

Institute for Christian Teaching
Education Department of Seventh-day Adventists

IMPLICATIONS OF CULTURAL PLURALISM
FOR SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST EDUCATION

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I. INTRODUCTION

The increasing cultural diversity of the Seventh-day Church has significant implications for its educational institutions and interfacing areas. Minority ethnic groups are rapidly growing in North America and the world-field has witnessed great gains in membership in non-European arenas. 1 Our mission specialist, Prof. Gottfried Oosterwal, indicates that the SDA Church is becoming more and more a non-Western Church. 2 What impact should these developments have on our educational system?

In fact, in the world at large a new ethnic consciousness (for example, the attempted suppression of rising heritage awareness contributed to the break-up of the U.S.S.R.) 3 asserts itself and already queries the function of education. 4 Likewise Christian educational systems are faced with somewhat similar questions, but usually in a milder form-institutions tend to reflect the society. 5

Therefore we see that Christian education must give an answer to the questions raised by the new ethnicity. New forms of the old question continue to develop: the perennial interaction between Christianity and culture. 6 This new culture consciousness causes the evangelist and the missiologist to look to education for assistance in proclaiming the Gospel in cross-cultural perspective and thereby expanding the domain of missions.

In essence and yet in part, SDA education is faced with the issue of Gospel (or Christianity) and culture: what is the relationship of Gospel to culture? This is classically described as an issue in "Christ and Culture". 7 When there is a clearer perspective about the relationship of Gospel to culture, then Adventist education can give a clear answer to the questions posed to it. Therefore, we shall proceed first by examining a definition of the critical term "culture" and then to delineate a theology of culture. Hopefully, such a consciously set forth theology should guard against decision-making based on an unconsciously functioning secular ethic; it is generally conceded now that Greek philosophical models have affected the formulation of Christian thought 8 (consider the apriori in the usual view of man as God's image). 9

Secondly, we shall proceed to examine the implications of this theology of culture for Christian education-how can it give an answer to the confronting issues. Obviously in a very broad sense we are "doing" Christian Ethics. Therefore the implications tend to be ethical and imperative in character.

II.A WORKING DEFINITION OF CULTURE

In harmony with the procedure outlined, we shall now move toward a definition of culture. There are many definitions of culture; 10 all of these have a certain relevance and reality, but probably reflect certain emphases. Obviously we wish to determine or develop a definition that suits our endeavor here; that is, a definition that allows theology and education to interface and dialogue in Christian perspective. We shall initially look at a more general definition, before arriving at a more specific definition.

Accordingly, Dr. Humberto Rasi provides a good general definition of culture and the Christian perspective for this definition in his "Christianity Faces Culture...":

...culture is the result of human cultivation of God's creation. Culture, then, is the artificial, secondary environment that human beings superimpose on the natural through the work of their minds and hands. 11

This definition identifies culture as a secondary and artificial environment that imposes itself on God's creation. From this definition it is also clear that man (through the work of his "mind and hand") uses culture to perceive, to interpret, and to adjust to the environment around him.

The theologian William Larkin, Jr. corroborates this conclusion very well; he says, "We humans use our world-view [the world-view constitutes the conditioning center for a culture 12] to interpret our experience, a fact that Scripture takes into account." Larkin cites Scriptural examples such as Acts 14:11 and 28:4,6. 13

After searching through a number of definitions by various anthropologists, William Larkin, Jr. comes up with his own definition. In many ways his definition of culture can really be seen as a detailing and elaboration of the Rasi definition. 14 "Perception" appears to be an element of emphasis in Larkin. 15 This perceptual aspect of culture is also an emphasis in the scholar Brian Walsh, world-view expert; he says, "...world views are perceptual frame-works. They are ways of seeing." 16 This element of emphasis on perception, we believe, constitutes a significant enabling key for theology and education to dialogue on culture.

This brings us to our working definition of culture; this definition is primarily that of William Larkin with some inspiration from myself and a Christian perspective mostly provided by Humberto Rasi, Brian Walsh, and C. Seerveld. 17 Culture is an imperfect manifestation of an innate response to God's creation that specifically reveals itself in a "socially acquired ideology or world-view, which is mediated through language, which a people use to interpret experience and which generates particular behaviors and structures-technological,

economic, social, political, and artistic, etc.-which adapts to changing circumstances." 18

As comprehensive and detailed as the definition may appear, it is still only suggestive of the vast implications and pervasiveness of culture for human perception and even society itself. See figure 5 in the excellent work on culture and the Bible by Dr. Larkin; culture has a truly vast arena. 19 Having defined culture, let us explore it more closely in theological terms. Let us seek a short theology of culture.

