Institute for Christian Teaching
Education Department of Seventh-day Adventists

Contemporary Popular Culture and Christian Responsibility:
A Korean Adventist Perspective

By
Un Bae Kim
Sahmyook University
Seoul, Korea

Prepared for the
28th International Faith and Learning Seminar
Held at
Babcock University, Ilishan-Remo, Nigeria
June 17-29, 2001

Contemporary Popular Culture and Christian Responsibility:
A Korean Adventist Perspective
Un Bae Kim
Sahmyook University

Considering the influence of popular culture on the youth, particularly the on-line culture of the Internet, it is critical that Christian universities hold to Christian values and culture. They are in an important position to define and transmit those values. Unfortunately, in many cases it is in our institutions that many Christian students first contact harmful culture, and where they experience the most serious cultural and value shock, as they encounter contemporary popular culture first hand. It is on our campuses that they experience spiritual frustration and even spiritual deviation. This doesn't only take place on our campuses, of course. Nor is it unique to Adventists. Youth from conservative families with more conservative beliefs and spiritual values are perhaps in more danger than even Adventists. Neither is it a problem exclusive to youth, nor to a few advanced societies. It is a symptom of secularization, and secularization is a universal problem facing believers and Christians everywhere. Anyone who lives in contact with modern society experiences these conflicts. However our universities are the primary venue for disorientation, and the only hope for reorientation.

It is undeniable that popular culture has a huge influence on our youth. It is arguably the greatest influence in their lives. Its impact on the youth in this information age is more immediate, more powerful, more organized, and more extensive than ever in the past. Unfortunately, this impact has slipped under the traditional protection we have had in place for our youth. Most Adventist youth have already crossed the line to popular culture values and participate regularly in practices unacceptable to the standards of the Adventist Church.

We should not bury our heads in the sand. We should recognize and address the shock and conflict that our youth are experiencing. The great controversy has moved its venue to a controversy between Christian values and popular culture. This is not merely a cultural issue. It is a spiritual and religious issue. Culture is integrated closely with our spiritual journey. It defines and influences how we live and how we should live. Christians must take culture seriously. And when the church is no longer aided by a 'Christian' society, it becomes even more critical that the church becomes the guardian and preserver of Christian values. It is more and more the lonely

role of the church to educate Adventist youth to establish proper spiritual and biblical values. We must enlist the youth themselves in this battle, by teaching them to be combatants on the battlefield. We must teach them to analyze and criticize today's culture, and come up with appropriate resolutions.

Why Focus on Culture?

Culture is not just a matter of aesthetic preferences. It is about how to live in accordance with the commands of God. It also determines and defines how we will discover the meaning of spiritual life. I am using the term "culture" in a wider sense than that typically used in the social sciences. This is much broader than it was in the past. Once it meant merely polite society behavior-- etiquette and manners. Then it moved on to mental and aesthetic activities. Culture was activities for achieving the moral value of human beings through training and sharpening their mentality. But recently the concept of culture has broadened to include any conscious activity. It now refers to all learned behavior. In that definition culture becomes very important to Christians. Spirituality is all about learned values and behavior. Culture is not something inactive and instinctive. It is active and learned. It is everyday life.

The Bible talks about everyday life. It is concerned with proper diet, proper sexual relationships, proper financial management, proper working habits, proper rest, proper communities and neighborhoods, and about proper worship of God. This is especially relevant for the Adventist Church. The teachings from the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy are focused on the way for Adventists to glorify God through their everyday lives. It teaches them to seek to please God through their routine lives. Adventists have a legacy of spiritual counsel on all aspects of the physical, social, financial, moral, and spiritual elements of daily life. It offers guidance on diet, marriage, sex, family, work, vacations, money, and relationships with neighbors, and worship. This is why we must pay attention to culture.

To lead a spiritual life is to live as the people or children of God in all aspects of life. To obey God's will and live after the pattern of His righteousness is to live as God's people. Proper culture means to live a God-given life according to His will. Therefore, the degree of our attention to culture may indicate our attention to the process of sanctification in our daily lives.

