What may the church be like twenty-five years from now?

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Niels Bohr (1885-1962), the famous Danish physicist who made fundamental contributions to the understanding of atomic structure and quantum mechanics, once said: ‘Prediction is difficult, especially about the future’. If anywhere, this truism applies to the future of the Christian church in general and the Adventist Church in particular. What will the church be like, some twenty-five or even fewer years from now? Will the Adventist Church continue to grow? Will the growth continue to be mainly in the developing world? How will future migration impact on the diversity in the church in the Western world? Will the influence of postmodernism spread further through the church, and also significantly affect the church outside the Western world? Will the church stay united, or will we see strong dissident movements, ugly fights, or even splits and offshoots? And if such splits occur, will they be on the left or at the right side of the church? And so the questions continue.

Of course, what will happen in Adventism is closely related to what happens in the outside world; to what happens in the wider Christian world and to what cultural shifts might occur in society. We can only proceed on the basis of extrapolations, but must realize that many uncertain factors may arise to thwart our predictions. Much of what follows cannot be proven. It is what I think, and—I must admit—it includes a number of things I simply hope for.

In spite of all uncertainties we cannot help being curious about what lies ahead. If we focus on the future of the church against the background of the influence of postmodernism—the topic I dealt with in my first presentation—a number of aspects must be taken on board. We must ask ourselves first what will happen with postmodernity. Will it strengthen, or will it disappear and give way to something else?

Some say that postmodernism never was anything but another form of modernity. In an
influential 2006 essay about ‘the death of postmodernism and beyond’, Oxford-based scholar and author Alan Kirby argues that postmodernism is dead and buried. He believes a new paradigm of authority and knowledge is formed as the result of the pressures of new technologies and contemporary social forces. Those who agree suggest that the term neo-pragmatism may be a suitable label. Others do not agree and the majority opinion seems to be that some form of postmodernity will, at least for some time, continue to make itself felt.

How will Christianity in general react to the continuing impact of postmodernity or some outgrowth of post-postmodernity? How will this affect Australian religion and Australian religious expressions? And, finally, how will it affect Adventism, specifically in Australia and other Western countries? Two things are quite certain: (1) Christianity will not easily regain its dominance in the religious marketplace in Australia; (2) Australian Adventism will be characterized by theological and cultural pluralism.

Assumptions
Let’s begin by making a few general assumptions that seem to be reasonably safe.

1. Modernity will not return. Postmodernity will, at least for some time, in some form or another, continue to be influential. It will increasingly also affect many men and women, in particular of the younger generation, in the developing world.

2. Christianity will not disappear. Its main base will move further South, but it may also surprise us in the developed world by ‘re-emerging’ in non-traditional ways.

3. Simultaneously, the traditional approach to religion and the religious institutions, to the Bible and to doctrine, will continue to appeal to many in the older generations, but also to a substantial part of the youth.

4. These trends will also be present in the Seventh-day Adventist Church: The church will continue to have its greatest growth in the South, but it still has potential in the developed world and new types of faith communities will be born, while at the same time there will be voices demanding that all stay as it is or returns to the past.

5. The diversity in the church in the West will not diminish, and the postmodern segment of the church (or something that develops from this) may well become stronger—but probably against sustained opposition. The continuing or even increasing polarization may endanger the unity of the church.

These future trends that seem probable will affect all ‘players’: the pastor, the congregation
and the external audiences. Most pastors, teachers, and leaders today are functioning quite differently when compared with their colleagues only a generation ago. Important further change is to be expected. There have also been significant changes in what church members expect from their church, in particular from their local congregation, and these expectations will undergo further changes. In addition, there is ample evidence that today, and in the near future, most external audiences cannot be reached, in the same way as was possible in the past. Further renewal in our approaches to the people around us will be needed.

It is impossible to deal with all areas of possible, or probable, change in one presentation, but others this week have dealt with aspects of this subject. In this talk I will concentrate on a number of aspects of probable change that will impact on who Adventists are and how they will ‘do’ church in the twenty-first century. However, keep in mind that the future may surprise us. In 1968 *Time* magazine asked the question: ‘Is God dead?’ For many the answer then was a resounding ‘yes’. Who could have predicted the amazing interest in spirituality and religion we see in today’s world? So, let’s proceed, but with the proviso that it may all turn out to be quite different! Nonetheless, Christian leadership requires that we prepare as best as we can for the probable future. We can only base our vision and strategies on what we currently see, but should be ever willing to modify and adapt our approach as we notice new trends or meet unexpected challenges.

