Neue Art Kirche Sein', p. 43.

⁸⁴ Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, pp. 132–33.

of church ministry. As seen in the section on church structure, ‘the church grows and thrives through the charisms of the Spirit’ given to its members.⁸⁵ The gifts of the Spirit, therefore, form the bases for determining the mode of personal and communal ministries within the church, as well as for understanding the ways in which they intersect in local and supra-local contexts.

The Spirit, by bringing about and constituting the body of Christ, is at the same time the source of its oneness and multiplicity.⁸⁶ Only in him can these two dimensions of the church's being be completely realized. He, as the personal and living principle of ecclesial communion, not only ‘inspires a rich diversity of charisms but also brings all persons and all local and particular churches into communion with one another’.⁸⁷ Such a communion of ‘persons of every time, place, race, and culture’,⁸⁸ according to Elizabeth Teresa Groppe, is possible only through the One who is ‘unique and present everywhere, transcendent and inside all things, subtle and sovereign, able to respect freedom and inspire it’.⁸⁹ Elaborating on Congar's insight, she goes on to claim that

No human person [...] could ever unify people in the boundless manner of the Spirit of God. No human institution or human law could secure this unlimited communion. No human being could make of many persons one body without annihilating their unique individuality and personhood. Ecclesial communion is a mysterious act of grace that comes from above — from God through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit.⁹⁰

This view assumes that human individuals can be and are in fact actively involved in contributing to ecclesial *koinonia* through their cooperation with the Spirit. In this way,

⁸⁵ Groppe, *Yves Congar's Theology of the Holy Spirit*, p. 105.

⁸⁶ Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, pp. 180–97.

⁸⁷ Groppe, *Yves Congar's Theology of the Holy Spirit*, p. 106.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 106–07.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 107; Congar, *I Believe*, 2, pp. 17–18.

rather than being simply a static and inflexible institutional form that 'absorbs new members that are homogenized to a common mold', the church is a living *koinonia* that 'grows dynamically as each person and each local community contribute [their] gifts to the service of others'.⁹¹

In view of this it can be deduced that Congar's insistence on ecclesial diversity is rooted in 'the transcendence of the infinite, incomprehensible, and inexhaustible God', on the one hand, and in 'the unique personhood of everyone who receives the Spirit of God', on the other.⁹² Any genuine interpretation of a 'delicate way of communion'⁹³ therefore supports the notion that 'there will never be one hymn that exhausts God's glory, one prayer that captures God's mystery, or one theology that explains God's economy'.⁹⁴ In other words,

Communion is precisely unity without uniformity, the harmony or symphony of diverse voices. There is nothing more sublime, nothing more concrete.⁹⁵

Overall, one can confidently state that diversity and communion are not opposed. They both have their ultimate source in the Spirit of God who is the 'guarantee both of that communion and of the diversity of the gifts'.⁹⁶ Diversity, therefore, 'should never degenerate into division' when exercising various ministries within the church. Neither should unity suppress the Spirit-originated varieties of the modes of communal service.⁹⁷

⁹¹ Groppe, *Yves Congar's Theology of the Holy Spirit*, p. 107.

⁹² *Ibid.*, pp. 107–08.

⁹³ Congar, *I Believe*, 2, p. 17; Groppe, *Yves Congar's Theology of the Holy Spirit*, p. 108.

⁹⁴ Groppe, *Yves Congar's Theology of the Holy Spirit*, p. 108; Congar, *Diversity and Communion*, p. 40.

⁹⁵ Yves Congar, *Espirit De L'homme, Espirit De Dieu* (Paris: Cerf, 1983), p. 54.

⁹⁶ Congar, *The Word and the Spirit*, p. 116.

⁹⁷ Groppe, *Yves Congar's Theology of the Holy Spirit*, p. 108.

These two complementary aspects of the Spirit's work in the church — unification and diversification — should at all times be seen as the basis for regulating the somewhat imperfect situation in the present-day community of believers who struggle to find ways in which individual gifts can be exercised for the benefit of the whole body. Even external ecclesial authority should be seen through this perspective, as a legitimate ecclesial means that exists to facilitate 'the spiritual finality of personal union with God' and to enable space for the uniqueness of personhood to be fully expressed and achieved in the context of community.⁹⁸

SOME SHORTCOMINGS IN THE ADVENTIST APPROACH TO *CHARISMATA*

The insight presented above speaks eloquently to the situation in which Adventists currently find themselves. For the sake of illustration, I shall now highlight several dominant misrepresentative trends involving the way in which Adventists handle their internal ecclesial ministries and modes of communal service. The first distortion — the habit of prioritizing and elevating the type of gifts that contribute most directly and explicitly to the proclamation of the 'present truth' — results from their herald-based missional outlook. Thus, Adventists tend to show the highest esteem for those few members who are able to articulate and share the message verbally in an influential and eloquent way. The rest of the church remains somewhat passive and its members assume the roles of spectators. Such an arrangement, in turn, often produces the culture of the personality cult, with members attending services featuring a specific individual, identifying themselves and their faith through that person, or quoting that

⁹⁸ Ibid.

member's opinion as authoritative merely because his or her gift as an evangelist is seen as a 'higher' one.⁹⁹

Another illustration of the *charism*-related distortion often perpetuated in Adventist circles is the artificial dichotomy created between ordained and non-ordained ministry. In spite of Adventists' continual attempts to embrace a diversity of ministries, the tendency to regard the non-ordained gifts as somehow less essential is still present. The division between paid and voluntary positions in the church can also contribute to the prolongation of such divisions and feed into the general passivity of lay members.

Such a hierarchical understanding of the (allegedly gift-based) positions in the church fosters another damaging trend — viewing different ways to serve the church as a set of positions that forms a distinctly structured career-ladder. People who have been successful in carrying out the duties of one or another function are often considered worthy of being 'promoted' to a position on the 'next level' of the hierarchy. In such cases, the person's prior services and reputation are given more consideration than their Spirit-provided gifts, and the function they are then invited to perform in the church is seen more as a reward than as a fulfilment of their true calling. While these 'promotions' may be awarded as a result of theologically ill-informed but generally good intentions, such structures also provide fertile soil for the more strategic manipulations of power familiar to any institutionalized groups — religious or not — such as intentional careerism, elitism, nepotism and various forms of corruption.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ There are many television evangelists who are highly esteemed by a large number of Adventists. Many among those evangelists have their own independent ministries and privately established educational centres. A good example is Doug Bachelor and his Amazing Facts independent ministry (www.amazingfacts.org).

¹⁰⁰ Knight, *Adventist Mission*, pp. 30–32.

Rather than prolonging the list of distortions that come about due to deficient understanding of the nature of charismata and their mutual interplay within the body of Christ, it is proposed here that Adventists can overcome some of these tensions if they decide to develop a more solid and balanced theology of spiritual gifts. By now it has become clear that the ministries and relations in the church are founded pneumodynamically and that the nature and extent of the Spirit's manifestation through us in the form of *charismata*, has a direct bearing on the way in which the believers' communal life in Christ is structured. The question that remains to be addressed is: How can one understand the nature and role of charismata from the perspective of the work of the Spirit?

TOWARDS A MORE BALANCED THEOLOGY OF MINISTRY

The writings of modern ecclesiologists, such as Congar, Volf, Fiddes and Moltmann, suggest five essential characteristics of the *charismata* that are especially significant for shaping the structure of the community of believers.¹⁰¹ These need to be understood as regulative theological principles that should be given an important role in any sustained theory of the church's ministry or its modes of communal service.

1. The first principle affirms that all the charismata in the church are a direct result of divine actions through the Spirit. They are, by definition, the manifestation of the work of Spirit in the believers.¹⁰² This means that authentic spiritual gifts presuppose something over and beyond human agency. Although there have been many

¹⁰¹ Some of the resources consulted include: Moltmann, *The Church*; Bradford E. Hinze and D. Lyle Dabney, *Advents of the Spirit: An Introduction to the Current Study of Pneumatology* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2001); Volf, *After Our Likeness*; Rahner, *The Spirit*; Küng, *The Church*.

¹⁰² I Cor. 12.7. Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, pp. 113-48.

human attempts to simulate and manipulate the work of the Spirit by producing counterfeit gifts, genuine gifts are always the result of an act of God in some distinctive and proper sense. Even though drawing a clear distinction between the *charismata* and other talents, skills and abilities is not always easy, charisms do stand out for two main reasons. They are elevated gifts, endowed by the Holy Spirit exclusively for God's glory and for the spiritual edification of human beings. This extraordinary manifestation comes solely as the outcome of a special divine intervention.¹⁰³

Understanding that the spiritual gifts are the manifestation of the God's presence in and through us has three important corollaries for the understanding of Adventist ministry, both local and supra-local. Firstly, this understanding clearly differentiates the church (as a community that fully relies on *charismata*) from other, secular, institutions. Secondly, it shapes the way in which the church should manage its ministries — never manipulating or forcing responsibilities or positions, but always recognizing the work of the Spirit. Thirdly, this direct manifestation of the Spirit through the gifts provides the community with an experience of the fullness of Christ and thus makes the church a participant in the revelation of God.¹⁰⁴

2. From this, the second principle follows. It acknowledges the Spirit as the sovereign distributor of spiritual gifts.¹⁰⁵ The church should not be seen as merely a society of like-minded individuals, created and organized by man. Rather, the Holy Spirit should be confessed as the one who assumes the decisive role, not only in creating the community but also in deciding who will possess which gift to use for the

¹⁰³ For a very nuanced and insightful description of the nature of talents and spiritual gifts, see: Fiddes, *Participating in God*, pp. 268–70; Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, p. 183.

¹⁰⁴ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, pp. 228–29.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 231–32.

common good. In this the Spirit's work is comparable to the wind. He breathes wherever he wants (John 3.8). Nobody can predict, control or manipulate his work. While this principle appears self-evident to many Christians, it is only when applied consistently to various aspects of the church's ministry that its far-reaching implications can be perceived more clearly.

For instance, as the only sovereign originator of the spiritual gifts, the Spirit may decide to become manifest through people we least expect to be gifted. When he does so, no human being should try to hinder his work by limiting the scope of usefulness of any gifts on the basis of gender, race, culture, age, nationality or ethnicity.¹⁰⁶ Bowing to the Spirit's sovereign decision to commission certain individuals to fulfil a specific ministry, the church should do everything in its power to ensure that their calling and giftedness is publicly affirmed and embraced by the body as a whole.¹⁰⁷

It follows that the church, in its search for the person to be appointed to a certain role within the church's structure, should seek resolutely to make its decisions solely on the basis of the individual's God-given charisms. The members' respect for the sovereign nature of the Spirit's authority should be seen in their determination not to allow their ties to family or friends, their political affiliation, or prejudices of any kind to distract them from positioning the right person in the right place at the right time to fulfil their God-given calling within the body of Christ.¹⁰⁸

It should also be made clear that although some forms of routinization of charism are inevitable, the Spirit can also choose to replace or withdraw the charism exercised

¹⁰⁶ Moltmann, *The Source of Life*, pp. 97–102.