III. TOWARD A THEOLOGY OF CULTURE

A. CULTURE AND THE NATURE OF MAN

Aspects of our definition of culture, culture as "innate response", already suggest a close relationship between culture and man's nature. Let us consider this more closely.

In Gen. 2:18 we learn that human beings are social in nature; the social nature is present by virtue of creation. Man is designed for family and community. Emil Brunner might say that man's social nature is an order of creation. 20 If man is a social being, he is also a cultural being; the concepts are linked. "Cultural" is simply a more specific description of man's social nature. The social nature of man has to manifest itself in a particular culture. The sociologist B.J. Cohen affirms also that social implies cultural. 21

Interestingly coming from a different perspective, Walsh identifies the cultural aspect of man very directly with the image of God in man and links it with the social-historical-cultural activities of man. This both harmonizes with and adds to our observation. 22 The SDA scholar Hans LaRondelle comes to a somewhat similar conclusion. 23

Both Walsh and LaRondelle come to their conclusion by challenging some older concepts as being based on a functioning secular philosophical ethic rather than being based on the Scriptures themselves. 24 In other words, rather than identifying the rational elements alone in man with the image of God (as we find frequently), Walsh and LaRondelle see man as a dynamic and functioning being and whose culturally mandated activities (Gen. 1:26-28) should reflect or "image" the Creator throughout history. 25 Creation anticipates the future. The future is already present. 26

More specifically, Brian Walsh and Richard Middleton say it this way:

The ideas of the image of God and our rule of the earth occur near each other in the Genesis narrative, making their connection seem natural... Throughout Genesis 1, God is portrayed as the Creator-Lord who rules his world by sovereign decree. Then with the creation of mankind, the idea of the image of God is introduced. Almost in the

same breath God blesses his special creatures and gives them dominion over the earth. He gives them a royal authority and a realm to rule. We see in Genesis 1 an intended analogy between the limited authority over the earth that humans enjoy and the ultimate sovereignty of Yahweh. The former is portrayed as a reflection or likeness of the latter.... Adam's task is 'to till the soil and keep it' [RSV]. The twofold original task is to develop and preserve our creational environment.... in the words of the New American Standard Bible, we are to "cultivate" the garden.... Culture is the result of cultivation.... Both culture and cultivate refer essentially to our human interactions with the world... Anything to which we put our hand (or mind) changes—we cause... development. ... human interaction with or cultivation of our world always constitute culture... our human culture-forming, is intrinsically a communal or social phenomenon... We are socio-cultural beings called by God to work in developing.... So the primal command to subdue the earth (often called the creational mandate) is a cultural mandate. 27

Walsh and Middleton also make the connection between culture and history. They say:

Culture and history are therefore inseparable, almost by definition. Culture refers to what human beings have developed, so culture is essentially historical. The fabric of human life is developmental; this is intrinsic to our nature as human creatures.... But uniquely human history, the historical development of mankind, is based on our constant interaction with and cultivation of reality as we find it. 28

Therefore by a sensitivity to the Christian perspective or world view Walsh and others have apparently identified certain philosophical assumptions that have hindered our understanding of man as a cultural being. In fact Walsh and Middle make this powerful and summarizing statement: "To be a cultural being is, quite simply, to be human." 29

The proximity of man as the image of God and man as a cultural being should stimulate a greater appreciation and sensitivity in cultural matters. The Biblical ethic therefore encourages mutuality and receptiveness in cultural diversity. This "steady-state" is probably best described by the term cultural pluralism; Prof. R.C. Federico defines pluralism as "a situation in which many different groups live together, keeping and respecting their individual identities and heritages." 30 Prof. B.J. Cohen gives a somewhat similar definition for cultural pluralism. 31 A positive and

culturally pluralistic stance is a Biblical stance. Each person reflects the image of God.