**Will we see more or less diversity?**

The diversity within Adventism is a rather complex phenomenon. In many places in the Western world we see a few distinct, but yet interrelated factors. The strong influx of new members as a result of migration in the last few decades has changed the face of the church in more than just visual ways. Usually the newcomers have brought with them specific ways of ‘doing’ church, and their Adventist experience often resembles the kind of Adventist practice and thinking that a large segment of the church in their host country has long left behind. The diversity that results is partly cultural, but also often has doctrinal components. Many ‘new’ members tend to feel that in their host environment Adventism has lost much of its true identity—which they, however, are not willing to give up. In fact, they may regard themselves as the guardians of the Truth and will try to convince the church members in the host country to return to the ‘good, old-time Adventist religion’.

It must immediately be added that the rift between more conservative and more liberal
Adventism—to use the most common labels—is not, by any means, always between the ‘original’ church members and the recent arrivals. The ‘original’ members may have moved with the times, and may have changed in a more ‘liberal’ direction, but that is certainly not true for all.

At times, the relationship between the ‘new’ and the ‘old’ members may have a strong linguistic component. Many people prefer to worship in their own mother tongue. This diversity in language may be accompanied by other preferences in worship style, either based on theological conviction or culture. In addition, the place attributed to Ellen G. White, may be a matter of dispute—as may be life style issues, such as ‘jewelry’, drinking of certain beverages and vegetarianism.

Migration, as we said, has in many places changed the church. But it is unclear whether migration will continue to be a factor of the same magnitude. Many Western countries are passing laws with a view to severely restricting migration. Much, of course, also depends also on which countries the immigrants are coming from. If they come from certain Caribbean of African countries, the likelihood is that there will be many Adventists among them. If they come from the Middle East or North Africa or most Asian countries, there will be very few, if any, Adventists among them.

Immigrants may retain most of their habits and beliefs for the rest of their life, but it is a different story when we look at the second and third generation. So, if the waves of immigration were to subside for a considerable length of time, future diversity in the church as a result of immigration might diminish, rather than increase. But, immigration is only one factor, and much of what we see in our church today gives us reason to think that strong diversity will be a remaining feature in the church, regardless of developments in the area of migration.

The church—at all levels—must, I believe, be more intentional in dealing with this challenge of diversity. The positive elements of diversity—the richness it brings in the way we live and express our faith, and the freshness it can bring to our communities—should receive more attention than the challenges it certainly brings. I believe we should not constantly focus primarily on the elements that differ, without also emphasizing the strong underlying unity, which is just as real. It has taken me a while, but nowadays I am looking more avidly for signs
of unity than for signs of diversity. I tell myself that I should not be blind to the wonderful
degree of unity that continues to prevail in the Adventist community. Whatever label we may
give to others, or others may give to us, it is gratifying to see that, in most cases, there is, in
fact, far more that binds us together than what divides us.

When one looks at what proponents of different currents within Adventism tell us they
believe, we notice that they hold important basic convictions in common. I know there are
different perspectives on the inspiration of the Bible, but I know of no Adventist theologian
who does not, in some way, take the Bible very seriously. I realize we have differences in
Christology, but I know of no Adventist colleague for whom Christ is nothing but a human
person and who does not in some way believe that He is our Mediator and that in the ‘near’
future He will return to this earth. I know of no serious theologian who denies the value of the
Sabbath and yet calls himself a Seventh-day Adventist. I notice everywhere within Adventism
the same holistic view of man’s nature and of his ‘conditional immortality’. In spite of many
different theories about the end-time events, I do not think there are many (if any) Adventists
who have rejected the biblical teaching that human history as we know it will end, and that
Adventists have a special mission in preparation for that event. And for all it is clear that faith
affects life style and that stewardship and discipleship are close twins. And so on. Let us
rejoice in this unity, while we think and talk in a Christian way about our theological concerns
and the problems we may see in some propositions put forward by fellow Adventists.

Also, important lessons are to be learned from general church history and from the Adventist
past. History shows that in the early stages of most movements, diversity was an element that
provided vitality and often proved to be an impetus for further growth and discoveries. That
should make us realize that diversity is possibly not as great a danger as it is often made out to be.