¹⁰⁷ Bertil Wiklander, *Ordination Reconsidered* (Bracknell, UK: Newbold Academic Press, 2015), pp. 285–97.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

by a given individual when he finds it necessary. The ecclesial body should always be willing to update and revise its organizational structure according to circumstances of this kind. The moment the church begins to focus all its energies on maintaining its conventional institutional forms and fails to follow the dynamic guidance of the Holy Spirit, it ceases to function as a living organism. Like the human body without breath, it withers. While the institutional aspects of ecclesial life are necessary if the community is to maintain its existence over a lengthy period of time, they should always be treated as subservient to the dynamic activity of the Spirit.¹⁰⁹ If the church fails to preserve a balance between its institution and its spontaneous sensitivity to the Spirit's work, it may eventually reach a state of being *incurvatus in se* — a point at which the institution no longer exists to support the mission and the task of maintaining the institution becomes confused with the very mission of the church.¹¹⁰ To prevent this from happening, complete openness to the quiet, unobtrusive and unimposing guidance of the Spirit is required of the church in discerning who the right person is for any particular task at a given time.

3. The third principle with important structural implications for the community of believers is that all believers in Christ are endowed with the gifts of the Spirit.¹¹¹ The type or number of gifts received may vary from member to member, yet they all have the privilege of participating in the dynamic and vibrant manifestation of the Spirit through these gifts. This universal distribution of gifts defies any attempt to franchise the Spirit and present him as the exclusive property of a select few. There is no spiritual elite in

¹⁰⁹ In the discussion about the nature of church structure, George Knight has become one of the key Adventist voices pointing to the negative aspects of an overly institutionalized approach to the charismatic structure of the church. See, Knight, *Adventist Mission*, pp. 30–32.

¹¹⁰ Jenson and Wilhite, *The Church*, p. 51.

¹¹¹ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, pp. 229–31.

Christ's body. There is no aristocracy of the Spirit — people who have unchallenged, exclusive rights and powers over others. Each of the members is given the manifestation of the Spirit, says the Apostle Paul, for the common good.¹¹² If the *charisms* are universally distributed among the congregation, there can be no members without them. Furthermore, there can be no categorization of members into those who serve and those who are served in the congregation. Everyone is responsible for the life of the church and should, therefore, actively participate in the charismatic ministry to other believers and non-believers.¹¹³

Obviously, this principle coincides with the Protestant, or (better said), apostolic principle of the equal inclusion of all, known as the priesthood of all believers. Building his understanding of ecclesial relations on this pneumatic basis, Volf rightly claims that the church is a 'polycentric community', within which the reality of the priesthood of all believers is fully embraced.¹¹⁴ Each member of the congregation enters into communion with Christ by faith and, in so doing, receives from God's Spirit the authority and ability for ministry.¹¹⁵ In this way, the Spirit constitutes the church because every member serves others through his or her spiritual gifts.¹¹⁶

As noted above, Adventists have held the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers as one of their 'cardinal beliefs' throughout the denomination's history.¹¹⁷ Yet,

¹¹² I Cor. 12.7

¹¹³ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, pp. 230–31.

¹¹⁴ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 224.

¹¹⁵ This comes to the Christian as a one-time general call to ministry. Yet this general call becomes individually specific as a result of the gifts received and the tasks and situations one finds oneself involved in as part of daily life. Volf, *After Our Likeness*, pp. 228–29.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 226–28.

¹¹⁷ Edwards, 'Priesthood of Believers', p. 1; Charles Thangaimodzi, 'A Historical Study Towards the Seventh-day Adventist Theology of Priesthood of All Believers' (master's dissertation, University of Wales, 2009).

it seems that this doctrine has nevertheless not been fully understood and expressed. A study by Rex Edwards reveals that

Seventh-day Adventists, in general, have interpreted this doctrine to mean only that every believer has free and direct access to God without the necessity for the intermediation of a human priesthood. While this interpretation is certainly true, it is only half the meaning of this doctrine. What we have failed to understand adequately is that the priesthood of believers also teaches that every Christian is a priest or minister and thus has a ministry to perform.¹¹⁸

In order for this principle to become alive again in the growingly institutional Seventh-day Adventist church, certain changes need to take place. Rex Edwards claims that this principle will be fully realized in the practice of the church only

if the 'non-clergy' are willing to move up, if the 'clergy' are willing to move over, and if all God's people are willing to move out.¹¹⁹

4. The fourth principle expresses the general orientation of spiritual gifts. According to the Pauline vision, charismata are always other-centred.¹²⁰ This means, as various *communio* theologians have also noted, that a person who has received a genuine spiritual gift should not use it for the purpose of self-aggrandizement or for the fulfilment of private, selfish ambitions and goals. The mark of the true gift of the Spirit is that it turns an individual from self-centeredness to other-centeredness.¹²¹ It points away from itself towards Christ and other believers.¹²² In this way it draws its owner and other people into a closer union with Christ and, by doing that, plays an active part in personal and communal edification, serving the common good (See I Corinthians 12.7). Given such a vision of the *telos* of charisms, one can establish criteria for

¹¹⁸ Edwards, 'Priesthood of Believers', pp. 1-2.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 11.

¹²⁰ Thiselton, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 84.

¹²¹ Kärkkäinen, *Pneumatology*, p. 33.

¹²² George E. Rice, 'Spiritual Gifts', in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. by Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald Publishing Association, 2000), pp. 617-18.

distinguishing between proper and improper uses of the gifts and the personal and communal domains, as well as between authentic and counterfeit gifts. The community can thus better test the spirits and determine whether they are indeed from God. (See I John 4.1).

5. The fifth characteristic of charisms that has a significant bearing on church structure and ministry affirms the interdependent nature of spiritual gifts.¹²³ Faithfulness to the apostolic vision requires the establishment of structures that provide a space where the balance between an individual and the corporate body can be achieved. The affirmation of the unity of the church through its diversity is presented by various metaphors and images in the New Testament, but especially through the profound reality of the 'Body of Christ' (for example, in I Corinthians 12–14 and in Romans 12). According to this vision, each gift is irreplaceable and unique and should therefore be allowed to have a bearing on the structuring of the common life of believers, locally and globally.

So that the gifts can be exercised in an orderly manner, however, leaders must be appointed who will assist the members in finding, developing and using their gifts in ways that are beneficial to all. Those leaders should not form a class of officeholders who stand apart from the community and rise above it to lord over it, but should function in a relationship of interdependence with their fellow believers.¹²⁴ This interdependent structure requires the participation of everyone in the decision-making processes and recognizes the limits to individual authority and rights, which, when exercised with no regard to the community, can lead to anarchy or fragmentation. This

¹²³ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, pp. 231–33.

¹²⁴ Dederen, 'The Church: Authority and Unity'.

specific kind of interrelationship cannot be created overnight, but requires the constant effort of learning how to be and act as a person-in-communion.

Although the principles submitted here may appear somewhat sociologically naïve, and in general idealistic, they are indisputably valuable, if only as pointers towards a set of goals.¹²⁵ This specific set of chosen principles is meant to be more illustrative than comprehensive in its scope. Further revisions and additions are not only desirable but also necessary.

These principles will not, on their own, generate clear solutions to the problems that arise in the life of the church. Nevertheless, the recommendation that their importance should be acknowledged theologically represents a step forward in Adventist theology. Their differentiated vision of how God's grace and authority works in the church can develop the balanced account of ministry needed in Adventism today, both locally and globally.

(IV) INTERPRETATION

Adventism's logocentrism generates controversies regarding the communal interpretation of divine truth as revealed in Jesus Christ through Scripture. Traditionally, Adventists have affirmed the prominent and unique role of Christ's Apostles, to whom the task was given to proclaim and hand on in full integrity their first-hand witness to God's self-presencing in the person of Jesus Christ.¹²⁶ For that purpose, Christ promised them a special gift, the gift of a Spirit who was to remind them of his words and deeds and lead them into a fuller understanding of truth. By

¹²⁵ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 257.

¹²⁶ Raoul Dederen, 'The Church: Authority and Unity', 2–3.

doing this, Jesus assigned to the Apostles a special role within the church. Not only were they given the authority to be faithful witnesses to the embodied Word of God Jesus Christ — but also to be the authoritative interpreters of it. It is upon the 'rock' of their authoritative testimony that the church is built (Cf. Matthew 16.16–18).¹²⁷

Adventists also claim that once the Apostles, inspired by the Spirit of God, put their oral message into written form, the authority that characterized the former was also attached to the latter. The new documents came to be regarded as equal in authority to the Old Testament Scriptures, which also point towards the personal revelation of Jesus Christ.¹²⁸ In the ensuing years, the church, led by the Holy Spirit, acknowledged and recognized the sacredness of these books and put them together to form the New Testament 'canon'. Richard Davidson, an Adventist scholar writing in the field of Adventist hermeneutics, adapts the words of Geisler and MacKenzie when summarizing the Adventist position on the role of the early church in the Spirit-led process of canonization. He argues that

the church did not determine the canon, but *discovered* it; did not regulate the canon, but *recognized* it; the church is not the mother of the canon, but the *child of the canon*; not its magistrate, but its *minister*; not its judge, but its *witness*; not its master, but its *servant*.¹²⁹

Adventists claim, then, that the collected canon stands as the means through which God exercises his authority and rules among and over his people. According to this view, through the sacred canon the apostolic (and prophetic) voice can still be heard over generations. It has served as the ultimate standard against which the church has

¹²⁷ Ibid, 4.

¹²⁸ Fernando L. Canale, 'Revelation and Inspiration: Method for a New Approach', *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, 31 (1993); Bemmelen, 'Revelation and Inspiration'.

¹²⁹ Davidson, 'Interpreting Scripture'.

aligned its deeds. In the light of the canon believers have interpreted and made sense of their experiences of the presence and work of the Spirit among them. Finally, based on the canon, the church shapes its actions and its communal life in God.¹³⁰

With the deaths of the Apostles, the primitive Christians lost immediate contact with the first-hand apostolic witnesses of Christ's life on earth. Although the apostolic legacy was passed on through their writings, which continued to be highly respected among the early Christians, the interpretation of their written witness (and tradition), as became evident, was not immune to various distortive influences. As a result, the following questions remained to be urgently addressed: Who will now have the authority to make decisions about the right interpretation of the Scriptures? Who will fill the vacuum left by the death of the Apostles? Will the apostolic office remain alive through their chosen successors? If not, whose responsibility will it be to interpret the Bible?

Since the Apostles did not adjudicate this issue conclusively, at least not in a way that could be interpreted unequivocally and unambiguously by succeeding generations of Christians, the stage was set for the emergence of a multiplicity of possible solutions to this hermeneutical quandary. With the passing of centuries, it became clear that the way in which this vital question about the true interpreter is answered determines one's understanding of the nature and domain of the church's responsibility before God and the world.