Likewise, extreme ethnocentrism, the tendency to consider the culture of other groups as inferior is an un-Biblical stance.³² Accordingly, a superior attitude toward one's own culture could constitute an extreme ethnocentrism.³³

B. REVELATION IS GIVEN IN CULTURAL TERMS

As we have discovered that man is described as a cultural being in the Bible; likewise we find that revelation in the Scriptures is given in cultural terms. In other words, the Bible tends to communicate its message through the cultural symbols of the receiving people. Both conservative and liberal scholars agree on this. ³⁴ Both the seven-headed dragon of Revelation 12 and the winged beasts of Daniel 7 come from the cultural milieu of their time. The leviathan or serpent in Psalms 74:14 is a cultural symbol of its time. The description of Christ's resurrection and exaltation in Ephesians 4:8 is described in terms of a Roman triumph--the most celebrated victory procession of a conquering general.

There are many more. These are well-accepted conclusions by Biblical scholars. ³⁵

These salient points are succinctly set forth by Oosterwal and Surridge. Prof. Oosterwal says:

Whenever God reveals Himself He does so in the cultural dress of the people who are recipients of His message. That was true in Old Testament times. It was true also in the New. God uses the language of the people, employing their modes of thought and metaphors. He speaks through their natural environment--mountains, sheep, water--and makes use of their social institutions. All of Scripture bears evidence of the fact that 'the Word became flesh' (John 1:14,RSV). ³⁶

Indeed Jesus comes to us in the Gospels not as a generalized man, but as a first century Jew--using the thought forms of the time. Robert Surridge also says:

When we deal with symbolic passages of Scripture, we realize that the writer is trying to illustrate a spiritual truth. While the spiritual truth may have a universal application, the symbol he uses does not. It must by necessity come from his own cultural background. So to appreciate the spiritual truth fully, we need to understand what the symbol meant to the author and his first audience. ³⁷

Ellen White appears to echo the sentiments of Oosterwal and Surridge. In Selected Messages she says:

The Bible is not given to us in grand superhuman language. Jesus, in order to reach man where he is, took humanity. The Bible must be given in the language of men. Everything that is human is imperfect. Different meanings are expressed by the same word; there is not one word for each distinct idea. The Bible was given for practical purposes.
38

Also the "steady" Bible writer and teacher, T. H. Jemison, makes similar statements. He comments :

God chose men, prepared them for service, and through the Spirit guided them to write. The writers expressed themselves in their own style, at their own level of literary ability, and their writings revealed their individual personality. The words they used were their own; they drew on their personal background and experience. The Spirit enlightened their mind, prompted their thinking, enlivened their memory, and directed their attention to matters to be recorded. Their methods of expression were characteristically their own, but at the same time the communications formed God's divine message to men. Thus the words of men became the word of God. These words, considered in their total context and in their natural sense in harmony with the usage of their day, teach the truth regarding God's character, His will, and His plan of salvation. 39

Therefore, our earlier examination of the doctrine of man in regard to man's cultural nature agrees with our conclusion from the nature of Biblical revelation itself; namely, with great importance Biblical revelation approaches and recognizes man as a cultural being.

C.Revelation as Cross-Cultural Communication

Hence in the Scriptures then, we have an example of God doing cross-cultural communication. As noted, the divine revelation is given in human language. Moreover, the symbols of the language tend to reflect the particular cultural context. As the context changes, the language literally changes from Hebrew to Greek. The revelation and the message has not changed, but the cultural encapsulation has changed. In the Scriptures then we find God doing "contextualization". This is a valid missionary method. Dr. Hesselgrave gives us more detail on contextualization from the divine perspective and summarizes Norman Ericson's important

treatment of the topic in Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally. 40

However, let us look at some specific examples in the Scriptures. Like good educators today, the Bible lends emphasis to the specific and concrete. 41

For example, let us take a look at the Gospels. To some degree, differences in the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke) reflect differences in context, situation, and culture. Apparently because of the Roman receiving audiences, many Latin terms are simply transliterated into the Greek of Mark (they retain their Roman character); Unlike Matthew, in Mark many Jewish terms are explained (i.e., compare the parallel accounts in Mark 7 and Matthew 15). Matthew is probably addressed to a Jewish audience and according emphasizes Jesus as the fulfillment of Hebrew prophecy. Luke appears to be addressed to a Greek audience; it comes the closest to a classical Greek style. 42

Also, let us consider the variety and cultural dress in the proclamation of the one central gospel message. In Acts 17 Paul takes on a Greek style in manner and rhetoric as he addresses his Greek audience on Mars Hill (Dr. Hesselgrave also cites and elaborates this example). 43 However, in addressing his fellow Christian Jews in the book of Hebrews Paul uses rabbinical exegetical methods in teaching the gospel.44 At Pentecost there was a manifestation of the Holy Spirit and "every man heard in his own language" (Acts 2:6).