The future pastor
We do not need to say too much about the changing role of the pastor. Most of you who are
here and who are pastors, have firsthand experience of how the role and work of the pastor
have changed, and most of you probably realize that the work of the pastor will change
further. The pastor no longer has the respect and trust of his congregation simply because he
has a certain status, as a result of his education and his employment by the conference.
Respect and trust must nowadays be earned over time. The congregation does not expect the
pastor to be perfect or to be a person who never has any doubts or knows all the answers. In fact, a pastor who pretends to be perfect, who suggests that he never has any doubts and comes with easy answers that ring hollow and unconvincing—will not get the respect of his people. These trends will, no doubt, only intensify. Not his learning and multitude of talents but his personal integrity and authenticity are more and more the defining marks of a pastor’s acceptance.

The future role of the pastor in a church that wants to grow—in numbers and in depth—will primarily be that of a trainer and coach. This demands the willingness of constant professional training and of being exposed to new ideas and methods. It also demands a constant focus on one’s own spirituality. One cannot give what one does not have.

The church will need to prepare for new trends in pastoral work. For some time we have already seen how the average age of the intern and of the beginning pastor is considerably higher than it was generation ago. For many, ministry is a second career. In the future we will undoubtedly see more women in ministry; female pastors may well be the majority in not too distant a future (as is already the case in some denominations). I cannot imagine that the church will not solve the issue of ordination of women in the near future. We may need to get used to more part-time pastors or bi-vocational pastors. There are signs that ambitions for the pastoral career path are changing. To an increasing number of pastors being the pastor of a prominent church seems much more interesting than having a conference or union assignment. And, just as mission work in Africa or the Pacific islands was the preference for quite a few theology students in days past, in the years to come many may be attracted to the challenge of planting new churches or devoting oneself to other forms of adventurous pioneer work.

**The church is people in a particular place**

Many believers have become more or less postmodern and will carry this approach to life with them into the future. This will continue to affect the identity of the local congregation. Adventist leadership, in general, fears any developments towards congregationalism. Strong ties between the local churches and the ‘higher’ organizations are seen by many leaders as essential for the unity and the success of the worldwide mission of the church. They are right if they say that totally independent local congregations do not reflect the New Testament model of church organization. However, whatever the fears in the church’s hierarchy may be,
our top leaders will not be able to stop the postmodern trend of focusing primarily on the local community. Trying to force the issue would put a brake on future church growth. In one of his recent thought-provoking books, George R. Knight suggests that, if he were the devil he would try to create more administrative levels and appoint more administrators and downgrade the role of the local congregation!\(^4\)

The role of the higher organizations, and certainly that of unions and the echelons further upward, can no longer be one of control, and of devising and pushing uniform worldwide or division-wide programs. Increasingly their role is, and will be, one of counsel, of providing resources and of facilitating cross-fertilization between churches.\(^5\)

The local church of the future will want a greater say in its own affairs. It will pick and choose its own programs and projects. It will want to have a major, and possibly a final, voice in the choice of its pastor and there will be a concerted (and I believe, in the end successful) push for the retention of a greater part of tithe at the level of the local church.

But other developments may also be expected. More churches will want to adopt or support community projects. Many churches will also show increased flexibility with regard to the entrance requirements it imposes on new members. Many local churches will no longer demand that baptismal candidates accept all 28 Fundamental Beliefs, but will rather expect that new members express their affinity with the core of Adventist beliefs and practices and want to participate in the life of the community. Maybe, this simply means that we will more openly admit that, in many instances, this already is our actual practice. There may be a greater fluidity between members and non-members—with non-members participating in all kinds of roles in the congregation. And—by the way—it may also mean a greater openness towards those with a different sexual orientation.

I believe we will see an increased tendency for local Adventist churches to cater for a specific audience, especially in regions where we find several congregations in close vicinity, so that each church can have its own niche and members and visitors can ‘shop’ and choose the congregation where the ‘climate’ suits them best. This may be a very positive thing. After all, people are different and have different spiritual needs. Postmodern people are not primarily looking for a spiritual home where all fellow-believers think in identical ways, but they look most of all for a place where they feel welcome and accepted just as they are.
Meaningful worship

One of the positive trends in recent Adventism is a greater attention to, and increased appreciation for meaningful worship. Nowadays, many local churches have worship committees and a lot more planning goes into designing meaningful and well-structured services than often used to be the case. Unfortunately, we also still see much shallowness, and we also see church worships with much form without real content. But, there is reason to be hopeful, as long as we realize that there are ways of ‘reaching out without dumbing down’. A number of aspects will continue to play an important role. Local churches will more and more develop their own worship styles within the universals of Christian worship.. This, of course, parallels the trend that particular congregations will tend to cater for specific segments of the Adventist Church—based on age, ethnicity, educational level, or theological leanings, or otherwise. This will express itself in diversity in music styles, sermon content and modes of sermon delivery, and in the degree of audience participation.

