

## ECCLESIOLOGY IN SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL RESEARCH, 1995-2004: A BRIEF INTRODUCTION AND BIBLIOGRAPHICAL GUIDE

GERALD A. KLINGBEIL  
River Plate Adventist University  
Libertador San Martín, Argentina

*The Importance of Theological  
Reflection about the Church*

The term “church” can refer to an imposing building, whose architecture powerfully communicates something about how close or far away God resides from human beings.<sup>1</sup> “Church” can also be an abstract institutional entity—characterized by boards, commissions, synods, or assemblies—that makes and administers policy and plans for the future. However, “church” is, foremost, the way we live, pray, worship, study, dialogue, and work together. The “church” is made up of people, but it has been designed by God and reflects his presence.

Questions about ecclesiology, such as what constitutes the church and what type of organizational structures the church should adopt, have been addressed from various angles. One option is a sociological approach, which suggests that social change and cultural realities determine theological and ecclesiological realities.<sup>2</sup> A better paradigm, which will be

<sup>1</sup>The tendency to utilize architecture as a means of theological expression about a particular religious community or a certain deity is not only a characteristic of Christianity, but apparently represents a conscious strategy of religion throughout the ages. See, e.g., Martin Fitzenreiter, “Richtungsbezüge in ägyptischen Sakralanlagen oder: Warum im ägyptischen Tempel das Sanktuar hinten links in der Ecke liegt (Teil I),” *Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur* 31 (2003): 107-15; idem, “Richtungsbezüge in ägyptischen Sakralanlagen oder: Warum im ägyptischen Tempel das Sanktuar hinten links in der Ecke liegt (Teil II),” *Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur* 32 (2004): 119-147. Pertinent studies dealing with Israelite sacred architecture include Clifford Mark McCormick, *Palace and Temple: A Study of Architectural and Verbal Icons*, BZAW 313 (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2002); and John M. Monson, “The Temple of Solomon: Heart of Jerusalem,” in *Zion, City of Our God*, ed. Richard S. Hess and Gordon J. Wenham (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 1-22. Discussions of these tendencies to modern religious architecture can be found in Klemens Richter, “Heilige Räume,” *Liturgisches Jahrbuch* 48/4 (1998): 249-264; and Rainer Volp, “Space as Text: The Problem of Hermeneutics in Church Architecture,” *Studia Liturgica* 24 (1994): 168-177.

<sup>2</sup>See, e.g., Rolf J. Pöhler, who seems to argue the immense influence of social change and cultural realities in the theological discussion of Seventh-day Adventist theology (“Change in Seventh-day Adventist Theology: A Study of the Problem of Doctrinal Development” [Ph.D.

used as the basis for selection in this bibliographic review, is to evaluate and formulate ecclesiological principles with biblical exegesis and theological reflection.

This review of Seventh-day Adventist ecclesiology begins in 1995<sup>3</sup> with an important article "Church Authority: Its Source, Nature and Expression,"<sup>4</sup> which was released just prior to the 1995 General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists at Utrecht, Netherlands. The author, Raoul Dederen, who was at the time Professor of Systematic Theology at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, is considered to be the foremost living scholar of Adventist ecclesiology. Dederen's article, which called for a biblically based ecclesiology, examined the future of Adventist ecclesiology in light of the first church council held at Jerusalem (Acts 15:1-35). Dederen called for continued global unity, based upon the precedent set by the Jerusalem Council.

Dederen's article was especially significant in light of the General Conference agenda for 1995. A major issue of discussion and policy, argued heatedly prior to the 1995 General Conference session and which threatened the continued global unity of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, concerned the issue of the ordination of women to the pastoral ministry. This discussion involved not only practical and administrative questions, but also exegetical and theological issues.

From the outset, it should be clear that theological reflection about the nature of the church is not a subject reserved solely for specialists and theologians. Theological thinking is done by everyone who has contact with Scripture in the context of faith and, thus, is relevant for the entire church.<sup>5</sup>

dissertation, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, 1995]). See also the updated, published volume: idem, *Continuity and Change in Adventist Teaching: A Case Study in Doctrinal Development*, Friedensauer Schriftenreihe: Reihe A: Theologie, Band 3 (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2000). The danger of overemphasizing the sociological factor in doctrinal/theological development has been made in a critical review of the book by Sergio E. Becerra, review of *Continuity and Change in Adventist Teaching: A Case Study in Doctrinal Development*, by Rolf Pöhler, *DavarLogos* 1/2 (2002): 198.

<sup>3</sup>Mention should be made of Alberto Timm's important review of Seventh-day Adventist ecclesiology, which covers the period from 1844-2001. He covers the years from 1950-2001 in six pages and titles this phase "Challenged by Disrupting Voices." Cf. idem, "Seventh-day Adventist Ecclesiology, 1844-2001: A Brief Historical Overview," in *Pensar la iglesia hoy: Hacia una ecclesiología Adventista. Estudios teológicos presentados durante el IV Simposio Bíblico-Teológico Sudamericano en Honor a Raoul Dederen*, ed. Gerald A. Klingbeil, Martin G. Klingbeil, and Miguel Ángel Núñez (Libertador, San Martín, Argentina: Editorial Universidad Adventista del Plata, 2002), 283-302, esp. 295-301.

<sup>4</sup>Raoul Dederen, "Church Authority: Its Source, Nature and Expression," *Ministry Supplement* (May 1995): 1-10.

<sup>5</sup>Ekkehardt Müller, "Theological Thinking in the Adventist Church," *DavarLogos* 1/2

### *Method and Delimitations*

This bibliographic review will examine the following areas: the major theological academic journals published by Seventh-day Adventist institutions of higher learning; Th.D. and Ph.D. dissertations and M.A. theses, which deal with ecclesiological issues and are written at Seventh-day Adventist institutions of higher learning; and monographic studies on ecclesiology. The review will conclude with a brief assessment of the evidence. This review should not be understood to be an extensive bibliography of Seventh-day Adventist ecclesiology over the past ten years; rather, it is a helpful tool to spotlight a topic that requires more reflection, and exegetical and theological work, as well as dialogue and prayerful interaction. The review will exclude other important elements connected to ecclesiology, such as missions, church growth, church planting, or practical church leadership.