Addressing this question, the first and most foundational thesis around which Adventists have built their understanding of the nature of the exegetical process is the

¹³⁰ George W. Reid, 'Preface', in *Understanding Scripture: An Adventist Approach*, ed. by George W. Reid (Silver Spring, MD; Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2005), p. xi.

conviction that the only true interpreter of the Scriptures apart from Jesus is the Holy Spirit, whose role is to continue to teach and enlighten the people of God. After all, it was under his influence that inspired human authors wrote the Bible, both the Old and the New Testaments. Who else could offer a better interpretation than the Spirit? It is through him that we again hear the voice of the Lord Jesus explaining the Bible to us, as he did to his first disciples. Only through the Spirit of God can the mind be illuminated, enlightened, and prepared to find in the prophetic and apostolic writings an exposé of God's will, and to interpret it truthfully.¹³¹

Once the Spirit is placed in the forefront of the discussion about the dynamics of the interpretative process, a question is posed about how he mediates the divine truth to human beings. Following the Protestant emphasis on the 'priesthood of all believers' — boosted even further by the individualistic way of thinking of the Enlightenment period — Adventists have insisted that all genuine believers are given the gift of the Spirit to be able to discern the meaning of God's written word. It is thus the prevailing opinion that every individual, as a self-sufficient and autonomous unit, could reach a full and perspicuous interpretation of the scriptural content at any given time, under the exclusive guidance of the Spirit.¹³²

Only when faced with the rise of theological pluralism, quite destructive to the unity of the believers (in the 1880s), did Adventists start to think more intentionally about various pragmatic measures that can ensure the unity of faith within the church.

¹³¹ Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, 'A Matter of Interpretation', *Biblical Research Institute Release*, (2006) <<https://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/materials/bible-interpretation-hermeneutics/matter-interpretation>> [accessed 02/04/2016].

¹³² Alberto R. Timm, 'Historical Background of Adventist Biblical Interpretation', in *Understanding Scripture: An Adventist Approach*, ed. by George W. Reid (Silver Spring, MD; Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2005), pp. 1-15.

They developed an elaborate system of hermeneutical principles and exegetical procedures for sound interpretation of the Bible that were to be respected by all its members.¹³³ Although initially very hesitant when faced with anything that looked like a creed or public confession of faith, as time passed, Adventists came to understand the necessity of expressing their beliefs in the form of 'Fundamental Beliefs'.¹³⁴ The purpose of these doctrinal articles was to protect the integrity of the Adventist interpretation of the Bible, express the communal faith consciousness of the movement, define its distinctive identity, inform and focus its message, strengthen the unity of the church and provide the basis for further explorations of the truth.¹³⁵

Another pragmatic measure for facilitating the common understanding of faith was the establishment of the Sabbath school system, which proved to be the most important factor in balancing various extremes of opinions, as well as in providing a space where the Bible could be read and interpreted in conversation with other believers.¹³⁶ The global expression of Adventist common interpretation of the Bible is most authoritatively voiced during the church's General Conference sessions, where the representatives of various denominational administrative areas around the globe have the opportunity to express, revise and vote on the statements of Fundamental Beliefs. Once voted, this document is regarded as a universally binding consensus of faith within the church.¹³⁷

¹³³ Davidson, 'Interpretation'; Floyd, 'Adventist Hermeneutics'.

¹³⁴ Richard M. Davidson, 'Interpreting Scripture: An Hermeneutical 'Decalogue'', *JATS*, 4 (1993); Ministerial Association, 'Fundamental Beliefs'; Adventists, *Adventists Believe*.

¹³⁵ Kwabena Donkor, 'The Role of the Statements of Beliefs and Creeds', *Journal of Adventist Theological Society*, 16 (2005); Kwabena Donkor, 'The Role of the Fundamental Beliefs in the Church', in *Message, Mission and Unity of the Church*, ed. by Ángel Manuel Rodríguez (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2013), pp. 287-302.

¹³⁶ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 'Sabbath School and Personal Ministries', <<http://www.sabbathschoolpersonalministries.org/sabbathschool>> [accessed 02/04/2016].

¹³⁷ Ministerial Association, *Church Manual*, pp. 29-30; Donkor, 'Fundamental Beliefs', pp. 293-302.

The need for communal interpretation was perceived relatively early in Adventist history, and some pragmatic measures and procedures for its realization have already been put in place. Nevertheless, Adventists have still not developed an adequate theological basis for their theory of ecclesial interpretation. As in other aspects of Adventist ecclesiology, the work of the Spirit as the one who illuminates the mind and heart is usually treated as being within the domain of the individual reader. Even though Adventists acknowledge that the community as a whole plays a significant part in the process of interpretation, the point is not stressed or developed.

It is therefore proposed in this thesis that Adventists should understand that every time the Spirit works within individual believers he also draws them closer to other believers, with whom they are joined in a close-knit web of relations that constitutes the body of Christ. Adventism needs to move beyond an individualist account of the Spirit's work in believers. The Spirit is the Spirit of *koinonia*, not the Spirit of fragmentation. Accordingly, the actions of the Spirit should *not* be seen in isolation from each other and potentially in contradiction, but rather as complementing each other. Whatever the Spirit does ultimately leads to a deeper union of believers with God and with others. His influence is always a community-forming and community-affirming one.

Though they may surely continue to emphasize the importance of individuals in reading the Bible, Adventists should also acknowledge that by baptizing the faithful in his Spirit, God envisioned this process of interpretation as being undertaken by the community of believers as a whole, not merely by some of its members. The task of discovering and interpreting the voice of God is so important that it could not be left in the hands of a few individuals. It takes many different minds, gifts, skills and

perspectives, working together, to apprehend the richness of God's revelation as stored in Scripture.¹³⁸

Given the coherence between all the actions of the Holy Spirit, Adventists will be able to conclude that the process of interpretation, in the human realm, will always involve rich and complex interaction between an individual and corporate interpretation.¹³⁹ While the Spirit does speak on the individual level, his voice is still most clearly heard in the voice of the community as a whole, a community that is gathered and maintained through the ecclesially constitutive process of reading, studying, applying and sharing the truth as found in Scripture. In other words, an enriched vision of the Spirit in the church can enhance Adventist theologies of interpretation, and provide a solid theological basis for explaining the nature, authority and role of the universal voice of the community. Specifically, in the Adventist context, this finds its fullest expression in the worldwide body of representatives called the General Conference.

While most Adventists would fully support the statement that the voice of God in interpretation is most clearly heard in the context of the General Conference session, there are significant gaps in the understanding of how, and according to what principles, this voice should be discerned in that group. This issue is clearly illustrated by the session held in 2015 and in particular by the vote on women's ordination (already mentioned, earlier in this chapter). The result of the vote was 1,381 against the

¹³⁸ Recently some Adventist authors have given a greater prominence to the communal aspect of interpretation of the Bible. See, for instance, Davidson, 'The Role of the Church in the Interpretation', pp. 323-43.

¹³⁹ A famous evangelical theologian, Clark H. Pinnock, offers a useful 'grid' for understanding the role of the Spirit in the process of individual and communal interpretation. See, for example: Clark H. Pinnock, 'The Work of the Holy Spirit in Hermeneutics', *JPT*, 2 (1993), 16-23; Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, pp. 215-46.

proposal to allow the ordination of women in those regions (Divisions of the church) where the idea has been welcomed, and 977 for the motion. In other words, the delegates were divided by roughly 60% to 40%.

This raised a number of questions: (1) Can and should this question be solved by imposing the interpretation of the Bible made by a relatively small majority on a rather large minority?; (2) What kind of input can and should the appointed committee of educated experts have had in the decision-making process, especially considering that after two years of collaborative effort on the question of women's ordination, the preliminary vote in the committee resulted in a different outcome from the final General Conference session vote? In fact, the voice of the committee was given no space and certainly no prominence in the discussions in the forum leading up to the final vote; (3) How should the example of the First Apostolic Council shape the way the church decides on issues of faith and church practice, keeping in mind that they were equally as attentive to the work of the Spirit in and through the Scriptures as to the Spirit's work among them (Cornelius's case)? Once again, Adventists seem to be plagued by their narrow and rather individualistic interpretation of *sola Scriptura* and by their lack of tools for discerning the work of the Spirit at communal levels.

As some key Adventist authors have pointed out, the decision made in San Antonio was not only a vote on church policy about women in ministry; it was perhaps even to a greater degree a question of hermeneutics.¹⁴⁰ It brought to the fore the acute need for Adventists to reconsider the role of community in the processes of

¹⁴⁰ The thesis that hermeneutics lies at the core of the Adventist ordination debate has been well established in a recent doctoral thesis: Jan Barna, *Ordination of Women in Seventh-day Adventist Theology: A Study in Biblical Interpretations* (Belgrade: Preporod, 2012).

interpretation, as well as the place in the body of Christ for people with special gifts of discernment and knowledge.¹⁴¹

The richer ecclesiology of participation proposed in this thesis, and the more differentiated account of authority that its pneumatological grounding enables, may enable Adventism to move beyond the kind of voting procedures seen in the 2015 Assembly. It might be possible to allow members who are endowed with the special spiritual gift of knowledge (or understanding) of faith and with the capability to express it in a coherent, relevant and meaningful way to and on behalf of other fellow believers, to be given a special role in the process of communal discernment.¹⁴²

This role should not be to think instead of others and prescribe the normative teachings that other believers should assent to in blind obedience. Instead the teachers' responsibility should be to listen to the wider body and discern the movements of the Spirit within, among and around the church. They should not have the last word in determining official teaching but should act as the facilitators who help the wider community to discover what that official teaching ought to be. The same teachers should not be the church's single authorities, but its ministers; not its masters, but its servants. The members as a whole should, in their decision-making processes, give both space and careful consideration to the voice of this teaching office.

This enrichment of communal reading in the form of a teaching office – obviously imagined rather differently from the Roman Catholic *magisterium* – may seem to some reversionist Adventists to be a direct attack on the *sola Scriptura* principle. The

¹⁴¹ For an insightful demonstration of what this participatory approach looks like when applied to the communal process of interpretation, see: Sinn, *Participatory Community*.

¹⁴² Other Christian traditions have dealt with this issue when talking about the magisterium. Michael A. Fahey, 'Magisterium', in *The Routledge Companion to the Christian Church*, ed. by Gerard Mannion and Lewis Seymour Mudge (London; New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 524–35.

claim in this thesis is, however, the opposite; it is a development that comes as a logical implication of *sola Scriptura*. The fuller elaboration of the role of the Spirit in the process of individual and communal interpretation requires one to be open to the totality of the Spirit's contribution to the life of the community. If the Spirit decides to edify the body of Christ by assisting the members' collective quest for truth by giving particularly enhanced discernment to some of these people, this should not pass unnoticed by the wider community. Of course the challenge that will arise will be one of determining the exact extent, role and level of normativity of the conclusions reached by the teachers of faith in relation to the personal faith of the believers. All sorts of risks are inherent within this kind of theory. However, this should not be an excuse for poor theological practice or for the neglect of this Spirit-generated ecclesial ministry.