A predominantly postmodern audience will expect to actively participate in worship. It will look for spiritual experience, rather than for detailed doctrinal exposition. At the same time, postmoderns will look for freshness, professionalism and quality. They also want to feel safe and not be subjected to fierce criticism with regard to particular life style issues or opinions, or to sudden attacks on the beliefs of others or on the history or the leadership of other denominations. This is, in particular, important for those who are in transition and have not yet fully decided to formally join the Adventist community. It is important for a faith community that wants to welcome others, that the sermon and the Bible study are not used (or should I say: abused) to bash Catholics or other Christians or even non-Christian believers. Those who want to bring friends or relatives with them to enjoy Adventist worship services or other Adventist events, must be able to feel confident that there will be no anti-popery rhetoric or demeaning language about other believers. Modern Adventists may still sense the need to affirm their Adventist identity in a traditional, aggressive way, but postmodern Adventists will not have such constant need to point to an enemy to underline their denominational identity.

Church discipline

Opinions about what should be subject to church discipline and about the implementation of church discipline have shifted significantly. In general, Adventist congregations in the Western world are much more reluctant in disciplining members than they used to be. This is
not simply due to a lowering of standards and growing indifference with regard to doctrinal positions or moral standards, as is often rather accusingly suggested. There may be some of that, but other factors also come into play. Traditional disciplining is simply not very effective in a postmodern environment. Rather than producing a sense of remorse and a desire for change, church discipline upsets postmodern people and alienates them. They want to take full personal responsibility for what they say and do, and do not want the judgment of others and certainly do not readily accept any sanctions. Whether they inter into, or end, a certain relationship, have sex before marriage, live in a cohabiting situation, choose a particular profession that others may see as dubious, drink a glass of wine at dinner or go to a concert on a Sabbath afternoon, eat an occasional bacon sandwich and doubt whether Benedict XVI is the antichrist, or whether 1844 is a crucial date, is—so they feel—their own business. It does not, they believe, determine their Adventist identity and is not something others should not sit in judgment on. They do not accept that their Adventist identity should be measured along such traditional yardsticks, by others who happen to have certain opinions that are somewhat different from theirs.

When there is a strong influx of immigrants into the church in Western countries, inevitably issues about church discipline arise and tend to escalate. Most of these ‘new’ members have a totally different view of church discipline—and, in general, want the church to abide by inflexible rules. They see the Church Manual as almost divinely inspired and believe every local church should follow it to the letter, in particular when it comes to disciplining members who do not honor every one of the church’s teachings and do not abide by the traditional Adventist moral code (or the things they have selected from it!).

The challenge for the twenty-first century will be to ensure that Adventism will be seen as a Christian community with clear beliefs and clear ethical standards. While Adventism will be known, I hope, for its tolerance, and even its celebration of diversity—it must also insist that not everything goes. There are certain things a Christian must believe if he is entitled to be called ‘Christian’, and there are certain things one must believe and practice if one wants to call oneself a Seventh-day Adventist. That, of course, also means that there are certain convictions and behaviors that cannot be accepted.

Yet, at the same time, the Adventist of today, and even more so, in the coming decades, will refuse to be constantly measured with regard to the details of his orthodoxy and orthopraxis,
and in many (or most) local churches church discipline as prescribed by the Church Manual will become a relic of the past. How then will the church safeguard norms for belief and practice? By underlining authenticity and by actually being what we pretend to be. And by moral persuasion. This moral persuasion will not focus on the minutiae of numerous specific rules and regulations. It will rather focus on basic Christian principles, that are solidly biblically based. But how exactly these principles are to be implemented by a person in his/her situation, at a given moment in his/her pilgrimage, must be a matter of personal decision.

**Church growth**

Far too often the Christian church—including the Seventh-day Adventist Church—is simply in a survival mode. It is easily infected—and paralyzed—by the sentiment that the Christian church in the West is in grave danger of disappearing. True enough, the institutional church in its present form may not have too much life left in it. But faith is not by any means ready to die. The future shape and organizational form of Christian faith communities, admittedly, is rather uncertain. But that does not mean that God has abandoned major parts of our planet. He is prepared to do new things for us. The Spirit is at work. He will build on revealed truth, but we must anticipate that He may do so in unexpected ways. The Spirit is like the wind, and the wind blows where it wishes. You hear the sound of it, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it goes (John 3:8). An outline of future things is, however, ‘emerging’—even though it may be advisable not to use the word ‘emerging’ too often, as this seems to be a term that evokes widespread negative feelings among many Adventist leaders.