It is obvious that we should manifest great receptivity and sensitivity in cultural matters. God does.

D. CHRIST AS THE TRANSFORMER OF CULTURE

As we construct our Biblical ethical model for culture (or a theology of culture), we note that Biblical revelation tends to affirm culture. This is one dimension. There is a second dimension, Christ as the "transformer of culture". This term is identified with H. Richard Niebuhr. 45

This ethical type of Niebuhr basically conforms to the Biblical standard. We earlier observed that while revelation may use a particular language or symbol, it is not "bound" by it; revelation moves from Hebrew to Greek in traversing the path from Old to New Testament. Therefore, revelation is something different from culture and stands above culture. Revelation then puts on cultural dress and, as we observed, revelation is expressed culturally. In other words, culture is transposed and organized in such a way as to serve revelation.

Some would say that Christ has transformed the culture. Romans 12:2 speaks of transforming and renewing of the mind; we speak of "conversion" in the Christian context. It seems to me that Niebuhr brings up the essential matter when we consider Christ as Transformer. Christ transforms culture into service for Him. As cultural elements are aligned in Christian perspective, they rightly carry out the cultural mandate in man's nature and imitate the manner of Scriptural contextualization. Then we have integration of faith and learning in Christian perspective.

Interestingly, P. Berger shares some of our views and so strengthens them. From an entirely different approach, the sociologist-anthropologist Peter Berger concludes that religion always tends to be expressed in cultural terms; these cultural symbols are built into a type of system that expresses meaning for the society and serves as an integrating force for the same. Dean Kelly summarizes Berger and says it this way:

'Man must make a world for himself...he must construct a human world. This world, of course, is culture...While it is necessary that such worlds be built, it is quite difficult to keep them going.'

This human world of culture is kept going by the transmission of its humanly constructed and shared meanings from each generation to the next. ...this socially constructed mental universe, this meaningful ordering of experience, which Berger terms *nomos*, by which 'the individual can 'make sense' of his own biography'....An individual who cannot appropriate, internalize this culturally transmitted world of meaning, this *nomos* is faced with meaninglessness or anomy....This *nomos* is threatened by the marginal situations we face....'

The socially established *nomos* attains its greatest solidarity and reality when it is taken for granted. Whenever it attains this quality, 'there occurs a merging of its meaning with what is considered to be the fundamental meanings in the universe. *Nomos* and *cosmos* appear to be coextensive'.... In Berger's thought, '*cosmos*' is the system of fundamental meanings believed to underlie and organize the universe. 'Religion is the human enterprise by which a sacred *cosmos* is established.'....'By sacred is meant here a quality of mysterious and awesome power, other than man and yet related to him....'It is this 'sacred *cosmos*' that 'provides man's ultimate shield against the terror of anomy'... a sacred canopy against chaos....Religion has played a strategic part in the human enterprise of world building....[It] is the audacious attempt to conceive of the entire universe as being humanly significant.'46

In addition to the support Berger gives to some of our conclusions, we also find here a suggestion that all societies have some type of religious view of life and that this religious view, which is really the world view, is already integrated into the cultural life of the society. 47 The Christian must recover his world view by the "transformation" and "conversion" of the cultural elements into an integrated perspective. As Hesselgrave

says, "culture reflects the fallen state of man...culture can be renewed so as to glorify God and promote His purposes." 48 In our ethical model, it seems to me that Christ as Transformer must hold a central place.

E. POSSIBLE CONFLICTS BETWEEN CHRIST AND CULTURE

This leads us to consider the third dimension of our ethical model or theology of culture; we must consider possible conflicts between "Christ and Culture" as classically coined by H. Richard Niebuhr. We must consider his "Christ against culture" type.