Whether Adventists are ready to admit it or not, the reality is that some members are indeed more gifted, more skilled, and better trained than others in matters of interpretation of faith. Why not, then, provide a formal space for them to offer their gift for the edification of others? This does not automatically mean that the thinking of the remaining members will be seen as more outdated than it currently is. Everybody has the responsibility before God to search for the truth and understand it. However, God has gifted certain members of the church with particular wisdom and learning that can help the whole body to advance. Why should the church then shy away from acknowledging this aspect of God's work? In light of this conception of the communal dynamics of interpretation — which, in turn, comes as a direct result of seeing the

church as the Spirit-generated *koinonia* — it seems appropriate to attempt to reformulate the traditional individualistic approach to the *sola scriptura* principle.¹⁴³

To conclude, three complementary principles that should undergird a renewed Adventist theory of the reading of the scriptures can be identified. First, at 'the heart of the life of the church is a *personal* process, the individual person grasping the meaning of biblical texts for his or her own life'.¹⁴⁴ Second, the interpretative process is always a 'deeply *relational* process because it enables the person to relate to the subject matter of the texts, God, and invites the person to relate to all the faithful who share the same texts as the source of life'.¹⁴⁵ The establishment of the various ecclesial means for fostering a communal interpretation should thus stem from the convictions that diverse individuals committed to truth do need each other and that the community is the most adequate 'context within which various claims are continually tested and enriched'.¹⁴⁶ According to this view, Kinnamon is, right when declaring that the truth of divine self-disclosure

¹⁴³ Discussing the possibility of providing a joint ecumenical statement that would unite the evangelical and Catholic wings of Christendom in their expression of the *sola Scriptura* principle, Aleksandar Santrac states: 'The Holy Scripture is the divinely inspired and self-authenticated Word of God, received, recognized, generated and compiled by the Spirit-dwelt community of faith. It is interpreted by the same Holy Spirit who spoke through the prophets and the apostles and continues to speak through the historic apostolic Tradition and the teaching office of the Church. It is rightly appropriated only by spiritual and theological interpretation, and is experienced, heeded and obeyed by the living and worshipping people of God. It is the sole and unique criterion of truth and revelation of God, the *norma normans* of every single historical belief, tradition and practice and of all contemporary interpretations.' See Aleksandar S. Santrac, *Sola Scriptura: Benedict XVI's Theology of the Word of God* (Saarbrücken, Germany: Lambert Academic Publishing, 2013), p. 355. See also: Aleksandar S. Santrac, 'The *Sola Scriptura* Principle in the Current Debate', *JATS*, 24 (2013).

¹⁴⁴ Sinn, 'Hermeneutics and Ecclesiology', p. 589.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ Michael Kinnamon, *Truth and Community: Diversity and Its Limits in the Ecumenical Movement* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), p. 11.

is not simply pursued in isolation but is responded to and known within the realm of covenant relations, within the community of others who have heard God's Word and responded — in various ways.¹⁴⁷

This implies the third principle: every interpretative process occurring among genuine seekers of truth is always a *transformational* process involving interplay between the individual and the collective. As Sinn argues, '[W]here understanding occurs, there transformation takes place and something new takes shape.'¹⁴⁸ By devoting itself to the continual journey towards clearer understanding of divine truth as expressed in the Bible, the Adventist church, as a hermeneutical community, does not exist as a static religious organization. Instead, it stands as a space where the *viva vox evangelii* enables the on-going growth of its members towards the likeness of Christ.¹⁴⁹

This growth in Christ through ever-deepening communal participation in his Spirit and Word is not simply a spiritual or mystical phenomenon, invisible to the rest of humanity; it also has its visible manifestations. There are two major domains in which the effects of this complex interdependent process of transformative interpretation are most visibly seen. The first domain involves the realm of church belief as expressed through public statements of faith.¹⁵⁰ The second domain has to do with the way in which these beliefs translate into the church's praxis.¹⁵¹ By being immersed in this transformative event of personal and communal reading, the church is not only becoming better equipped for maintaining the integrity of apostolic teaching

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 10–11; Sinn, 'Hermeneutics and Ecclesiology', p. 589.

¹⁴⁸ Sinn, 'Hermeneutics and Ecclesiology', p. 589.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Michael Welker, 'The Spirit in Philosophical, Theological, and Interdisciplinary Perspectives', in *The Work of the Spirit: Pneumatology and Pentecostalism*, ed. by Michael Welker (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), pp. 231–32.

¹⁵¹ A very insightful interdisciplinary discussion about the relationship between hermeneutics, ecclesiology and ethics can be found in: Reinhard Hütter, *Bound to Be Free: Evangelical Catholic Engagements in Ecclesiology, Ethics, and Ecumenism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004); Hütter, *Suffering Divine Things: Theology as Church Practice*.

over time, but is becoming the organic part of that to which it witnesses — the revelation of God.¹⁵²

(IV) MISSION

The analysis of Adventist remnant-based ecclesiology in Chapter II reveals that Adventists have always understood themselves in relation to their mission to the world. This outward, missionary outlook profoundly shaped their concept of church, which was accordingly defined in terms of purely functional categories.¹⁵³ Though almost all the missionary initiatives of the movement were initially undertaken on an *ad hoc* basis, a more comprehensive and in-depth reflection on the relationship of the church and mission to the purposes of God in creating and restoring the world followed with time.¹⁵⁴

While this process of maturation in the Adventist understanding of the church's mission has already included the widening of earlier conceptions, there is still a long way to go before the denomination grasps the complex interface between the community of believers and the world.¹⁵⁵ How might the renewed pneumatological

¹⁵² It should be stressed that I am not actually proposing a solution to the problematic questions of how to go about interpreting the Bible; instead I am suggesting a richer theological interpretation of some of the key conflicts that accompany the transformative event of private and communal interpretation. It is argued that the development of a more comprehensive and vibrant pneuma-logic-dynamic theoretical outlook could indeed act as a promising theological framework for addressing some of the most urgent and pertinent issues that the Adventist community of believers is encountering on its journey towards a fuller understanding of truth.

¹⁵³ Rodríguez, 'Toward a Theology of the Remnant', p. 21.

¹⁵⁴ Schantz, 'Adventist Missionary Thought'; Damsteegt, *Foundations*, pp. 259–62; Hugh I. Dunton, Baldur Ed Pfeiffer, and Borge Schantz, *Adventist Missions Facing the 21st Century: A Reader* (Frankfurt am Main; New York: Peter Lang, 1990).

¹⁵⁵ For an official statement on the Adventist understanding of the nature and methods of mission, see: GC Committee, 'Mission Statement'. Some of the remaining challenges of Adventist mission are described in: Bjørn Ottesen, *Reaching Post-Christian Europeans* (Bracknell, UK: Newbold Academic Press, 2015); *Parochialism, Pluralism, and Contextualization: Challenges to Adventist Mission in Europe (19th–21st Centuries)*, ed. by David J. B. Trim and Daniel Heinz (Frankfurt am Main; New York:

understanding contribute to further enhancement of the Adventist theory and praxis of mission? Within the limits of the current project, we can consider only a few representative points: (1) the replacement of Adventism's traditional ecclesiocentric perspective on mission with a God-centred one, which finds its prime manifestation in the believers' whole-life participation in the triune work of God, (2) a major change in Adventist attitudes towards other Christians and non-Christians, (3) a widening of the scope of Adventist mission, and (4) the adoption and development of more communal and relational modes of outreach.

Perspective

The first enhancement, pertaining to changing the Adventist outlook on mission, is already on its way to being implemented in Adventist ecclesiological thinking. It has been widely accepted — at least in principle — that a distinction should be made between doing mission 'for God' and doing the mission 'of God'.¹⁵⁶ The former centres around the church's efforts and projects that aim to somehow assist God in spreading a specific message, while the latter insists that the church must simply join the already existing mission of God (*missio Dei*) and participate in it as fully as it can.¹⁵⁷ The traditional — church centred — approach fails to recognize that the ultimate agency behind mission is God and God alone. After all, the church itself was born as a result of, and in the context of, a prior divine initiative in the world.

Peter Lang, 2010); Jon Dybdahl, *Adventist Mission in the 21st Century: The Joys and Challenges of Presenting Jesus to a Diverse World* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1999).

¹⁵⁶ Ajith Fernando, 'God: The Source, the Originator, and the End of Mission', in *Global Missiology for the 21st Century*, ed. by William D. Taylor (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2000).

¹⁵⁷ Dybdahl, 'Missionary God', pp. 8-14.

Most Adventists have understood this over time and have begun, accordingly, to see themselves as the continuers and instruments of Christ's restorative end-time mission of preparing the world for the things to come.¹⁵⁸ Nevertheless, their Christ-centred approach has often been put into practice in such a way as to render them unaware of the immediate work of Christ through His Spirit within, through and around them. In this thesis, therefore, it is suggested that if Adventists truly are to learn how to participate in the entire work of the Triune God, they need to develop a new sensitivity to the movement of the Spirit both within and beyond the church.¹⁵⁹ Only then will they be able to articulate a full-fledged Trinitarian outlook that will enable them to perceive the *missio Dei*, and thus enhance their approach to mission. They will also be better equipped to deal with the complexities and challenges of contemporary culture and context.

Attitudes

The second change has to occur in Adventists' self-perception, especially in how they conceive their relations to others. This change affects the most foundational *attitudes* that have shaped the development of the movement's distinct identity. Adventist identity-formation has traditionally relied on defining and putting to the fore those theological areas in which the church differs from others.¹⁶⁰ The revisionist strand of Adventist authors has tried to make the denomination's members aware of their historical and theological continuity with other religious traditions, Christian or non-

¹⁵⁸ Damsteegt, *Foundations*, pp. 259–62.

¹⁵⁹ Kärkkäinen and Yong, *Pneumatological Theology*, pp. 225–27.

¹⁶⁰ Knight, *Identity*, pp. 55–89.

Christian.¹⁶¹ However, their emphasis on these common roots has often earned them criticism for being overly 'ecumenical', which is not usually considered something to be proud of in the Adventist context.¹⁶² Sadly, even today, attempts to become involved in on-going interchurch and interfaith ecumenical dialogues are regarded almost as apostasy by a large number of Adventist believers. This has mostly to do with their conceptualization of other Christian and non-Christian religions as the great 'Babylon' — a metaphor from the book of Revelation that, according to Adventist interpretation, describes a man-made socio-economic and religious entity.¹⁶³

While it is true that the Adventist movement has to a large extent outgrown its previous sectarian attitudes, there is still an on-going theological tension that characterizes Adventist assessment of the relationship between the true remnant church and the world.¹⁶⁴ On the one hand, it is emphasized that nobody who willingly opposes the core doctrinal corpus of Adventist distinctive beliefs known as 'the present truth' can be considered part of the same church of Christ. On the other hand, there exists the vague idea that even beyond the membership of the Adventist church there are a lot of 'honest souls' who still live in 'Babylon' and are called to come out from it and join the community of God's faithful ones. They form, according to Fernando Canale, the 'anonymous' (invisible) remnant, characterized by a general openness to what they know is true.¹⁶⁵ According to the Adventist interpretation, once faced with light from Heaven

¹⁶¹ Bruinsma 'Adventists and Other Christians', pp. 137-49.

¹⁶² For an analysis of the anti-ecumenical sentiment of the Adventist church, see: Bruinsma, *Seventh-day Adventist Attitudes toward Roman Catholicism, 1844-1965*; Beach and Beach, *Pattern for Progress*, pp. 100-09; Cosmas Rubencamp, 'The Seventh-day Adventists and the Ecumenical Movement', *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 6 (1969), 534-48; Schantz, 'Adventist Missionary Thought', pp. 144-86.