The church of the future must not be focused on its own organizational success and development, as a top-heavy institution that is run by professionals along a set pattern that is prescribed by its past. It will be a community of people, rather than of programs and activities and institutions. Such Adventist communities will continue to be inspired by the Adventist tradition, but will also benefit from many additional sources for its inspiration, spiritual growth and wellbeing, and will enjoy many of the elements of the richness of Christianity of past and present. If an Adventist community is to flourish, it must be a Christian community that is embracing diversity and is intent on learning and on sharing what is has learned, while cherishing the special ‘truths’ that makes it ‘Adventist’. The small-groups-movement and the church planting initiatives, the house church experiments and other church growth initiatives, with their strong emphasis on relational faith and experiential religion—models that have
already brought life to many local churches—are signals of what the future could be—but more so.

This does not mean that all church members will be easily convinced that this is the correct road into the future. Many see, and will see, the various contemporary church growth models as part of the broad way that leads to Babylon, rather than as the narrow path that will deliver its pilgrims to the kingdom. They will point to the problems and failures that will inevitably accompany this new approach to church growth and ‘doing’ church. Some may refuse to be involved with these risky innovations and will demand a pure church. They will focus on the idea of a small remnant that believes and defends all the right things, rather than hope (and work) for a multitude of believers that have come from all peoples and all cultures, and that not only believes right, but also does right and demonstrates what is right. For them, unfortunately, a small inward looking church rather than a great gospel harvest is a defining sign of the nearness of the second coming!

I am convinced that the church of the twenty-first century should see itself as a movement that has abundant potential for growth, if it will learn to connect with the people who everywhere are searching for meaning and want to find a welcoming place, with the space to learn more Bible truth and to grow in their faith, at their own speed, with the support of friends. The church that constantly looks for ways to better connect with real people, whether they are ‘seeker-sensitive’, or ‘post-seeker sensitive’ and looking for ‘vintage Christianity’, will make its share of mistakes. It will provide constant worries to church administrators—provided a decade or so from now there will still be such officials as we know them now. But such a church is bound to grow, because the Spirit cannot not be constrained, and people who carry the fragrance of the gospel will attract other people because they smell of Christ and of the good and permanent life that He offers.

**Adventures in theology**

The emphasis on community and relationships, on experience and the Spirit, does not by any means indicate that Christians no longer need to think about their faith. Evangelical Christianity has at times been accused of neglecting to properly think through what it believes. Some suggest that too much theology may actually endanger or destroy faith. Should faith not be childlike, they say, and does it not betray human hubris if we think we can analyze and actually understand the mysteries of God and his grace? Will this not lead to
dangerous doubt rather than to a deepening of our faith?

In actual fact, the church cannot prosper without theology. A twenty-first century church will need a twenty-first century theology. Serving God with our entire being implies that we also serve Him with our intellect, and that we do all we can to discover what God wants to reveal to us and what this means for us individually and for our communal life in the times in which we live. Theology is the lifeblood of the church. ‘It is both a statement of present belief and an explorers’ compass for further intellectual navigation.’\textsuperscript{12} The church must never stop thinking of how its faith interacts with the world in which it exists and in which it must bear witness. The church is not just the custodian of truth, but must always be a seeking for more truth.\textsuperscript{13} It can only do so fruitfully if studies its Source and also understands and speaks the language of the environment in which it operates, and if it tries to respond to the cultural and philosophical trends that come and go.

The words of St. Anselm are as valid as ever: Faith must ever try to understand itself, if it is to be communicated. To do so, it needs theology. And to ‘do’ theology within the Adventist Church three aspects must come together: the biblical message, the theological heritage of our own tradition and the thought-forms of contemporary culture.\textsuperscript{14}

Theology never originates and develops in a vacuum. Adventist theology can never divorce itself from its roots in Protestant Christianity and will carry along many elements of such diverse currents as Reformed theology, Anabaptist theology, Arminianism, Methodism, etcetera. And it will continue to be informed by the Adventist theologians who have gone before and by those who are contemporary, as well as by the cultural trends of our present-day world. But theology is not just the hobby or obsession of a few academics and of those passionate non-academics who feel a strong urge to either protect or return to the pure theology of the past.