As we earlier observed, revelation is something different from culture and hence stands "above" culture; and therefore culture stands "under" the judgement of revelation. Indeed, the culture-oriented nature of revelation implies a process of deliberate cultural selection and thus also implies a process of judgement. All cultural terms and symbols do not have equal suitability for a task (It is well-accepted that inspiration also involves the selection of materials 49). Some aspects of a culture may be judged unacceptable by the standard of revelation (All things, including cultures, stand under the judgement of God as Ecclesiastes 12:14 tells us and H. Richard Niebuhr reminds us 50).

For example, some local Graeco-Roman cultures may accept homosexuality as a way of life, but revelation judges it as unacceptable (Rom. 1:24-32). 51 This position is taken despite its contrariness to a specific culture.

Therefore we conclude that when there is a conflict between demands of the Gospel and a specific culture, we should with the Gospel demands. In other words, in such a situation one should maintain a "Christ against culture" stance as Niebuhr would call it. 52

However, let us humbly evaluate such a possible conflict. Let us be certain that the standard of judgement is in fact Biblical revelation and not that of our own culture. After all, it is well-acknowledged that many of our well-meaning nineteenth century missionaries sought to eliminate many native cultural practices that were not un-Biblical; they were simply non-Western. Too often the standard of judgement became the home-base culture rather than the Bible. 53

Accordingly, the scholar Stephen Grunlan gives us such an example. He says:

...in developing a theology of conversion, our Western culture with its emphasis on individualism has tended to emphasize the individual nature of the conversion experience, drawing on Scripture that supports that position (e.g., Acts 8:26-40). However, those who are from a culture where group and communal decision making are emphasized will tend to emphasize the corporate nature of conversion (e.g., Acts 10:44-48; 16:33; I Cor. 1:16). 54

Grunlan finds further reinforcement for this observation in The Willowbank Report--Gospel and Culture by the Lusanne Committee for World Evangelism in 1978 and cites a quote:

Conversion should not be conceived as being invariably and only as an individual experience, although that has been the pattern of western expectation for many years....It is evident that people receive the gospel more readily when it is presented to them in a manner which is appropriate--and not alien--to their culture, and when they can respond to it with and among their own people....We recognize the validity of the corporate dimension of conversion as part of the total process as well as...to share in it personally....55

Obviously, individuals tend to be culturally selective in reading the Scriptures and therefore one must very carefully evaluate a "Christ against culture" situation. This further suggests other social and psychological forces that may be present as one seeks to understand and apply the Scriptures. Indeed, probably like other cultures, Western culture has affected the Western theological "lens".⁵⁶ Let us check for "lens distortion" as we seek to apply the Scriptures.

Furthermore, there may be a number of issues within a culture that are clearly "Christ against culture" and their implementation are unentangled. These can be carried out decisively. There may be others that are clearly "Christ against culture", but the implementation may be locally "tangled". Such a situation may require tact, care, patience, and adaptability. It may even require "time". As noted earlier, the absolute Biblical ethic is characterized by its specificity and concreteness of application in context (unlike the "general" tendency in philosophy).⁵⁷ While Paul stood firmly against the almost culturally imbedded homosexuality and immorality in Rome and Corinth; revelation itself more gently led some in the Old Testament from polygamy to the ideal of monogamy. Obviously, God does not compromise; He finally leads to His ideal. So must we.

For example, our high Western divorce rate seriously goes against the Biblical ideal for marriage. The secular ethic, and therefore cultural ethic, is probably a strong factor in this situation. Nevertheless, the committed church seeks to move toward the ideal--though it is an "entangled situation". Grunlan describes this in his "Biblical Authority and Cultural Relativity".⁵⁸

Obviously the "Christ against culture" position raises a number of questions and issues. It is a fruitful area of study. This completes the third dimension of our ethical model as stated before; the other dimensions are "Christ as Transformer" and "affirmation of culture". As mentioned, our model is similar to the Rasi model.

F. THE ETERNAL AND THE CULTURAL?

As observed in the consideration of "possible conflicts", revelation is something different from culture (culture is its dress), and therefore revelation is said to be eternal. The cultural is said to be temporal.

As noted also, we view revelation through our particular "cultural lens". However, each society has its own "lens". Again culture is seen as temporary and relative.