¹⁶³ Don Leo M. Garilva, 'The Development of Ellen G. White's Concept of Babylon in *The Great Controversy*', *Journal of Adventist Theological Society*, 18 (2007), 223-42.

¹⁶⁴ Bruinsma 'Adventists and Other Christians', pp. 137-49.

¹⁶⁵ Fernando Canale often uses this adapted Rahnerian nomenclature ('an anonymous Christian'). See Canale, 'On Being the Remnant', p. 134.

('the present truth' as preached by them), the true members of Christ's body will hear God's voice (John 10.27) and follow it. On this assumption Adventists base their entire missional mandate. Hence, the 'sheep' who are currently outside the 'fold' represent the main drive for Adventist engagement with other Christian and non-Christian world religions.¹⁶⁶

Given such a meagre and highly selective biblical rationale, it is no wonder that the Adventist relationship to non-Adventists tends to be predominantly conceived as one-directional, meaning that one engages in an extensive conversation with others only for the sake of converting them to 'the present truth'. In this process, Adventists rarely ever expect to learn something new from their conversational partners. Ironically, this attitude goes directly against the movement's early practice of adopting everything that is true, wherever it is found.¹⁶⁷

In this area, a good example for Adventists to follow would be that of the Second Vatican Council. This council has been instrumental in opening up the Catholic Church to the modern world and in promoting a more appreciative attitude towards other religious traditions.¹⁶⁸ An especially influential document, that became the model for subsequent ecclesiological and missiological formulations, is known as *Lumen Gentium* (LG).¹⁶⁹ It introduced the new phrase 'subsists in' (*subsistit in*) for the purpose of clarifying the relationship of the Catholic Church to the wider entity of the body of

¹⁶⁶ This statement represents an allusion to Jesus's words in John 10.16. Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, 'God's End-Time Remnant', *Adventist Review* (2009) <<http://archives.adventistreview.org/article/2993/archives/issue-2009-1534/god-s-end-time-remnant>> [accessed 01/04/2016].

¹⁶⁷ Cosmas Rubencamp, 'The Seventh-day Adventists and the Ecumenical Movement', *Spectrum*, 2 (1970), 14-15; Francis D. Nichols, 'Why We Cannot Join', *Review and Herald*, 142 (1965).

¹⁶⁸ See the 'Preface' to Richard R. Gaillardetz, *The Church in the Making: Lumen Gentium, Christus Dominus, Orientalium Ecclesiarum* (New York: Paulist Press, 2006).

¹⁶⁹ *Lumen Gentium*

Christ. This helped Catholics to navigate successfully between two ecclesiological extremes, so that now they neither shed the distinctive religious identity of a particular community of believers as they attempt to achieve a more meaningful, inclusive and lenient dialogue with other Christian and non-Christian conversational partners, nor define the church's communal identity in an excessively exclusivist manner.¹⁷⁰

To avoid the same extremes, Adventists could, for instance, adopt both the amended version of the *LG* nomenclature, as well as its inclusive theology of mission that undergirds the famous paragraphs of the Vatican II document, *Lumen Gentium* (article no. 8). Along with *LG*, Adventists could acknowledge that the wider entity of the body of Christ, while transcending the bounds of any particular individual denomination or ecclesial group, still *subsists in* a concrete, organized and visibly identifiable church — in this case, the Adventist denomination.

In addition, Adventists could also incorporate into their theology of mission a basic acknowledgment that, although the church is indeed erected by Christ as 'the pillar and mainstay of the truth',¹⁷¹ there are still 'many elements of sanctification and of truth' that can be found 'outside its visible structure'.¹⁷² By this statement, Adventist theologians, like those of *LG*, can maintain the balance between saying that they are the only true earthly expression of Christ's church (exclusivist position), or claim that all religious bodies are equally viable manifestations of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church of God (pluralist position). These extra-ecclesial elements of sanctification and truth, within this renewed outlook, should be seen as God's gifts to his Pilgrim People,

¹⁷⁰ The meaning of the phrase 'subsists in' has been widely debated since Vatican II. See Fernando Ocáriz, 'Christ's Church Subsists in the Catholic Church', <<https://www.ewtn.com/library/Doctrine/subsistit.htm>> [accessed 01/04/2016].

¹⁷¹ I Timothy 3.15

¹⁷² *LG*, article 8.

given with the intention that they should be the forces 'impelling toward catholic unity'.¹⁷³

Without elaborating further on the merits of this ecclesiological solution, it can be affirmed that this formulation — which clearly represents something of a committee compromise and maintains the element of imprecision proper to ecclesiological writing — could be valuable for Adventists in the context of their discussion about the visibility or invisibility of the church. It also expresses well their claims about the trans-denominational character of God's scattered remnant community, in addition to the need for joining the body of believers that is to be visibly manifested before the end-time. By striving to be the fullest visible expression of ecclesial *koinonia*, the prophetic Seventh-day Adventist community can, according to this approach, become a universal instrument for gathering the whole of humanity under God in preparation for Christ's Second Coming (Revelation 14 and 18). This statement, while affirming the distinctive role of Adventism in the world at large, does not deny that there are also other avenues that God might decide to use for the sake of bringing the whole of humanity and of the world under his headship.

That said, is it easy to see how a more nuanced account of the workings of the Holy Spirit beyond the visible structures of the Seventh-day Adventist church could contribute towards this truly ecumenical and universal vision of believers' participation in God. The notion of extra-ecclesial movement by the Spirit not only provides a theological rationale and motivation for a more thorough and multi-directional

¹⁷³ Ibid. Some other examples of an appreciative approach which recognizes good in other Christian churches is present in: George Vandeman, *What I Like About the Lutherans, the Baptists, the Methodists, the Charismatics, the Catholics, Our Jewish Friends, the Adventists* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1986); Stefan Höschele, 'From Mission Comity to Interdenominational Relations', in

dialogue with other religious traditions; it also demands such an engagement so that Adventism can be true to its calling to be the visible expression of *koinonia* in God, who was, is and will always remain the God of all.¹⁷⁴ It is only if Adventism decides to open itself up to the work of the Spirit within and through those outside its membership that it can continue to actively learn from them, and, in so doing, grow in its understanding of and participation in the truth of divine revelation.

Scope

The quest to participate in the extra-ecclesial movement of the Spirit might also lead to a recognition of the Spirit's movements that are manifested in the domains of politics, ethics, economics, culture, and ecology.¹⁷⁵ The traditionally perceived area of Adventist mission might thus become far wider. Instead of focusing only on what might be identified as 'religious', the Adventist community might develop an interest in and appreciation of God's activity in other spheres of human, and indeed non-human, existence.¹⁷⁶

The church's missionary role is not just proclamation; it extends to a wide range of its members' personal and corporate initiatives as instruments and servants for the betterment of the world as a whole.¹⁷⁷ Adventists could be enabled to understand what

Exploring the Frontiers of Faith, ed. by Børge Schantz and Reinder Bruinsma (Lueneburg, Germany: Advent-Verlag, 2009), pp. 400–01.

¹⁷⁴ Veli-Mati Kärkkäinen, "'How to Speak of the Spirit among Religions': Trinitarian Prolegomena for a Pneumatological Theology of Religions', in *The Work of the Spirit: Pneumatology and Pentecostalism*, ed. by Michael Welker (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), pp. 47–70.

¹⁷⁵ For the prospective literature to be consulted in construing such a vision, see the footnotes to the section 'Spirit around us' in Chapter V.

¹⁷⁶ Fiddes, *Participating in God*, pp. 172–73; José Comblin, *The Holy Spirit and Liberation* (London: Burns & Oates, 1989), p. 113; John V. Taylor, *The Go-between God: The Holy Spirit and the Christian Mission* (London: SCM, 1972), pp. 50–52.

¹⁷⁷ For a good example of an Adventist attempt to tackle these issues, see: Zdravko Plantak, *The Silent Church: Human Rights and Adventist Social Ethics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998).

the Apostle Paul meant when he talked about the cosmic scope of the church's ministry (Ephesians 3.10). This Spirit-enabled participation in God through the mysterious body of Christ is much wider and greater than any human conception of it can ever be; it involves the entire universe.

Mode

The prime focus of the Adventist movement is to proclaim the present truth in preparation for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.¹⁷⁸ This kind of self-understanding of church and mission, as argued by Paul M. Collins, is

rooted in particular epistemological and hermeneutical understandings of the reception and dissemination of truth claims. Mission is understood to entail a cognitive process whereby certain claims are transmitted, received and accepted.¹⁷⁹

However, this needs to be supplemented. The existing herald-based missional paradigm must also include an understanding of church mission in terms of expanding *koinonia*. This relational approach, in which 'faith, hope and love are communicated by the grace of God to bring in God's kingdom of justice and peace, through interpersonal relations and fellowship', should not be deemed a contradiction to the traditional proclamatory model, but instead seen as an organic enrichment of it.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁸ GC Committee, 'Mission Statement'. As mentioned earlier, this coincides with the herald model in Jenson and Wilhite, *The Church*, pp. 40–44. Recently, however, there has been a move towards a more holistic perception of mission. See, for instance, Wagner Kuhn, 'The Need for a Biblical Theology of Holistic Mission', in *A Man with a Vision: Mission*, ed. by Rudi Maier (Berrien Springs, MI: Department of World Mission, Andrews University, 2005).

¹⁷⁹ Paul M. Collins, 'Ecclesiology and World Mission/*Missio Dei*', in *The Routledge Companion to the Christian Church*, ed. by Gerard Mannion and Lewis Seymour Mudge (New York; London: Routledge, 2008), p. 624.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 624–25.

The relational vision of the nature and mission of the church, which has been often, and in a variety of ways, reiterated in the current study, promotes a very different model of divine revelation that includes, yet goes beyond the corpus of doctrinal beliefs proclaimed by the church. It involves the community of believers itself. Needless to say, seeing the church as organically part of any account of revelation changes everything. The ecclesial *koinonia* suddenly becomes not only the means towards a better organized and more efficient spreading of God's kingdom, but also a real, albeit imperfect demonstration of what this kingdom is.

This renewed Adventist interpretation of the organic connection between revelation, the church's being and its mission makes the church an essential part of the Adventist theology of the Divine Word. This organic interplay, in turn, represents the core of what any true Christian community is all about — revealing God to the world. The acceptance of the church as not merely the means to this end, but also as in one sense a manifestation of this end, has major implication for Adventists' perception of the nature, and the mode and scope of their mission in the surrounding world, moving them decisively beyond the false dichotomies that are all too often expressed when talking about what the church is, says and does, what it proclaims and what it embodies.