There is, of course, no such thing as ‘pure’ theology. Theology is always work in process. ‘Theological thinking is never finished, never achieves finality; it is always \textit{in via}, “on the way”—in the process of becoming, in transit and transition.’\textsuperscript{15} And it is not just an activity of a happy, or not so happy, few. In fact, it is, or should be, the activity of the entire church. Theologians must always remember that their work is not just an academic exercise but is intended to serve the church and the wider community.
Theology can only be an important factor in the development of the Adventist identity in the twenty-first century, if it will to do more than primarily defend traditional understandings. It must help the church to see depths and angles it has not seen before, and to find and maintain the right emphases. This means that it must not treat second or third order issues as if they belong to the core of the Adventist understanding of the biblical message. It may well be that it all boils down to less emphasis on a defense of the truths and more on discovery of truth. And in conjunction with this, I believe it is important that the Adventist member in the pew learns to read the Bible rather than mostly study the Bible. We must learn how to read with open minds, ready for new thoughts and new interpretations, rather than go through the Bible mainly with a view to searching for support for the theories and interpretations we have long cherished.

**Development of Identity**

All of what I have said so far impacts on my individual identity as a Seventh-day Adventist Christian who lives in 2011 and hopes to be part of the future church, at least for some time. I am not the same kind of Adventist I was when I was baptized at age 14, or as I was when I studied in my early twenties for my Masters degree at Andrews University, nor as I was just ten years ago. My Adventist identity has changed. I think I have grown in my faith and in the ways in which I can make it relate to everyday life, and in the way I share it with others. I have seen a similar development in many people around me. And I have seen changes in the church. The church in the Netherlands is not the same as it was some 25 years or 50 years ago. And I am sure that applies to the church in Australia as well.

There will be further changes in our corporate identity—in who we collectively are and in how we are seen by those around us. I am happy about some current developments while there are other things I deplore. I lament the voices that insist that everything must remain the same, or, preferably, that many things must be turned back to what they once were. I read things that make me sad and frustrated. (Of course, I realize I also write and say things that make others sad and frustrated.) Yet, there is no way of stopping change. I pray that the manner of change and the rate of change may lead to further corporate spiritual growth rather than to further polarization or even to open conflict.

It will be important that the Adventist church of the future is identified as a Christian Church.
But also as an Adventist community that holds a number of firm convictions that are relevant to our times and provide answers to questions people are asking today. It is essential that we are identified as a servant community that is eager to be part of society around us, not primarily for PR reasons, but because that is what Christian discipleship entails. *It is essential that we are defined by what we are, not by what we oppose, by preaching what we believe rather than by condemning what others believe.* It is furthermore essential that we are defined by our lifestyle, which we promote through a credible and contemporary demonstration of principles, rather than by legislating a long list of do’s and don’ts.

Faced with the ongoing challenge of ‘doing church’, while engaged in the ongoing dialogue between liberals and conservatives, evangelicals and progressives, and so on, everything possible must be done to encourage the idea that we should not fight each other, but are ready to listen to each other and to complement each other, as Alden Thompson advocates in his newest book.¹⁶ That will only happen if we let the Spirit speak to us in new ways, through a renewed reading of God’s Word, through a new theological approach that builds on what we must not lose, but most emphatically also embraces new insights and addresses the real questions of real people, inside the church as well as outside the church—whether they are modern, postmodern, or post-postmodern, or whatever. In final analysis it would seem to me, that this is the way of Christ. And that is what it all boils down to: Our individual and corporate identity must mirror that of Christ.

¹ Alan Kirby, ‘The Death of Postmodermism and Beyond,’ *Philosophy Now*, issue 58.
² See e.g. William Chris Hobgood, *The Once and Future Pastor: The Changing Role of Religious Leaders* (The Alban Institute, 1999).
³ The following few paragraphs are borrowed from my article in *Ministry* magazine: ‘Theological diversity: A threat, an asset, or what?’ (December 2010), pp. 17-19.
⁵ See Knight, chapter ‘Adventist Congregationalism: Wake-up Call or Death Knell?’ in: ibid., pp. 185-198.
⁷ For an important study by an Adventist author about the topic of ethnic diversity in worship, see: Pedrito U. Maynard-Reid, *Diverse Worship: African-American, Caribbean & Hispanic Perspectives* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000).


Ibid., p. 11.