### *Journals*

*Andrews University Seminary Studies* (ISSN 0003-2980), a refereed journal published biannually by the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University, is the oldest Seventh-day Adventist academic theological publication.<sup>6</sup> However, during the past ten years the journal did not publish a single study on ecclesiology—an omission being amended by the publication of the present edition. A possible exception is a study by Denis Fortin, dealing with current perspectives on Petrine ministry and the issue of papal primacy.<sup>7</sup> While this is not necessarily a contribution to the formulation of a Seventh-day Adventist ecclesiology, it nevertheless contains important biblical and theological observations. Fortin argues against papal primacy and examines the larger hermeneutical and methodological issues involved in this discussion.

*Asia Adventist Seminary Studies* (ISSN 0119-8432) is an academic theological journal published annually since 1998 by the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies in the Philippines.<sup>8</sup> Two articles that make a contribution to ecclesiological thought in Seventh-day Adventism

---

(2002): 125-147. Müller mentions many substantial challenges to profound theological thinking in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

<sup>6</sup>For a brief history of the journal, see Karen K. Abrahamson, "A Brief History of *Andrews University Seminary Studies*: 1963-2003," *AUSS* 40 (2003): 165-168.

<sup>7</sup>Denis Fortin, "Current Perspectives on Petrine Ministry and Papal Primacy," *AUSS* 41 (2003): 199-214.

<sup>8</sup>It seems that the editorial team is a bit behind schedule, since the latest available issue is vol. 5 and dates to 2002.

are by Ronald Bissell, who asks if the characteristics of the eschatological, remnant church are visible in Seventh-day Adventism,<sup>9</sup> and by Enrique Espinosa, who discusses the question of authority and orthodoxy in the context of the early apostolic church.<sup>10</sup> Espinosa raises an issue that could definitely affect a Seventh-day Adventist ecclesiology, and which seems to be highly relevant in the larger context of cultural hermeneutics and postmodern concerns about *relevance*.<sup>11</sup>

*DavarLogos* (ISSN 1666-7832), a recent addition to Seventh-day Adventist academic publications, is published biannually by the Theology Faculty of River Plate Adventist University in Argentina.<sup>12</sup> It is a peer-refereed academic journal, with a representative international review board comprised of distinguished scholars who share a similar conservative outlook concerning the hermeneutics of Scripture.<sup>13</sup> Most of its published articles involve hermeneutical or specific exegetical studies, with the occasional study dealing with more practical church aspects. To date, the journal has not published any studies on ecclesiology; however, its sponsoring organization, River Plate Adventist University, sponsors ongoing and indepth research in this area, which will be discussed more fully below.

Beginning in 2001, the Instituto Adventista de Ensino do Nordeste, Brazil, began to publish the academic journal *Hermenêutica* (ISSN 1518-9724), which appears annually and contains biblical and theological studies and a section on book reviews. None of its four editions include any study dealing with ecclesiology.

The *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* is published biannually by the Adventist Theological Society. In 1996, Jack Blanco presented a

<sup>9</sup>Ronald D. Bissell, "Reflections on the SDA Church as the Eschatological Remnant Church," *Asia Adventist Seminary Studies* 4 (2001): 69-75.

<sup>10</sup>Enrique Espinosa, "The Principle of Authority and the Criteria of Orthodoxy in the Early Church," *Asia Adventist Seminary Studies* 4 (2001): 77-88.

<sup>11</sup>For a more in-depth discussion of cultural hermeneutics (i.e., cultural criticism) and its pervading influence in biblical and theological studies, see Gerald A. Klingbeil, "Cultural Criticism and Biblical Hermeneutics: Definition, Origins, Benefits, and Challenges," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 15/1 (2005), forthcoming.

<sup>12</sup>I must confess partiality here, since I am presently the editor of this journal. It has been published since 2002 and includes three complete years with a total of six issues published.

<sup>13</sup>E.g., Bill T. Arnold (Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, KY), David W. Baker (Ashland Theological Seminary, Ashland, OH), Lucien-Jean Bord (Abbaye Saint-Martin de Ligugé, France), Carroll R. Daniel (Denver Seminary, Englewood, CO), Craig A. Evans (Acadia Divinity School, Wolfville, Nova Scotia, Canada), Daniel Fleming (New York University, New York, NY), James K. Hoffmeier (Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, IL), and Elizabeth Ann R. Willett (Summer Institute of Linguistics International, Mexico).

well-documented study "The Church in the Light of Scripture," in which he discusses the biblical basis of the authority, unity, and universality of the church in dialogue with recent Catholic and Protestant thought.<sup>14</sup> In 1997, Gerhard Pfandl discussed the biblical concept of the "remnant" and its application to the Seventh-day Adventist Church.<sup>15</sup> In 1999, Pfandl again focused upon a particular distinctive feature of Seventh-day Adventist ecclesiology and evaluated, in light of Scripture, the attempts to unify the Christian church by the ecumenical movement. He suggests that scriptural unity involves faithfulness to the inspired Word of God and does not manifest itself in political or social manifestos.<sup>16</sup> In 2000, Ekkehardt Müller discussed the characteristics of the end-time remnant in the book of Revelation. After careful exegetical work, in which he defined seven distinctive characteristics, he suggests that the Seventh-day Adventist Church, although far from being perfect, bears the characteristics of the remnant of Rev 12-14 and "therefore represents God's end time church of the remnant."<sup>17</sup> In 2001, Müller offered a careful study of the ecclesiology of the book of Revelation<sup>18</sup> that also appeared in a slightly different form in the 2002 volume *Pensar la iglesia hoy*, which will be introduced in more detail below.<sup>19</sup> In 2002, Gerhard Pfandl tackled the issue of Israel and the church, focusing upon the increasingly popular notion that the Christian end-time remnant will have a Jewish counterpart.<sup>20</sup> Pfandl rejects this idea on the basis of the "one body" metaphor found throughout the NT.

*Spes Christiana* (ISSN 0935-7467) is published annually by Theologische Hochschule Friedensau in Germany.<sup>21</sup> Most issues are thematically oriented. The 1995 volume, "Church and World," contained three contributions that are significant for the present review. The discussion of unity and differences

<sup>14</sup>Jack J. Blanco, "The Church in the Light of Scripture," *JATS* 7/2 (1996): 1-22.

<sup>15</sup>Gerhard Pfandl, "The Remnant Church," *JATS* 8/1-2 (1997): 19-27.