More obviously needs to be said. But it has, I hope, been established that the retrieval of a full Trinitarian theology of the church will transform Adventist understandings of the church's mission in complex and multi-layered ways. The first task that Adventists need to undertake in order to resolve their tensions regarding mission is to broaden their Christ-centred theological perspective so as to make space

for a rich interplay between the Spirit and the church in the context of God's mission in the world.¹⁸¹

(V) REFORM

In his book *Called to Communion*, Ratzinger discusses true reform of the church in terms of *ablatio* (removal), which further results in *congregatio* (gathering). To formulate this fundamental idea more vividly he borrows a metaphor from Michelangelo, who in turn drew upon the ancient insights of Christian mysticism and philosophy. 'With the eye of the artist', Ratzinger explains,

Michelangelo already saw in the stone that lay before him the pure image that, hidden within, was simply waiting to be uncovered. The artist's only task — so it seemed to him — was to remove what covered the statue. Michelangelo considered the proper activity of the artist to be an act of uncovering, of releasing — not of making.¹⁸²

'Rightly understood', claims Ratzinger, 'this image contains the prototypical model of church reform'.¹⁸³ The church, consisting of human beings, frail and imperfect as they presently are,

will constantly have need of human constructions to help her speak and act in the era in which she finds herself. Ecclesiastical institutions and juridical organizations are not intrinsically evil; on the contrary, to a certain degree they are simply necessary and indispensable. But they become obsolete; they risk setting themselves up as the essence of the Church and thus prevent us from seeing through to what is truly essential. This is why they must always be dismantled again, like scaffolding that has outlived its necessity.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸¹ On the lack of Adventist social engagement, and for some suggestions on how this area of Adventist mission can be enhanced, see, for instance: Calvin B. Rock, 'The Church and Society', *Biblical Research Institute Release*, <<https://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/sites/default/files/pdf/Church%26Society.pdf>> [accessed 01/04/2016].

¹⁸² Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, p. 141.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 141-42.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

Given its present sinfulness and finitude, the church *in via* is always in need of reformation — or, as the famous ecclesiological dictum declares, *ecclesia reformata semper reformanda* or *semper purificanda*.¹⁸⁵ In order to allow its Sculptor to free it from the 'dross that conceals the authentic figure' of its being so that the image of Christ can shine radiantly through it, the church needs to be continually willing to change.

This process of change, in which the historical community of believers is expected to learn and unlearn many things, is at times very painful and can seem meaningless. However, it is necessary if the church is to allow the divine to penetrate and bring about *congregatio* — the *koinonia* that all human beings long for — the community where human personhood is fully realised in the context of self-giving love that enables complete reciprocal exchange of all that is good and pure, the community where 'all that is mine is yours' (Luke 15.31; cf. John 17.10).

Nevertheless, the purpose of this constantly-renewed *ablatio* (removal) is, to use Ratzinger's words, to allow the *nobilis forma*, 'the countenance of the bride, and with it the Bridegroom himself, the living Lord, to appear'.¹⁸⁶ Only by committing to on-going *ablatio* in all the domains of its communal life — including its faith, morality, lifestyle, structures, and other aspects of its life — can the church break 'the barriers of finitude' and thus create 'the open space that reaches into the unlimited'.¹⁸⁷ Only then can it become the foretaste or the visible sign of the future glory, freedom and plenitude that the world longs for.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁵ See *Lumen Gentium* 15.48, and *Unitatis Redintegratio* 3.6 in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. by Austin Flannery (Northport, NY: Costello, 1975/1986).

¹⁸⁶ Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, p. 142.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ Here it should be noted that, in contrast to some extreme Protestant views, Ratzinger's account stresses that there is a church with a genuine theological significance and identity; and, implicitly,

This process of ecclesial renewal can assume many different modes and shapes. Yet, as Nicholas Healy convincingly argues, there is a basic pattern that every appeal for change resembles. According to him, every reform starts with the premise that there is an ideal (x) to be achieved and that the current church somehow falls short of it (y). Once the discrepancy between x and y occurs, a recommended route or reform strategy is proposed in order for the church to move from point y to x.¹⁸⁹ While on paper this might look like a simple and straightforward process, easy to manage, the everyday reality of a church that struggles to remain faithful to its calling reveals quite a different story.

Usually the complications arise from the fact that there are always different and often conflicting perceptions of (1) the nature of the ecclesial ideal (x: the authentic core of the church's being); (2) the way in which the ideal is visibly manifested in the concrete day-to-day life of the church; (3) the alleged nature of the church's present failure (y: 'apostasy'); and (4) the best strategy for 'putting things right' and lifting the church up to its desired condition.

Nowadays, the worldwide Adventist church faces exactly this kind of complexity. Although everyone agrees that the church needs to be urgently reformed and revived if it is to remain faithful to the essence of its theological identity and fulfil its divinely given mission, there is no consensus on how this should be done.¹⁹⁰ The members seem

there is a difference between appropriate and inappropriate *change*. For a more detailed explanation of how the proposals for church reformation function, see: *Ibid.*, p. 144.

¹⁸⁹ Healy, *Church*, pp. 30–32.

¹⁹⁰ A very strong appeal is frequently sent to the worldwide Adventist church by its GC representatives to reform and revive the church. See, for instance, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 'Revival and Reformation', <<http://www.revivalandreformation.org/>> [accessed 28/03/2016].

to be divided regarding all four of the points listed above. The lack of unified vision hinders members' efforts to maintain the cohesion of their *koinonia*.¹⁹¹

The fact that Adventism is so ill-prepared to face current challenges and undergo necessary changes seems almost ironic, given its past. As explained in the first chapter of this study, Seventh-day Adventism started as a reforming, or more precisely, restorative initiative by North-American lay members of Protestant churches who were driven by the desire to change existing ecclesial structures, teachings and lifestyles in order to accord more fully with God's original plan for the church, as expressed in the early apostolic community. They thus saw themselves as part of a divinely initiated movement, which was at its core a movement of reformation. Allegedly, their prime task was to continue the process of purification of the church's faith and praxis that had begun with great reformers such as Luther, Zwingli, Calvin and Wesley, but had never been fully completed. Neither will it be until Christ comes again.¹⁹²

Yet, in spite of Adventism's general openness to the notion of change, this reform-driven movement currently faces a growing confusion that is created by the enormous number of proposals and suggestions that emerge as to what kind of reform should be implemented. These proposals can be divided into six major categories, depending on the strand of Adventism that they come from. They include so-called 'historical', 'evangelical', 'cultural', 'fundamentalist', 'ecumenical', and 'progressivist' reform submissions.¹⁹³ These fall into three fundamental subgroups: 'reversionists', 'revisionists' and mainline Adventists. The *principium divisionis*, or a criterion for

¹⁹¹ See the section on unity in Chapter I.

¹⁹² For a very insightful analysis of the Adventist principal (restorationist) theological project, see: Lukic, 'The Anatomy of Dissension'.

establishing their difference, is defined in relation to the basic orientation of their reform proposals, which include different convictions about whether one needs to look towards the past or the future, or perhaps towards both, when searching for the ideal model to be reached by the present-day community of believers.

Reversionists tend to look into the past in their search for the perfect ecclesial model (such as the first human couple in Eden, the nation of Israel, the early apostolic community or Adventist pioneers), whereas revisionists claim that the true manifestation of the ecclesial *koinonia* is still hidden in the future and is thus yet to be embodied (in the grand eschatological gathering described in the book of Revelation). The prime task for the community of believers, according to revisionists, is to stay open to the 'signs of the times' in order to discern the progressive historical guidance of God who speaks to his people not only through the Bible and ecclesial tradition but also through the avenues of culture, science, philosophy and any other form of human intellectual and experiential endeavour, as well as through nature.

This thesis is aimed at presenting the mediating position — the 'mainstream' stance — that somehow bridges the gap between the two aforementioned strands and suggests ways of seeing them as one organic whole.¹⁹⁴ The reversionists are right to stress the church's collective memory in which the past words and actions of Jesus Christ are preserved as a present reality through the working of the Spirit.¹⁹⁵ Moves towards new

¹⁹³ This taxonomy is given only in a very tentative manner, in view of the many equally good ways of characterizing the multiplicity in Adventist self-perception. For a more detailed overview of other possible approaches, see: Knight, *Identity*; Patrick, 'Contextualising Recent Tensions'.

¹⁹⁴ On the importance on simultaneously maintaining a view of the past, the present and the future when reforming the church, see the discussion in the concluding chapter of Knight, *Adventist Mission*, pp. 158–59.

¹⁹⁵ For a discussion about the contribution of the 'collective memory' to the process of mediation of social identity, see John P. Bradbury, *Perpetually Reforming: A Theology of Church Reform and Renewal* (London; New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. 171–200.

interpretations that might 'assail the identity of the church's memory and replace it with a different mentality', should always be received with caution and scepticism.¹⁹⁶ It is, indeed, crucial for the church to find adequate ecclesial mechanisms and measures that will assist her in maintaining continuity with the apostolic *koinonia* by handing over the fullness of apostolic *traditio* to the present and future generations, and by doing so with integrity (apostolicity).¹⁹⁷ In this process of transmission, Ratzinger rightly argues, 'compatibility with the base memory of the church', should be regarded as

the standard for judging what is to be considered historically and objectively accurate, as opposed to what does not come from the text of the Bible but has its source in some private way of thinking.¹⁹⁸

This, however, does not mean that the church has nothing to learn from 'the historically evolving currents of theology'.¹⁹⁹ Ratzinger continues his argument by saying:

Every new situation of humanity also opens new sides of the human spirit and new points of access to reality. Thus, in her encounter with the historical experiences of humanity, the church can be led ever more deeply into the truth and perceive new dimensions of it that could not have been understood without these experiences.²⁰⁰

Thus both Adventist strands — revisionist and reversionist — have something valuable to bring to ecclesial reform. They should not be perceived as mutually exclusive forces; on the contrary, their advocates should continue to engage in dialogue until they find a

¹⁹⁶ Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, p. 20.

¹⁹⁷ Bradbury, *Perpetually Reforming*, pp. 171–200.

¹⁹⁸ Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, p. 20.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

way to integrate their reform proposals. They complement each other; in their interdependence, they can help the church in its pursuit of divine plenitude.²⁰¹

Concerning ecclesial reform, this thesis thus proposes that there is a more promising route than the ones that have been taken so far. Adventism's concern for maintaining its memory of the past (reversionist) and its habit of looking with hope into the future (revisionist) can be combined in a way that helps maintain the freshness and vitality of the church today. Both contribute to ecclesial participation in the life of the Spirit.

The memory engraved in the church tradition is not dead and rigid, as is often suggested, but a genuine expression of the living movement of the Spirit in, through, and among the members of Christ's body. The movement's beginnings lie in the past, yet they are made present to the current generation *via* the trans-temporal and cross-spatial mediation of the Spirit of Christ. Yves Congar most eloquently expresses this dynamic, or *pneumadynamic* view of tradition. He distinguishes between Tradition and traditions, and by doing that he creates the basis for viewing the past in a self-critical, yet respectful way — something that is often lacking in the Adventist approach. By viewing the Tradition as the 'the outgrowth of Spirit-led reflection and spirituality of the whole people of God through the centuries', Congar manages to spell out an organic and fresh reformulation of the notion of tradition. His vision is different from and more spiritually penetrating than the ones developed by most of his contemporaries.²⁰²

²⁰¹ Rowan Williams has reflected on the notion of ecclesial change and the role of theology in it. He argues: 'The loyal and uncritical repetition of formulae is seen to be inadequate as a means of securing continuity at anything more than a formal level.' See, Rowan Williams, *Arius*, 2nd edn (London: SCM Press, 2001).