Somewhat similarly, when dealing with the issue of the appropriateness of "hats or veils" in church in the light of I Cor. 11, most Christians probably conclude the issue here is one of showing of respect by the ladies of the church by "covering" in Corinth. However in other cultures this respect might be shown differently. As is well-known, in the Jewish culture, the man covers his head while praying or worshipping. Giving respect and reverence are said to be eternal, while the act of "covering" is said to be the temporal and cultural. Both Larkin and Grunlan address of I Cor. 11. 59 Most of us would probably agree that hats and veils are not required today when the cultures are not parallel. There are other cases like this in Scripture; in these instances the essence of the Biblical injunction can be carried out in the cultural form of the particular society involved. Grunlan cites several examples and explains this matter very well. 60 However, there is more to this entire matter; it is not readily so self-evident.

As Larkin points out in his full treatment of the matter, the "cultural" is not always identified with the "temporary". Larkin, as our study does, points out that revelation is given almost completely in cultural terms. We might say that revelation is all cultural: 61 the symbols, the idiom, etc. are all cultural. In his short work, Grunlan seems to miss this dimension completely. 62 Larkin says:

Ramesh P. Richard states... 'The fact that a command is cultural does not mean it is not transferable to this time.' However, there are respected critics... who maintain that the meaning is binding but not the form. Such a position is fraught with difficulty. Since both cultural forms and scriptural instructions deal with human behavior, how can interpreters be sure that in clinically separating the two they are not removing from their purview biblical content intended for application in all times and places? If cultural form and meaning have no essential relationship, where is the authority for such forms as monogamous marriage, the husband-wife relationship, and baptism by water? Proponents of this position insist that this is not the logical implication of their approach. But Robertson McQuilkin observes, 'Suddenly I am made aware that every teaching of Scripture is 'cultural' and that the idea of

expecting obedience only to the principle [meaning] that can be discerned behind any specific command of Scripture has made possible the rejection of any teaching at all that is not deemed appropriate by any group of people.'⁶³

Accordingly using Larkin's terminology, the issue is not so much whether a specific injunction is "cultural" or not, but rather whether it is "normative" or "nonnormative".⁶⁴ The immediate context and the Bible itself provide "criteria for normativeness and nonnormativeness".⁶⁵ The New Testament often shows the historical and cultural limitations of certain Old Testament statements; for example, Larkin notes how 2 Cor.6:17 limits and applies the original commands in Isa.52:11 (cf. Ezra 1:7-11) not merely to the "vessels of idols", but "idolatrous practice itself".⁶⁶ Also Jesus Himself in Matt 19:4-9 limits the Mosaic legislation on divorce by virtue of its circumstance and refers to the original 'creational order' in Gen.1:27 and 2:24.⁶⁷

While Larkin correctly speaks of normativeness and non-normativeness, I prefer to explore the matter in terms of whether or not the cultural form is "absolutized" or not in any specific Biblical statements.

For example, the Lord's Supper or Communion stands on the cultural concept of a "covenant meal".⁶⁸ However, the words of Jesus in Matt.26 make it very clear that this practice is to be followed by His believers everywhere. I would say that the cultural form has been "absolutized" into a universal ordinance.

Also, the footwashing in John 13 is certainly "cultural" in the sense that is not practiced in many lands today, but neither are the "covenant meals" of the communion ordinance universally practiced today. Too close a differentiation of cultural form and meaning may lead to a rejection of Biblical concepts as Larkin points out.⁶⁹ Grunlan falls into this "trap" in his analysis of foot washing practice.⁷⁰ Though the practice teaches us "humility", the actual practice of foot washing is not thereby rendered obsolete; in his analysis of "the sacraments", Vernard Eller concludes that footwashing is a universal.⁷¹ Jesus' statements in John 13:13-17 also appear to "absolutize" this cultural form.

Once again we see that the Scriptures are also culturally selective. God seems to choose certain cultural forms to be universalized.

This now completes our theology of culture. Both Larkin and Hesselgrave speak of just such a need.⁷² Let us now explore the implications for Seventh-day Adventist education.

IV. IMPLICATIONS FOR SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST EDUCATION

A. GENERAL IMPLICATIONS

Our theology of culture leads us very directly to Christian education; educators classically and strongly identify the educational process with the transmission of culture. 73 This also constitutes a significant bond with the Biblical concept of man as a cultural being . 74 Interestingly both Ellen White 75 and most educators also identify the nature of man 76 with the objectives of education. The Christian concept gives a particular strong emphasis to the cultural nature of man.