<sup>16</sup>Gerhard Pfandl, "Unity—But at What Cost?" *JATS* 10/1-2 (1999): 184-190.

<sup>17</sup>Ekkehardt Müller, "The End Time Remnant in Revelation," *JATS* 11/1-2 (2000): 188-204, esp. 203.

<sup>18</sup>Ekkehardt Müller, "Introduction to the Ecclesiology of the Book of Revelation," *JATS* 12/2 (2001): 199-215.

<sup>19</sup>Ekkehardt Müller, "Introduction to the Ecclesiology of the Book of Revelation," in *Pensar la iglesia hoy: hacia una eclesiología adventista. Estudios teológicos presentados durante el IV Simposio Bíblico Teológico Sudamericano en honor a Raoul Dederen*, ed. Gerald A. Klingbeil, Martin G. Klingbeil, and Miguel Ángel Núñez (Libertador, San Martín: Editorial Universidad Adventista del Plata, 2002), 147-164.

<sup>20</sup>Gerhard Pfandl, "Israel and the Church," *JATS* 13/2 (2002): 15-29.

<sup>21</sup>I would like to express my appreciation to Stefan Höschele from Theologische Hochschule Friedensau, who in a speedy manner replied to some of my bibliographical queries.

in the early apostolic church, by Bernhard Oestreich,<sup>22</sup> attempts to answer the question of the relationship between unity and diversity. Johannes Hartlapp focuses, in a historical review, upon the use of the term “Babylon” in church history in general and in the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in particular,<sup>23</sup> while Johann Gerhardt favors the concept of mediation as the dominant church model.<sup>24</sup> Gerhardt’s contribution is particularly oriented toward sociological and pragmatic issues, rather than exegetical or theological considerations. In 2000, Edgar Machel reviewed the conceptual position of Seventh-day Adventist churches in the process of “Verkirchlichung” (i.e., becoming a church). He draws heavily upon sociological studies and assesses characteristics of “movements” and so-called “orthodox” churches, including ratios of churches/members/pastors and others.<sup>25</sup> An article published by Daniel Heinz in 2001 evaluated the tension between exclusivity and contextualization in the history of the German Adventist Church.<sup>26</sup>

The biblical-theological journal *Theologika* (ISSN 1022-5390) is published biannually by the Theology Faculty of Peruvian Union University in Lima, Peru, and is the second oldest academic journal (after *AUSS*) of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. None of the articles in *Theologika* deal specifically with ecclesiology, focusing instead upon particular exegetical, historical, missiological, or theological problems.

The final journal to be briefly reviewed is *Ministry* (ISSN 0026-5314), which—while not strictly an academic journal—focuses upon issues that are of theological and practical relevance to Seventh-day Adventist clergy. Due to its large circulation and the fact that many articles are translated and republished in regional ministerial journals in other parts of the world, it wields considerable influence. *Ministry* appears monthly, and each issue contains between 30 and 36 pages. I note four articles that discuss important aspects of ecclesiology from a Seventh-day Adventist perspective. In the July/August issue of 1995, coinciding with the General Conference session in Utrecht, Netherlands, Rex D. Edwards focused upon the nature and design

<sup>22</sup>Bernhard Oestreich, “Meinungsstreit und Einheit in der frühen Christenheit,” *Spes Christiana* 6 (1995): 14-25.

<sup>23</sup>Johannes Hartlapp, “Der Gebrauch des Begriffes ‘Babylon’ in der Kirchen—und STA-Geschichte in kurzer Übersicht,” *Spes Christiana* 6 (1995): 33-50.

<sup>24</sup>Johann Gerhardt, “Gemeinde als Vermittlungsinstanz. Ein Plädoyer für das Vermittlungsmodell,” *Spes Christiana* 6 (1995): 51-68.

<sup>25</sup>Edgar Machel, “Verkirchlichung: Schicksal oder Herausforderung? Eine Standortbestimmung der Gemeinschaft der Siebenten-Tags-Adventisten,” *Spes Christiana* 11 (2000): 72-82.

<sup>26</sup>Daniel Heinz, “Exklusivität und Kontextualisierung: Geschichte und Selbstverständnis der Siebenten-Tags-Adventisten in Deutschland,” *Spes Christiana* 12 (2001): 121-139.

of the church and reviewed four important metaphors employed in Scripture: family, body, building, and bride.<sup>27</sup> In 1997, Joel Musvosvi discussed the servant nature of the church.<sup>28</sup> Walter Douglas returned to the subject of the church a month later, concentrating upon the important topic of the relationship between unity and diversity.<sup>29</sup> In a fourth article, which appeared in September 2000, Richard Marker tackled the issue of diversity, particularly from a cross-cultural perspective.<sup>30</sup>

### *Dissertations and Theses*

As in the previous section, I will briefly present in alphabetical order the relevant data concerning doctoral dissertations and M.A. theses that deal in a decidedly theological or exegetical manner with issues relevant to ecclesiology. Three major Seventh-day Adventist institutions which grant doctoral degrees in theological or biblical studies are the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies in the Philippines, the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University, and River Plate Adventist University in Argentina.<sup>31</sup> There are other educational institutions which grant doctoral-level degrees: the Peruvian Union University in Peru; São Paulo Adventist University College (Campus 2) in Brazil; and Montemorelos University in Mexico. However, as with the previous two institutions, these doctoral degrees are in practical theology or ministry. This is not to suggest their lack of relevance for the church, but the dissertation content generally reflects the practical rather than exegetical/theological focus. An example is the doctoral dissertation of Bruno Raso, defended at the Peruvian Union University in Peru in 2004, which deals with personal, ecclesiological, pastoral, and community factors that influence the mission of making disciples.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>27</sup>Rex D. Edwards, "The Church: Its Nature and Design," *Ministry* 68/7 (1995): 36-42.

<sup>28</sup>Joel N. Musvosvi, "The Church: Born to Serve," *Ministry* 70/7 (1997): 19-21.

<sup>29</sup>Walter Douglas, "Unity in Diversity in Christ," *Ministry* 70/8 (1997): 5-8.

<sup>30</sup>Richard A. Marker, "Meeting the Challenge of Diversity," *Ministry* 73/9 (2000): 19-21.