²⁰² Yves Congar, *The Meaning of Tradition* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004); Yves Congar, *Tradition & Traditions: The Biblical, Historical, and Theological Evidence for Catholic Teaching on Tradition* (San Diego, CA: Basilica Press, 1998).

Congar explains the process of handing over (Latin: *tradere, traditio*), a process that starts with *divine* transmission. God does not give only a set of doctrines or desired faith practices and rituals that are expressive of his will. Although these are indeed included, much more is encompassed by this particular divine gift; God the Father gives himself through the sending of his Son and of the Spirit. In this offering, claims Congar, the gift of divine life

is communicated to a great number of people throughout the world, and down the successive generations, so that a multitude of people, physically separated from it by space and time, are incorporated in the same unique, identical reality, which is the Father's gift, and above all the saving truth, the divine Revelation made in Jesus Christ.²⁰³

It is with this vision in mind that Congar can view the tradition as 'the sharing of a treasure, which itself remains unchanging', a 'victory over time and its transience, over space and the separation caused by distance'.²⁰⁴ Being ultimately the self-communication of God through which human beings are called to participate in the life of God, the Tradition deserves the church's utmost veneration.

This rich spiritual inheritance passed down from the Father in His Son, although age-old, continues to be fresh and alive. According to Congar,

It advances through history toward its final consummation, its development coinciding with that of believing and Christian humanity itself. It is born by living men who succeed one another, and at the same time it is born within them by a subject who transcends them: the Holy Spirit, the principle of communion, who effects the Church's unity throughout time as well as space.²⁰⁵

If understood against the backdrop of Congar's reflection, the reversionist attempt to be faithful to the past revelations of God no longer appears as merely the fear of change or

²⁰³ Congar, *Tradition*, p. 12.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

as the unbending and mindless repetition of what went before, a conservation of past ecclesial forms that have lost relevance in the present-day world. On the contrary, the fact that ecclesial memory conveyed via tradition represents the visible manifestation of the church's ever-dynamic participation in the life of the Spirit — the participation that encompasses its visible, structural, doctrinal and moral expression — has the potential to give the conservative perspective a more favourable position in the eyes of progressives.

On the other hand, the eschatological role of the Spirit, in which the 'taste' of the future is introduced in mysterious and incomprehensible, yet real ways into the life of believers, justifies the revisionist quest.²⁰⁶ In their attempt to continually update and refine church structures according to their most current understanding of the present and future expression of the Spirit's movement in both ecclesial and extra-ecclesial realms, revisionists often dismiss the past, failing to recognize it as a valuable guide to their communal identity.

They fear that if the church does not continually strive to be relevant it will become a 'past-oriented intellectual and/or social ghetto'²⁰⁷ and lose its contact with present needs and realities. Obviously, they are overreacting to the conservative agenda by presenting the past experiences and understanding of faith as somewhat inferior to their own.²⁰⁸ As a result, like the reversionists, the revisionists fall into the trap of defining the nature and basis of their reform proposal in a too anthropocentric and unnecessarily reactionary way.

²⁰⁶ Both Congar and Zizioulas insisted on the importance of Spirit's eschatological role.

²⁰⁷ Knight, *Adventist Mission*, p. 158.

²⁰⁸ For this to work, they have to further assume that their perspective is much better informed than the perspectives of their predecessors and that it can serve as a reliable norm for ecclesial reform

The Spirit-generated momentum for change, however, does not have to be defined as a contrast to any perceived 'golden age' of the church, past, present or future. Neither does it have to be seen as merely a human initiative. As Moltmann suggests,

The church's first word is not 'church' but Christ. The church's final word is not 'church' but the glory of the Father and the Son in the Spirit of liberty. Because of this the church, as Ambrose said, is like the moon, which has no light of its own or for itself. If it is the true church, the light that is reflected on its face is the light of Christ, which reflects the glory of God, and it shines on the face of the church for the people who are seeking their way to freedom in the darkness.²⁰⁹

What, then, can be concluded regarding the contribution of this Christ-centred vision of the transformative initiative of the Spirit among believers to the discussion about the nature of true reform? In particular, how does outlook inform Adventist theory of doctrinal renewal? Can it be used as a theological rationale that supports the dynamic Adventist vision of the nature of the church's advancement in the knowledge of divine truth over time?

Given the theological (*pneumatological*) outlook that has been presented above, and with awareness of the potentials and limits of human free will, one can deduce that the church's growth in truth is never 'a straight line heading forever upward', as some revisionists would suggest. Neither can it be described in reversionist terms, as the continual regression and devolution from earlier, more pristine, forms of Christianity. To make the process of discovering the truth a necessarily linear activity that operates according to pre-set lines of growth or decay is to assume a determinism which seriously abrogates the power of human choice.

Since human beings are deeply rooted in the complex processes that characterize the multifaceted and 'kaleidoscopic' nature of human history, overly simplistic

explanations of the ever-shifting social arrangements that, under various influences, overlay the church's *esse* cannot be accounted for by subscribing blindly to either 'evolutionist' or 'involutionist' determinist patterns (see Volf).²¹⁰ What comes later is not necessarily better than what is there now or what came earlier (the 'progressivist' understanding). Neither is what came earlier automatically better than what is there now or what will come later (the 'primitivist' position).

The church's progress towards the truth of divine revelation, while indeed led by the Spirit, is nevertheless a journey undertaken by human beings, imperfect and fallible as they are. The quest will therefore always include ups and downs, advances and setbacks. Because of this, there is an ongoing need for reform and for revival initiatives aimed at helping the church to renew its commitment to complete orientation towards the glory of God. Given the real and continual risks that the faith and life of the church will fail to conform to divine will, the church has historically seen the need for setting certain doctrinal and practical norms that govern its shared life and safeguard the authentic freedom of its members.

It is the role of the Spirit both to remind believers about the content of divine self-disclosure in the past — most sublimely expressed in the event of Jesus Christ — and to lead them towards a fuller understanding of the meaning of this and all future revelations of God in Christ (for example, see John 16.13). Hence any reflection on a reform of church doctrine must include these two aspects of the Spirit's work.

Once again, prominent exponents of *communio* ecclesiology, such as Volf, Moltmann, Zizioulas and Congar, can help Adventists embrace change and

²⁰⁹ Moltmann, *The Church*, pp. 19–20.

advancement in a way that reaches beyond without becoming trapped by the artificial divisions and dichotomies created by some of its reversionist and revisionist groups. Instead of dismissing the broader Christian tradition on the ground that human accretions and false teachings have infiltrated and distorted the purity of Christian faith over time, Adventists can rediscover the value and role of tradition in providing a resource for the growth in faith that they currently need. Since the promise of Christ includes the assurance that the Spirit will be sent to remind the church of its hope and purpose and to lead it into fuller knowledge, one cannot neglect the Spirit's work as an active agency in establishing the tradition of the past and maintaining its vitality throughout the ages.²¹¹

By maintaining the unity of all the manifestations of the Spirit's activity among them, as well as seeing them in continuity with the work of Father and Son, Adventists may therefore overcome some of the current impasses related to the issue of ecclesial reform. They can provide a more integrative and comprehensive vision that will help the global Adventist church to maintain its communal identity in the future. Alternatively, to use Ratzinger's words, Adventists might be able to discover God's initiative in Christ through the Spirit stimulating an *ablatio* (removal) that will indeed lead to *congregatio* (gathering). This will, in its turn, allow the *nobilis forma*, 'the countenance of the bride, and with it the Bridegroom himself, the living Lord, to appear'.²¹²

²¹⁰ For further exposition of this 'kaleidoscopic' understanding of human history, see: Miroslav Volf, *Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 84.

²¹¹ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 22; Yves Congar, *Tradition and the Life of the Church* (London: Burns and Oates, 1964).

²¹² Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, p. 142.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

At the root of Seventh-day Adventist ecclesiology lies the confidence that the church, based on the divine Rock, Jesus Christ, can never fail or vanish. It is 'spread out through all time and space, rooted in eternity, terrible as an army with banners'.¹ The gates of hell will not prevail against it (Matthew 16.18). Nor will it cease to be a dwelling place of God (Ephesians 2.22) in which his manifold wisdom is made known to the entire universe (Ephesians 3.10).

Adventists also believe that in the postlapsarian period of human history the church exists 'underground' — in the crevice between visibility and invisibility, perfection and imperfection, acceptance and persecution — scattered, although at times pulled together. Yet God has always had his 'remnant' people who, by surviving the satanic attacks of their age by his grace and providence, have stood as a sign of hope for this fragmented and dying world. This remnant receives its calling and mission directly from God and has the purpose of furthering Christ's work of cosmic restoration, which unfolds in various stages towards its final, future completion. At the moment, in the last stage of the cosmic battle between Christ and Satan, God's visible remnant people have as their prime task the proclamation of the last message of warning — the 'present

¹ C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters: Letters from a Senior to a Junior Devil* (Glasgow: Collins, 1989), p. 15.

truth' of the three angels of Revelation 14.6–12 — and of calling out from 'Babylonian captivity' the invisible remnant (the faithful ones who are currently dispersed and live under the exclusive guidance of the Spirit). Therefore, the task of the present-day remnant church, Adventists claim, is to be the vanguard of the movement towards the eschatological, long-awaited, universal summoning of God's faithful people that will find its climax in the events leading up to Christ's Second Coming.

Given such an apocalyptic and task-driven vision of the church, Adventists have tended to define their communal identity in a very functional way: they are heralds, or 'a herald community' called to go before their King and prepare the way for his imminent return by announcing the good news of eternal salvation to the world. Imbued with a sense of urgency, preoccupied with discerning and articulating the content of the message that they are called to proclaim, and concerned with finding the most appropriate and timely ways of communicating this message to the ever-changing world, Adventists have failed to grasp the complexity intrinsic to the realm of God's self-revelation. They have overlooked the original intention for the church, which is for it to be not only a messenger of the present truth, but also an inherent part of that truth, not only an instrument of proclamation, but also the embodiment of the divine realities to which it is witnessing.

Due to the lack of introspection that has accompanied the generally pragmatic and activist Adventist ethos, the church as a communal reality has been assumed to be, yet not regarded as, worthy of being a separate and distinct locus of their theological investigation. To make ecclesiology so prominent could, in Adventist eyes, mean taking away the focus from the imminence of the *Parousia* and from the church's important task of preparing the world for it. This kind of logic has led Adventists to neglect to

explore what it means for the church to be a communion of persons that is mystically united to God in Christ through the Holy Spirit. The unexpected delay of the *parousia*, and the numerical and territorial growth of the Adventist global community, have, however, made this kind of exploration essential if Adventists are to clarify tensions and impasses in the church's relationships internally, with other Christian bodies, and with the unchurched.