Accordingly, true Christian education --which is so closely related to our human nature --must necessarily be multicultural and cross-cultural in nature. This understanding is reinforced by our understanding of self-concept development; the self-image is socially, and therefore culturally, developed. 77 Indeed, an individual's view of reality is socially and culturally constructed. 78 Under these circumstances the delicate human personality develops. We should do our very best to provide the fertile ground for the growth of this fragile plant. A multicultural and cross-cultural soil can provide an appropriate mix for human social diversity.

Accordingly the very diversity of Adventism both in North America and the rest of the world seems to mandate such a multicultural context for Christian Education. It seems to me that the tremendous ethnic concerns in the world today (often misjudged by men) constitute a call from God to accept human diversity as a positive springboard to action. H. Richard Niebuhr reminds us that God is constantly at work as redeemer and judge in all life; this "radical monotheism " is described by Niebuhr. 78

There is a certain level of commitment to provide educational institutions within the major cultural areas of the SDA church and to make education available to our youth as far as possible; 79 however ,more specific strategies and specific relevant techniques must be developed and applied . There is also a multicultural educational concern in our church as evidence in our publications. 80 Again, more development is needed in this area . 81

The success of achieving these implications that stem from our theology of culture are highly dependant upon the specifics of their implementation. Therefore, let us look at some specifics of implementation.

B. SOME SPECIFICS OF IMPLEMENTATION

1. CURRICULUM

Let us first look at curriculum. If man is a cultural being and the educational process involves the transmission of culture, the curriculum constitutes, in great part, what is transmitted. Hence, both educationally and theologically, we have strong concerns about the curriculum.

Accordingly cultural anthropology, the science of culture, should stand stronger in our course offerings; it is fairly weak now except at the graduate level. Since our understanding of the Scriptures comes to us through our "cultural lens" which may be therefore distorted, we seem to need intercultural theological studies as a "corrective lens". Grunland and Mayers strongly encourage this. 82 Also, some cultures are closer to the Biblical culture than others; these cultures may provide greater theological insights. 83

Also as we observed earlier, the methodology of this entire study is really that of Christian ethics in its broadest sense. More Christian ethics are needed in the curriculum -- especially Christian social ethics. Christian ethics should go beyond issues of personal ethics. It is Christian ethics that provides a viewpoint for the young person to evaluate the issues and crises around him or her. It is Christian ethics that provides the Christian perspective in the midst of a powerful secular ethic. It is really the perspective of Christian ethics that integrates faith and learning. This leads us to another point.

All of this suggest the need for more interdisciplinary studies. This tends to integrate the curriculum as a whole in Christian perspective for the young person. In fact, recent research suggest that interdisciplinary studies stimulate creativity. 84

2. INSTRUCTION

Recent studies strongly indicate that culture provides "the lens " and "the cues" for learning. 85 Our instructors need to better understand the cultural implications for learning.

3. STAFF

Obviously a multicultural staff as modified by the needs of the local institutions may be best. This staff should be exposed to cross-cultural communications and human relations workshops.

V. CONCLUSION: HOLDING IT ALL TOGETHER

Obviously diversity can challenge the cohesion of an organization. However Dean Kelly shows us that the social cohesion of religious organizations stem around its "strictness", but not to the point of "stricture ". Enforced standards hold the group together.⁸⁶ These are our twenty-seven fundamental beliefs. Let us hold on to them as they hold on to us. We can experience unity in diversity as the early church.

ENDNOTES

1. Time, May 7, 1990, p.12; cf. "Race in America", Nation, April 9, 1990; Carl George, "Challenges Facing Adventists", Adventist Review, Jan. 5, 1989, pp.17-19; "How You Can Fight Prejudice", Insight, Feb. 22, 1986; "Of Many-One People", Adventist Education, Summer 1989, p.3.
2. G. Oosterwal, Mission Possible (Nashville, 1972), pp.15-16. Cf. Carl George.
3. "Breaking Up is Hard to Do; Change or Die", Jan. 22, 1990, p.35, U.S. News & World Report; "Backlash in Eastern Europe; Newly Stirred Nationalism", Jan. 22, 1990, p.37, U.S. News & World Report; "Beyond Black & White", May 1992, Newsweek; John Leo, "Our Hypersensitive Minorities", April 16, 1990, U.S. News & World Report, p.17.
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