<sup>31</sup>I would like to express my appreciation to Lester Merklin, director of the Institute of World Mission, Andrews University, who without much ado and in a highly efficient manner sent me a list of completed doctoral dissertations and M.A. theses from his former institution, the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, Philippines. Thanks also to John McVay, dean of the Seventh-day Adventist Seminary at Andrews University, who, with theological research librarian Terry Robertson, responded immediately to a call for help and explained the best way to extract the required information from the online library catalogue of the James White Library at Andrews University.

<sup>32</sup>Bruno Raso, "Un estudio de factores personales, eclesiásticos, pastorales y

The Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies has granted M.A. and Ph.D./Th.D./D.Min. degrees since 1988. A brief examination of completed dissertations and theses shows a strong practical theology section, often combined with relevant Asian contextualization of important biblical principles.<sup>33</sup> Three dissertations/theses fall within the general field of ecclesiological research. In 1995, Peranginangin Joseph Syukur, who completed a Doctorate in Practical Theology, discussed in his dissertation the role of laity in the larger context of the church,<sup>34</sup> and presented his findings in a case study of the Batak Karo Seventh-day Adventist Church. A second relevant thesis presented in the same year by Jeong Kwan Choi reviewed the hierarchical structures of ecclesiastical authority as implemented within the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>35</sup> An M.A. thesis was presented in 2003 by Gideon Ondap and focused on diversity in the remnant concept in Seventh-day Adventism.<sup>36</sup>

The Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University, the largest postgraduate theological institution in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, produces a large number of doctoral dissertations, including Ph.D., Th.D., and D.Min. dissertations and a smaller number of M.A. theses. During the period of 1995-2004, the Seminary produced 51 Ph.D./Th.D. dissertations, 159 D.Min. dissertations, and 20 M.A. theses.<sup>37</sup>

---

comunitarios que inciden sobre la misión de hacer discípulos" (D.Min. dissertation, Theology Faculty, Universidad Peruana Union, 2004).

<sup>33</sup>See, e.g., Lee Sung Bae, "Towards an Evangelistic Strategy to Reach Koreans in China: Preliminary Studies" (M.A. thesis, Theological Seminary, Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, 1996); Gebre Worancha, "Toward a Wholistic Strategy to Approach the Ethiopian Orthodox People with the Seventh-day Adventist Message: A Case Study" (D.Pr.Th. dissertation, Theological Seminary, Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, 1997); Eddy Kartagi, "The Slametan Ceremony in Communicating the Gospel to the Javanese: A Case Study" (D.Pr.Th. dissertation, Theological Seminary, Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, 1998); Sutrisno Tjakrapawira, "A Church Planting Strategy for the Sundanese People in the Territory of the West Java Conference of Seventh-day Adventists" (D.Min. dissertation, Theological Seminary, Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, 2001).

<sup>34</sup>Peranginangin Joseph Syukur, "The Role of Laity: Its Theological Foundation and Application in the Batak Karo Seventh-day Adventist Church: A Case Study" (D.Pr.Th. dissertation, Theological Seminary, Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, 1995).

<sup>35</sup>Jeong Kwan Choi, "A Critical Study of the Hierarchical Paradigm of Ecclesiastical Authority as Implemented within Roman Catholicism" (M.A. thesis, Theological Seminary, Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, 1995).

<sup>36</sup>Gideon Duran Ondap, "Diversity in the Remnant Concept in the History of the Seventh-day Adventist Church" (M.A. thesis, Theological Seminary, Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, 2003).

<sup>37</sup>I am basing these statistics on the excellent database maintained by the James White



Out of these, one highly significant Ph.D. dissertation by Roberto Pereyra dealt with the Pauline concept of the Greek term ἐκκλησία (“church”) in 1 Thessalonians and its relationship to the fixed phrase ἐν Χριστῷ (“in Christ”).<sup>38</sup> In 1997, Keith Mattingly defended his Ph.D. dissertation, which dealt with the ritual importance of the laying on of hands on Joshua in Num 27:12-23 and Deut 34:9. Mattingly’s study reviewed this important ritual, which also plays an important role in the Christian ordination ritual. The laying on of hands remains a current issue in Seventh-day Adventist theology, and has definite ecclesiological repercussions.<sup>39</sup> Mattingly noted that a possible implication that may arise from further study is that “the laying on of hands is *the* essential element of the Christian rite of ordination” (emphasis original).<sup>40</sup> In the same year, John Reeve submitted an M.A. thesis focusing upon a particular organizational characteristic of the early church: the presbyter and its possible OT predecessor, the elder.<sup>41</sup> In 1999, Trust Ndlovu presented a dissertation on the function of the church in the thought of South African Anglican bishop Desmond Tutu. Ndlovu was particularly interested in Tutu’s perception of the church’s role in the South African reconciliation process.<sup>42</sup> While not necessarily an Adventist ecclesiological perspective, contrasts with other positions help to sharpen and focus one’s own position.

Among the 159 D.Min. dissertations submitted to the Adventist Theological Seminary between 1995 and 2004, three are relevant for the present bibliographical survey. In 1998, Viesturs Rekis discussed the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of the church and its mission,<sup>43</sup> while two years later Stefan Radu tackled the controversial issue of church discipline and grace.<sup>44</sup> Clearly, one’s understanding of church discipline and authority is

---

Library at Andrews University. It may be possible that some dissertations defended during November/December of 2004 are not yet in the database.

<sup>38</sup>Roberto Pereyra, “Paul’s Earliest Statement Concerning the Christian Church: A Review and Evaluation of Research into Paul’s Association of the Term ὁ ἐκκλησία τὸ ἐν Χριστῷ in 1 Thessalonians” (Ph.D. dissertation, Theological Seminary, Andrews University, 1995).

<sup>39</sup>Keith E. K. Mattingly, “The Laying on of Hands on Joshua: An Exegetical Study of Numbers 27:12-23 and Deuteronomy 34:9” (Ph.D. dissertation, Theological Seminary, Andrews University, 1997).

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 377.

<sup>41</sup>John W. Reeve, “The Presbyter: Jewish Elder to Christian Priest” (M.A. thesis, Theological Seminary, Andrews University, 1997).

<sup>42</sup>Trust J. Ndlovu, “The Church as an Agent of Reconciliation in the Thought of Desmond Tutu” (Ph.D. dissertation, Theological Seminary, Andrews University, 1999).