In the present thesis I have tried to fill this ecclesiological void. I have proposed that precisely in order to remain faithful to their *sola-tota-prima Scriptura* principle, Adventists need to recognize that the church as a believing community (*koinonia*) is not just a recipient of revelation; it is also a created participant in the life of the triune God. This proposal represents a major shift in Adventist perceptions of the nature of truth. Instead of talking about the truth merely in terms of propositions or information, Adventists should include the personal and communal dimensions of divine revelation. This reformed understanding of revelation (*koinonia* as truth), one that views the church as an active participant in the triune life of God, automatically widens the functional and remnant-based concept of church that has typically dominated Adventist ecclesiological self-description. It shifts the attention to ontological aspects — widening the spotlight from what the church does to what the church is.

For this purpose, my thesis makes use of *communio* ecclesiology, a mainstream Christian theological framework that has already been shown to meet this need. Seventh-day Adventists can supplement their current discourse about the nature of church by developing their own version of *communio* ecclesiology. This specific type of ecclesiology, which represents a 'major achievement of ecumenical consensus', describes

the church in terms of relationships.² Its primary aim is to give clear articulation to the dynamic interplay that exists between the persons of the Trinity (Trinitarian communion), human beings and the triune God (vertical communion), the members of the communion of the faithful (horizontal communion), the local and universal church, and the church and the non-church.

The inclusive and multilayered vision of *communio* ecclesiology is intended to embrace and safeguard the dialectical tensions that exist between essence and function, being and becoming, institution and community, doctrine and practice, individual and social, visible and invisible, local and universal, and indicative (*esse*) and imperative (*bene esse*). All these dimensions of ecclesial reality are woven together into a coherent conceptual system by the multivalent term *koinonia* (or its Latin synonym – *communio*), which represents the central axis or pivotal term of *communio* ecclesiology. By connecting the rich biblical and patristic tradition of the early Christian Church to the ecclesiological issues dominating contemporary ecumenical discussion, the notion of *koinonia* acts as a chief ‘interpretation-key and coherence criterion’ for the construction of a comprehensive systematic vision.³ It names a reality that must characterize the essence of church and revelation, while leaving space open for both the mystery of God and the possibility of further (and conflicting) theological elaboration.

Given the biblical, linguistic, historical, ecumenical, unifying, cultural, and systematic potentialities of such an approach, I have attempted in this study to open a discussion on the opportunities and prospects for creating an Adventist version of *communio* ecclesiology, and to demonstrate how it might assist the church by addressing

² Robert Jenson, ‘The Church as *Communio*’, in *The Catholicity of the Reformation*, ed. by Carl Braaten and Robert Jenson (Grand Rapids, MI, 1996), 1.

the tensions in the movement's relationships. The aim is to supplement, not replace the metaphor of the remnant in Adventist ecclesiology with the notion of *koinonia*. The claim is that the remnant people of God, now that the gathering has begun, inevitably are and must function as a community (hence the title: 'Remnant in *koinonia*').

Thus, if Adventists are to engage in a more serious ecclesiological exploration, they need to accept the prevailing contemporary consensus that 'the church is the *communio* of the faithful'⁴ as a formal theological principle, while, and, like other Christians, making further specifications in line with their own distinctive theological heritage and priorities. The elements of overlap and difference will open up the possibility of meaningful critical dialogue on ecclesiological matters between Adventists and other Christians.

Among the most important tasks of a distinctly Adventist ecclesiology are accounts of (1) how the church is maintained in the truth of revelation (a 'sanctuary-based system of interpretation' of the Bible), (2) how it foreshadows the eschatological destiny of all humanity under God (the proclamation of Three Angels' message from Revelation 14.6–12, an announcement that, among other things, includes the five pillars of the Adventist faith) and (3) the relationship between discipleship of Christ and relationship with God (especially in the context of Christ's pre-Advent cosmic ministry of restoration that commenced in 1844 and will climax in the event of *Parousia*). In these three respects, the Adventist account will differ from that of at least some other Christian churches. Only by integrating these three distinctive Adventist convictions — hermeneutical, eschatological and Christological — into a new

³ Rikhof, *The Concept of Church*, p. 229.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 233.

ecclesiological synthesis, can the Adventist interpretation of the concept of church as *koinonia* remain faithful to the genetic core of Adventist theological identity.

It follows that an Adventist *communio* ecclesiology will in some ways differ from its counterparts in the mainstream churches. The claim of this thesis is merely that Adventism can develop a Trinitarian ecclesiology of *communio* without violating its central convictions. This discourse will need to rely on what has actually been revealed about God's activity in the world, and, in particular, about his initiative in the making of the community. Unlike those accounts of church that begin with sheer speculation about the inner being of the triune God and then go on to build an ideal structural model that is to be imitated in the realm of human relations, the proposed framework is a participatory one — meaning that it stems from and is shaped by active human participation in the life of God as revealed in Christ and through the Holy Spirit.

By viewing the church as an active participant in the triune life of God, this approach starts with 'the Spirit-empowered works of God rather than the internal makeup of his being. It starts from below and works upwards, rather than starting from above and working downwards'.⁵ Karl Barth, although himself operating within a top-down approach, recognizes the legitimacy of this alternative way of doing theology:

There is certainly a place for legitimate Christian thinking starting from below and moving up, from man who is taken hold of by God to God who takes hold of man [...] one might well understand it as a theology of the third article [...]. Starting from below, as it were, with Christian man, it could and should have struggled its way upward to an authentic explication of the Christian faith.⁶

Gregory J. Liston, in his doctoral dissertation 'The Anointed Church: Towards a Third Article Ecclesiology', explains the main trajectory characterizing such an approach:

⁵ Liston, *The Anointed Church*, pp. 12-13.

⁶ Karl Barth, *The Humanity of God* (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1972), pp. 24-25.

In this movement from below to above, our theological reflection matches our discipleship. As we are drawn by the Spirit from our current fallen state into participation in the Godhead, so our theological reflections start from our current experience and knowledge (limited and tainted by creaturely mortality and sinfulness) and move upwards toward reflections on the nature and existence of God.⁷

So, for example, it is proposed that in developing an Adventist version of the participatory ecclesiology of *communio*, one should start by examining the nature and direction of the transformative movement of the Spirit within us, through us and around us. One should then move on from there to consider how, by means of our participation in the work of the Spirit, we are being incorporated in the pneumatic body of Christ, and through him united with God the Father. This Spirit-mediated-and-originated movement, from our imperfect and fragmented existence into the life of God, in which we are inextricably united with other fellow-believers (and the whole universe), is the basis of the church's *koinonia*. This approach — as demonstrated by the increasing number of theologians writing within various Christian denominations⁸ — 'holds great promise for theological insights'.⁹ This is so, especially in view of its triple emphasis on particularity, transformation and relationships.¹⁰

Although the indispensable role of the Spirit in the constitution of the church's *esse* is highlighted predominantly in the present dissertation, this is not done with the intention of replacing the existing Father-and-Son-centred accounts of the church within the Adventist context. The goal has been to address the 'Holy Spirit Deficit Disorder' that has affected the Adventist theological discourse for many years. It has

⁷ Liston, *The Anointed Church : Toward a Third Article Ecclesiology*, p. 13.

⁸ These include authors writing from the perspective of Roman Catholicism (Yves Congar, Ralph Del Colle, David Coffey), Protestant denominations (Lyle Dabney, Myk Habets, Gary Badcock, Clark Pinnock) and ecumenical traditions (Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, Amos Yong, Miroslav Volf, Steven Studebaker).

⁹ Liston, *The Anointed Church : Toward a Third Article Ecclesiology*, p. 14.

been done with the conviction that the attempt to look at the church through pneumatological lenses can indeed contribute to 'a profound perspective that has not been comprehensively pursued with depth and rigor' in Adventist ecclesiological explorations.¹¹ This approach, as described in Chapter V and illustrated in Chapter VI, has the potential to correct some of the dichotomies, over-emphases or under-emphases and intractabilities that have characterized past and present Adventist remnant-based ecclesiological reflections. It is especially appropriate and timely as a way of dealing with some of the key complications related to the issues of church structure, ministry, ordinances, mission, communal interpretation and reform.

The present thesis rests on the claim that, by giving a proper place to pneumatology within the broader stream of the Trinitarian participatory ecclesiological vision, Adventists could, to use Dabney's words,

bring together what we have so often let slip apart: worship and theology, service to God and service to God's world, the honouring of God's creation and the proclamation of God's redemption.¹²

To make sure that this proposal for further ecclesiological construction and integration is not yet another reactionary attempt that will — by being pursued apart from its wider theological context and treated solely on its own premises, while ignoring the contribution of other theological disciplines — result in a reductionist vision of the church, I am adamant that the effort be made with consideration to at least four regulative principles: (1) the principle of indivisibility (the activity of God in Christ through the Holy Spirit *ad extra* is always one and indivisible); (2) balance (equal attention should be given to the community-forming activity of each person of the

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 12.

Trinity); (3) comprehensiveness (the entire historical work of a particular person of the Godhead should be allowed to have a bearing on an ecclesiological discourse); and (4) ontological embeddedness (all divine actions *pro nobis* are *constitutive* for the church's *esse* and not merely accidental or peripheral).

Full adherence to these principles in the process of articulating the Adventist version of *communio* ecclesiology is necessary. While ensuring the adequacy of the theoretical account of the involvement of the triune God in the process of ecclesio-genesis, these principles — when applied properly — lead to a fuller understanding of the nature and scope of believers' participation in God. This vision, albeit somewhat idealistic, is necessary because the church, as the pilgrim community of God, is still 'under construction' and needs goals to strive towards. Once integrated into the ecclesiological account, they serve as basic guidelines, or correctives, which encourage and facilitate the church's attempts to reach a permanently improvised, delicate balance between the person and the community in the process of becoming one with God, in Christ, through the Holy Spirit.

This observation reveals one of the avenues for further research: a properly developed ecclesiology of *communio* has to recognize that its task does not end with examining the ecclesially constitutive work of God. Viewing the believers' communal life in God by referring solely to the church-forming initiative of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit does not do justice to the complex reality of the church's being. The discourse about divine initiative and action has to be broadened to include the ecclesial realms brought about by corresponding human response and reaction, but those questions are matters for another study.

¹² Dabney, 'Starting with the Spirit', p. 27.

The development of a mature, complete and systematic Adventist theology of church still lies in the future. Adventist ecclesiology is still in its infancy, and a collaborative, perhaps communal, academic effort to develop it is required. However, by offering a critical analysis of the ecclesiological *status quo*, and by suggesting some potential ways forward, this study may, I hope, encourage other Adventist scholars to pursue this line of reasoning further.

My dream is that this preliminary attempt to spell out the Adventist version of *communio* ecclesiology will reinvigorate, inspire, and equip Adventists' further quests for God's truth. Hopefully, the Adventist commitment to the right attitude (orthopathy), right belief (orthodoxy) and right praxis (orthopraxy) in the light of Christ's pre-Advent restorative activity, will lead the Adventist movement to discover the communal dimension of the truth they are searching for: This is the truth about the grace and wisdom of the Father who, through the immediate and non-mediated action of the Spirit, has drawn them into the body of Christ, and, by doing that, made them active participants in the triune life of God.

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