<sup>43</sup>Viesturs Rekis, “A Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of the Church and Its Mission” (D.Min. dissertation, Theological Seminary, Andrews University, 1998).

<sup>44</sup>Stefan Radu, “Church Discipline and Grace” (D.Min. dissertation, Theological

closely related to one's notion about structure and the function of the church. In 2004, Steven Walikonis studied the dynamics of power in the church, particularly in the context of administrative hierarchies and authority.<sup>45</sup>

The Ph.D./Th.D. program at River Plate Adventist University is relatively new and has, up to this point, produced only a handful of doctoral dissertations. Relevant to the topic of theological reflection about the church is Carmelo Martines's careful analysis of Seventh-day Adventist concepts of the remnant and its present perception in the church.<sup>46</sup> He analyzes a number of traditional, as well as more "progressive," remnant interpretations by Seventh-day Adventist scholars, and sees repercussions in the areas of mission, interchurch relations, and ecclesiology.<sup>47</sup> In the same year, Daniel Plenc defended a Ph.D. dissertation on the theological criteria for a Seventh-day Adventist theology of worship. He includes a significant section focusing upon worship and ecclesiology, emphasizing particularly the communal element of worship, its missiological importance, and the structural relevance of the church for worship.<sup>48</sup>

It appears that while a systematic and wide-ranging formulation and theological reflection of a Seventh-day Adventist ecclesiology has not yet been undertaken, important elements have been studied in the past ten years. Recurring topics include the remnant, unity/diversity, and authority/power structures of a Seventh-day Adventist ecclesiology.

### *Monographic Studies*

This final bibliographic section will review published monographic studies on Seventh-day Adventist ecclesiology. While not all of the studies presented here are systematic or treat the entire range of ecclesiological issues, they show definite, general tendencies in theological thinking. As already indicated above, I will focus on academic studies that include exegetical/theological elements. I will present the studies in order of publication, which should not be construed as an indication of their respective value.

---

Seminary, Andrews University, 2000).

<sup>45</sup>Steven R. Walikonis, "The Phenomenon of Power in the Church: An Investigation and Analysis of the Relational Dynamics Experienced in the Context of the Assertion of Authority" (D.Min. dissertation, Theological Seminary, Andrews University, 2004).

<sup>46</sup>Carmelo L. Martines, "El concepto de remanente en la Iglesia Adventista del Séptimo Día: razones subyacentes en el debate contemporáneo" (Ph.D. dissertation, Theology Faculty, River Plate Adventist University, 2002).

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*, 208-214.

<sup>48</sup>Daniel O. Plenc, "Hacia un criterio teológico para la adoración adventista: elementos para su evaluación litúrgica" (Ph.D. dissertation, Theology Faculty, River Plate Adventist University, 2002), esp. 325-370.

The first important monographic contribution falls slightly outside the present time frame. In 1994, Johannes Mager edited *Die Gemeinde und ihr Auftrag* (*The Church and Its Mission*), which contains seven chapters written by different scholars and six appendices.<sup>49</sup> Some chapters examine issues such as the nature, mission,<sup>50</sup> origin,<sup>51</sup> and authority of the church,<sup>52</sup> while others study the remnant and its mission,<sup>53</sup> the relationship between the ecumenical movement and the Seventh-day Adventist Church,<sup>54</sup> the interaction between church and world,<sup>55</sup> and a discussion of the theology and practice of the laying on of hands in the church.<sup>56</sup> The appendices include a sermon on Ezek 40:1-4,<sup>57</sup> an attempt at formulating an Adventist theology of worship,<sup>58</sup> a discussion of the unity of the church,<sup>59</sup> ideas on the Seventh-day Adventist Church and her youth,<sup>60</sup> thoughts about the church of the future and the future of the church,<sup>61</sup> and a brief sketch of an Adventist worldview.<sup>62</sup>

Church historian George Knight published *The Fat Lady and the Kingdom* in 1995. While he did not address an academic audience nor include a major theological section, his book should, nevertheless, be considered an important contribution, particularly in its historical outlook. He warns of two risks: institutionalism in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which may,

<sup>49</sup>Johannes Mager, ed., *Die Gemeinde und ihr Auftrag*, Studien zur adventistischen Ekkesiologie 2 (Hamburg: Saatkorn Verlag, 1994).

<sup>50</sup>Roberto Badenas, "Wesen und Auftrag der Gemeinde," 9-30. In the following references, I will indicate only the author, chapter title, and pagination. The complete reference to the book appears in fn. 49.

<sup>51</sup>Raoul Dederen, "Wollte Jesus eine Gemeinde gründen?" 31-50.

<sup>52</sup>Raoul Dederen, "Autorität der Gemeinde: Ihr Ursprung, Wesen und Wirken," 51-72. It seems that this is a translation of Dederen's important article that appeared in *Ministry* in 1995.

<sup>53</sup>Richard Lehmann, "Die Übrigen und ihr Auftrag," 73-102.

<sup>54</sup>Hans Heinz, "Ökumenische Bewegung und Adventgemeinde," 103-126.

<sup>55</sup>Bernhard Oestreich, "Gemeinde in der Welt," 127-156.

<sup>56</sup>Rolf J. Pöhler, "Zur Theologie und Praxis der Handauflegung Sendung—Segnung—Weihe," 157-207.

<sup>57</sup>Johannes Mager, "'Dazu bist du hierher gebracht...' Predigt über Hesekiel 40, 1-4," 209-216.

<sup>58</sup>George W. Reid, "Versuch einer Theologie des adventistischen Gottesdienstes," 217-236.

<sup>59</sup>Raoul Dederen, "Die Einheit der Gemeinde—Probleme und Spannungen," 237-250.

<sup>60</sup>Johann Gerhardt, "Die Adventgemeinde und ihre Jugend," 251-272.

<sup>61</sup>George W. Reid, "Die Gemeinde der Zukunft und die Zukunft der Gemeinde," 273-280.

<sup>62</sup>George W. Reid, "Adventistische Weltsicht," 281-288.

in turn, lead to the secularization of the church's mission.<sup>63</sup> The first risk addresses the issue of organizational structure,<sup>64</sup> while the second addresses questions of worldview and the relationship between church and culture.

In 1998, Nancy Vyhmeister edited *Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspectives*,<sup>65</sup> which included the research of Andrews University faculty members who participated in a Special Committee of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary on Hermeneutics and Ordination. The Committee was constituted in the wake of the negative vote of the General Conference session at Utrecht, Netherlands, to the request of the North American Division to be permitted to ordain women pastors within its territory. The twenty chapters included in this volume are generally pro-women's ordination, while not necessarily agreeing in all the details of biblical and theological issues connected to the question. Due to space limitations, I will examine only relevant studies from the volume's five sections. In section 1, four authors discuss the question of ministry in the Bible: the priesthood of all believers;<sup>66</sup> the absence of women priests in Israel;<sup>67</sup> the characteristics of ministry in the NT and in the early church;<sup>68</sup> and the ritual of ordination, particularly the laying on of hands.<sup>69</sup> Sections 2 and 3 examine the concept of ordination in early Christianity and Adventism, and the issue of women in ministry and leadership. These sections are primarily historical in content. Section 4 contains three relevant chapters, which discuss questions of headship, submission, and equality in Scripture,<sup>70</sup> and an examination of two critical NT texts that may indicate the subordinate status of women in the early church.<sup>71</sup>

The publication of *Women in Ministry* resulted in a flurry of critical

<sup>63</sup>George R. Knight, *The Fat Lady and the Kingdom: Adventist Mission Confronts the Challenges of Institutionalism and Secularization* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1995).

<sup>64</sup>See more references in Timm, "Seventh-day Adventist Ecclesiology, 1844-2001," 299-300.

<sup>65</sup>Nancy Jean Vyhmeister, ed., *Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspectives* (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1998), 335-354.

<sup>66</sup>Raoul Dederen, "The Priesthood of All Believers," 9-27. As before, I will include only the author, chapter title, and pagination.

<sup>67</sup>Jacques B. Doukhan, "Women Priests in Israel: A Case for Their Absence," 29-43.

<sup>68</sup>Robert M. Johnston, "Shapes of Ministry in the New Testament and Early Church," 45-58.

<sup>69</sup>Keith Mattingly, "Laying on of Hands in Ordination: A Biblical Study," 59-74.

<sup>70</sup>Richard M. Davidson, "Headship, Submission, and Equality in Scripture," 259-295.

<sup>71</sup>See W. Larry Richards, "How Does a Woman Prophecy and Keep Silence at the Same Time? (1 Corinthians 11 and 14)," 311-333; and Nancy Jean Vyhmeister, "Proper Church Behavior in 1 Timothy 2:8-15," 335-354.

appraisals, the most extensive being *Prove All Things: A Response to Women in Ministry*, edited by Mercedes Dyer and published by Adventists Affirm.<sup>72</sup> It contains 22 chapters divided into four distinct sections, which focus on methodology, biblical issues, theological and historical questions, and women and ministry. Not all contributions are academic in style. The biblically and theologically relevant chapters present alternative views concerning headship, submission, and equality in Scripture;<sup>73</sup> the priesthood of all believers;<sup>74</sup> the types of ministry found in the NT;<sup>75</sup> the laying on of hands in the ordination ritual;<sup>76</sup> and a discussion of 1 Tim 2:11-15.<sup>77</sup> These studies reflect nearly verbatim the outline and titles of the earlier *Women in Ministry*. Unfortunately, neither *Women in Ministry* nor *Prove All Things* tackles the more difficult question of a Seventh-day Adventist ecclesiology, but rather focus upon limited aspects of the church: the priesthood and ordination. Without belittling these two volumes, it should be noted that other ecclesiological questions deserve the same—or perhaps even more—attention. Clearly, both volumes reflect the questions and perspectives of North American and Seventh-day Adventists and First World concerns, which are not necessarily on the agenda of other parts of global Adventism.

One of the major events in the thinking about and formulation of a Seventh-day Adventist ecclesiology was the publication of the *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* in 2000 as volume 12 in the Commentary Reference Series. The project was initiated and supervised by the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference and thus represents an official position of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. All chapters 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.<sup>78</sup> Dederen's article includes nine major sections, including the church in God's plan; its nature and scope; biblical images of the church;

<sup>72</sup>Mercedes H. Dyer, ed., *Prove All Things: A Response to Women in Ministry* (Berrien Springs: Adventist Affirm, 2000).

<sup>73</sup>Samuele Bacchiocchi, "Headship, Submission, and Equality in Scripture," 65-110. As before, I will include only the author, chapter title, and pagination.

<sup>74</sup>P. Gerard Damsteegt, "The Priesthood of All Believers," 111-122.

<sup>75</sup>P. Gerard Damsteegt, "Shapes of Ministry in the New Testament," 129-153.

<sup>76</sup>P. Gerard Damsteegt, "The Laying on of Hands," 155-160.

<sup>77</sup>C. Raymond Holmes, "Does Paul Really Prohibit Women from Speaking in Church? A Look at 1 Timothy 2:11-15," 161-174.

<sup>78</sup>Raoul Dederen, "The Church," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen, Commentary Reference Series (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 12: 538-581.

its mission, government, ordinances, authority, and characteristics; and a sobering look into the future of the church. After these theological observations, Dederen also provided a helpful review of the church from its NT origins, as well as a selection of Ellen White's comments on the church. True to the purpose of the volume, Dederen followed a systematic methodology, which presents the basic concepts together with crucial biblical references, without necessarily going into detailed exegetical discussions.<sup>79</sup>

Another major event for Seventh-day Adventist ecclesiological discussion was the Fourth South American Biblical-Theological Symposium, held from August 30 to September 2, 2001, at River Plate Adventist University in Argentina.<sup>80</sup> The Seminar resulted in 88 presentations on the topic of ecclesiology. Most South American countries and institutions were represented, as well as representatives 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)*<sup>81</sup> in honor of Raoul Dederen's contribution to Seventh-day Adventist ecclesiology. The volume, which is divided into five different sections, examines exegetical and biblical issues of 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 contributors were theologians, but their input was based upon biblical and theological considerations. Some examples may suffice:<sup>82</sup> Carlos Cerdá evaluated the relationship between Laodicea and postmodern society and the resulting effects upon the current church from a sociological perspective.<sup>83</sup> Fernando Aranda Fraga examined the relationship between state and church from the

<sup>79</sup>A similar layout can also be found in the systematic theologies of Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 853-953; and Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994). Both were written from an evangelical perspective.

<sup>80</sup>I must, again, confess a lack of neutrality. Having been part of the planning, organization, and publication of the event has undoubtedly etched its importance in my mind, which may be considered differently by a more neutral outside observer. Nevertheless, the sheer numbers of participants (mostly theology students, professors, and pastors), together with the high volume of presented papers, seem to underline its importance.

<sup>81</sup>See n. 16 above for the complete bibliographical reference.

<sup>82</sup>More space is dedicated to the introduction of this volume due to fact that most of the studies are Spanish.

<sup>83</sup>Carlos H. Cerdá, "Relación entre Laodicea y la sociedad posmoderna: efectos en la iglesia," 377-388. The complete bibliographical data of the volume can be found in n. 16 above.

perspective of the English political philosopher Ockham.<sup>84</sup> René Smith studied the interaction of education and the book of Revelation from the perspective of a Seventh-day Adventist ecclesiology.<sup>85</sup> Some innovative ideas about ecclesiology can also be found in the exegetical section of the volume. For instance, Efraín Velásquez looked at the tribe from the perspective of social science as a possible paradigm for a Seventh-day Adventist ecclesiology that also takes the OT seriously.<sup>86</sup> The dichotomy between individualism and collectivism as portrayed in relevant OT texts was studied by Gerald Klingbeil,<sup>87</sup> while Martin Klingbeil examined divine metaphors in the Psalms and wondered which metaphor about God would speak to the church today.<sup>88</sup> Other studies involve careful attention to particular biblical contexts, as, for example, the unity of the church according to Ps 133,<sup>89</sup> the remnant motif in the wisdom literature of the OT,<sup>90</sup> ecclesiological principles in the book of Daniel,<sup>91</sup> ecclesiology in its cosmic dimensions in the epistle to the Hebrews,<sup>92</sup> and exegetical studies of John 1:47-51<sup>93</sup> and Acts 1:8.<sup>94</sup>

Several studies examined the concept of the remnant—an important element of traditional Seventh-day Adventist ecclesiology that has lately come under fire.<sup>95</sup> Besides Hector Urrutia's study of this concept in OT Wisdom literature, Fernando Canale surveyed the underlying hermeneutical issues connected to the questioning of the remnant concept in contemporary

<sup>84</sup>Fernando Aranda Fraga, "La metamorfosis en la relación iglesia-estado a partir de la filosofía política y jurídica premoderna de Ockham," 401-418.

<sup>85</sup>René Rogelio Smith, "Educación y Apocalipsis en la eclesiología adventista," 481-487.

<sup>86</sup>Efraín Velásquez, "La tribu: hacia una eclesiología adventista basada en las Escrituras Hebreas," 25-40.

<sup>87</sup>Gerald A. Klingbeil, "Entre individualismo y colectivismo: hacia una perspectiva bíblica de la naturaleza de la iglesia," 3-22.

<sup>88</sup>Martin G. Klingbeil, "'De lo profundo, Jehová, a ti clamo.' Conocer al Dios de Israel a través del himnario veterotestamentario," 41-56.

<sup>89</sup>Richard W. Medina, "La unidad de la iglesia según el Salmo 133," 57-69.

<sup>90</sup>Héctor Urrutia, "El mensaje del remanente final en los libros sapienciales," 71-92.

<sup>91</sup>Carlos Elías Mora, "Principios eclesiológicos hallados en el libro de Daniel," 93-103.

<sup>92</sup>Merling Alomía, "Dimensiones cósmicas de la iglesia reveladas en la epístola a los Hebreos," 131-145.

<sup>93</sup>Gluder Quispe, "La escalera de la iglesia: una interpretación exegética de Juan 1:47-51," 105-117.

<sup>94</sup>Efraín Choque, "Las prioridades para la misión en la iglesia primitiva según Hechos 1:8: modelo para la iglesia de hoy," 119-129.

<sup>95</sup>Cf. Alberto R. Timm, "Seventh-day Adventist Ecclesiology, 1844-2001," 300-301.

Adventism<sup>96</sup> and Ángel Rodríguez presented a helpful review of current Adventist thinking about the remnant.<sup>97</sup> A number of chapters deal with the issue of church authority, including the question of whether it is absolute or relative.<sup>98</sup> The priesthood of all believers was studied by Juan Millanao,<sup>99</sup> while Miroslav Kiš examined the holiness of the church<sup>100</sup> and Lael Caesar weighed the unity/diversity issue in recent Seventh-day Adventist ecclesiology.<sup>101</sup> The church and culture was the topic of two important studies: the influence of worldview upon the church and its possibilities in terms of mission,<sup>102</sup> and the impact of culture upon Adventist education.<sup>103</sup>

In the practical application section, George Reid described three major challenges that the Seventh-day Adventist Church faces today: the tendency to replace objective truth with experience, the challenge to our unity as a church, and the redefinition of spirituality.<sup>104</sup> Ron Clouzet observed the challenge to leadership formation in theological education,<sup>105</sup> while Gerhard Pfandl tackled the difficult and often unsettling issue of independent ministries.<sup>106</sup> Other studies that are part of this section include the significance of the eschatological mission for the church,<sup>107</sup> the importance and value of nature from a biblical and ecological perspective,<sup>108</sup> and practical implications of the pre- and postbaptismal process in evangelism.<sup>109</sup> As can be seen from

<sup>96</sup>Fernando Canale, "Hermenéutica, teología y remanente," 167-176.

<sup>97</sup>Ángel M. Rodríguez, "The Remnant in Contemporary Adventist Thinking," 269-279.

<sup>98</sup>See Roberto Pereyra, "La autoridad de la Escritura y la autoridad de la iglesia organizada: ¿absoluta/relativa?" 189-198. Cf. Miguel Ángel Núñez, "Cristo, cabeza de la iglesia: jefe, caudillo u otro significado?" 237-249; and Humberto R. Treiyer, "La autoridad de la iglesia: el dilema de la sucesión apostólica—aportes de E. G. de White y Hans Küng," 319-329.

<sup>99</sup>Juan Millanao, "Elementos básicos para la elaboración de una teología adventista del sacerdocio de todos los creyentes," 199-211.

<sup>100</sup>Miroslav M. Kiš, "Holiness of the Church," 213-225.

<sup>101</sup>Lael Caesar, "Una nación bajo Dios, indivisible," 227-236.

<sup>102</sup>Chantal J. Klingbeil, "Iglesia y cultura: ¿amigas o enemigas?" 351-367.

<sup>103</sup>Carlos A. Steger, "Cristianismo y cultura: el dilema de las instituciones educativas adventistas," 369-376.

<sup>104</sup>George W. Reid, "Three Significant Changes Facing Today's Church," 421-426.

<sup>105</sup>Ron E. M. Clouzet, "El desafío de la formación de líderes en la educación teológica: la lección de Eliseo," 427-435.

<sup>106</sup>Gerhard Pfandl, "Independent Ministries," 445-453.

<sup>107</sup>Enrique Becerra, "El significado de una misión escatológica," 455-464.

<sup>108</sup>Antonio V. Cremades, "El valor de la naturaleza para la iglesia," 465-479.

<sup>109</sup>Rubén R. Otto, "La evangelización: un proceso pre- y post-bautismal," 437-444.



these brief comments, *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-North American context.

In 2003, Norman Gulley published the *Prolegomena* of a comprehensive Seventh-day Adventist systematic theology.<sup>110</sup> Gulley places his systematic theology within the larger biblical worldview of cosmic controversy<sup>111</sup> and bases his entire system upon the revelation/inspiration of Scripture.<sup>112</sup> Unfortunately, the section dealing with ecclesiology will only appear in the next volume of Gulley's *Systematic Theology*, but judging from the quality of the introductory volume, it should prove to be detailed, biblically based, and informed.

A forthcoming research project, sponsored by the Postgraduate Studies section of the Theology Faculty at River Plate Adventist University and led by Mario Veloso, is *La iglesia, cuerpo de Cristo y plenitud de Dios (The Church, Body of Christ and Fullness of God)*. This project includes five distinct research groups, comprised of fifteen specialists in distinct theological fields. The volume takes the ecclesologically significant epistle to the Ephesians as its point of departure, as well as the more systematic elements of ecclesiology that may not be fully present in this particular biblical book. Some individual studies resulting from this work have already been accepted for publication or are in the process of publication.<sup>113</sup> It is hoped that the final publication of the complete project will occur in early 2006. In connection with this project, the Fifth Postgraduate Research Seminar at River Plate Adventist University, held on February 20, 2005, in Libertador San Martín, Argentina, focused on the same topic under the title "The Church in Ephesians: From Exegesis to Theology."

#### *Outlook and Future Perspectives for a Seventh-day Adventist Ecclesiology*

As can be seen from this concise bibliographical review, Seventh-day Adventist ecclesiological studies are emerging, particularly on the

<sup>110</sup>Norman R. Gulley, *Systematic Theology: Prolegomena* (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 2003).

<sup>111</sup>*Ibid.*, xxiii.

<sup>112</sup>*Ibid.*, xxvii.

<sup>113</sup>E.g., Gerald A. Klingbeil, "Metaphors and Pragmatics: An Introduction to the Hermeneutics of Metaphors in the Epistle to the Ephesians," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 15/2 (2005), forthcoming. See also Martin G. Klingbeil, "Exclusivism and Inclusivism: The Concept of Citizenship in the Pentateuch and Its Metaphorical Usage in Ephesians," unpublished paper.

“periphery.” By the term “periphery,” I refer to Seventh-day Adventism outside the U.S.A., which, historically and administratively, has been and still is, to a certain degree, the center of Seventh-day Adventism.

The first issue I foresee, based on this bibliographical review, concerns geographic changes in global Adventism. The ratio of Adventists in the U.S.A. to Adventists in Asia, Africa, and Central and South America is decreasing. This has a direct bearing upon decision-making and trends, since in the administrative system of the Seventh-day Day Church voting power is based upon membership. Besides the theological issues surrounding women’s ordination, this may have been one of the main reasons for the resounding negative vote in Utrecht against women’s ordination because women’s ordination is not necessarily a major issue in developing countries, which represent a growing percentage of global Adventism. As a result of the geographic change, more theological research is appearing in languages other than English.<sup>114</sup>

A second issue that will require further research and increased attention is the administrative structure of the Seventh-day Adventist Church concerning the issue of congregationalism and the biblical concept of the unity of the body. Will the Seventh-day Adventist Church remain a global and united church?

Another crucial issue is whether the church will be able to maintain not only administrative unity, but the spiritual/mental unity that is important for accomplishing the divine imperative of bringing the gospel to all nations, kindred, tongues, and people.

Fourth, Adventist theologians are beginning to discuss the relationship between world and church. This is by no means a modern question. Paul often counseled the nascent Christian church about this issue.

Another relevant item on the agenda of Seventh-day Adventist ecclesiological research concerns the study of the remnant. Recent developments suggest that this particular concept, which has been a mainstay of Adventist theology for many generations, is increasingly under fire. Closely related to this issue is the Adventist approach to reading apocalyptic texts. While still maintaining a historicist stance, can Adventists afford to question the identity of the end-time remnant?

Finally, theological reflection of ecclesiological issues needs to grapple

<sup>114</sup>This trend has also been observed in general biblical hermeneutics and has been described as the “globalization of hermeneutics.” For examples see Craig L. Blomberg, “The Globalization of Hermeneutics,” *JETS* 38/4 (1995): 581-593; Heikki Räisänen et al., eds., *Reading the Bible in the Global Village: Helsinki* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000); and Musa W. Dube, “Villagizing, Globalizing, and Biblical Studies,” in *Reading the Bible in the Global Village: Cape Town*, ed. Justin S. Ukpong et al., *Global Perspectives on Biblical Scholarship* 3 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002), 41-63.

with the concept of worldview and its influence in theological thinking. This, in turn, requires careful hermeneutical decisions. After all, we are looking for valid biblical understanding of particular concepts which then will affect our lifestyle and choices and not vice versa. The next years will be exciting and crucial in Seventh-day Adventist ecclesiological discussions.<sup>115</sup>

<sup>115</sup>The next international Bible Symposium, sponsored by the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference, the Adventist Theological Society, and the Andrews University Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, to be held in Turkey (July 7-17, 2006), will focus particularly upon ecclesiology. The general title of the conference is "The Adventist Theologian and the Nature, Mission, and Unity of the Church." The Biblical Research Institute is also working on the publication of a volume dealing exclusively with the Seventh-day Adventist perspective of the church.