Understanding Contemporary Popular Culture

Contemporary Culture

The culture of the "contemporary" era has at least three characteristics. Its foremost characteristic is that all the aspects of life have changed from God-centered to man-centered. This process is called secularization. Secularization is a universal phenomenon. Traditional values are now criticized and classical authorities are challenged. It is clear that the culture of materialism and man-centered secularization is indeed an obstacle for acceptance and dissemination of the Adventist message.

The second characteristic is individualism. "Nobody has a right to invade one's privacy." This is the core of modern libertinism. Everyone has a right to decide for him or herself. Modern people are comfortable with many options and alternatives as choices through the process of individualism. The impact of individualism on religion is, "I will choose whatever religion I want to," or "Nobody can tell me what religion I should choose." As a result, the impact of the church as a community has been weakened.

The third characteristic of contemporary culture is pluralism. Pluralism is a worldview that allows various systems to be true at the same time. For that to be possible, there has to be pessimism about the possibility of discovering absolute truth. So many positions can be 'true' in part-- religious, political or other ideologies. A personal set of beliefs is a preference. And a person may include more than one system at a time. In short, it is only a matter of taste or preference no matter what kind of religion, moral principles, or artistic trend one may choose. Consequently, the transcendental aspect in Christianity is challenged, eternal and consistent truth is abandoned, and the unique identity of Christianity is threatened. The contemporary culture can be comprehended by the successive relationship of secularization, individualism, and pluralism.

Popular Culture

The most outstanding form of contemporary culture in the twentieth and twenty first century is what is called 'popular culture.' This popular culture needs to be evaluated from the perspective of the characteristic of contemporary culture. Christian evaluation of popular culture is almost uniformly negative, with just a few exceptions. In most cases the revulsion is instinctive rather than carefully reasoned. However it is the world that surrounds us and and particularly our

youth. Our revulsion may not be reason enough for our youth to accept being social misfits in their generation. We need to make our evaluation of popular culture more tangible, more transparent so that this generation can form their own reasoned evaluation of the world they must live in. Often we force them to choose between our feelings and the natural world of their peers. And our feelings are almost uniformly negative towards that world. So let us spell things out— make them tangible so we can talk about them together.

First of all, we react to the secular aspect of popular culture. Wherever we sense secularity we have negative evaluations of it. Having rejected it, we focus on the negative aspects of popular culture, such as violence, lustfulness, and the occult.

Popular culture glorifies and justifies violence. Justifying violence matters because it results in the destruction of life itself, and valuing life is a basic human value. From a Christian perspective, there is nobody on earth who has the right to take another's life. Our responsibility is to preserve life. When violence is justified, the value of life is devalued. Taking life on a whim is common in entertainment mass media.

Popular culture stimulates lust. This lustfulness in popular culture distorts and commercializes sex, the gift of God. It erodes the experience of mutual intimacy and concern. It opens the door to sexual abuse of women and children. It justifies unequal and predatory relationships between men and women.

Popular culture incorporates occult images and ideas. References to reincarnation, ghosts, Satan worship, and psychic phenomena are common. These black arts challenge the spiritual truths and order in Christianity. They may even open the door for people to come under the influence of real occult powers, and even possession by evil spirits.

So violence, lustfulness, and black arts in popular culture can undermine the value of life, pervert pure sexuality, pollute true spiritual life and promote the intervention of evil spirits. It can enslave people to obsessive lusts, take away their freedom and deny them the peace that is their heritage to enjoy.

Secondly, we react to the secularization of popular culture promoted by the media. We are wary and uncomfortable with the direction that the media of popular culture seems to be going. The advancement of technology has opened new means to experience and transmit popular

culture. Television, audio, videos, computers, the Internet, and even cellular phones have become the media of contemporary culture. While media may seem to be merely the vehicle for transmission and participation in popular culture, the medium itself has an impact—it is also the message. By what it includes and excludes it does more than transmit. Prolonged use of particular media impacts the thoughts, ideas, lifestyles, and viewpoints of its users. It sends a message, stimulates particular thoughts and impulses, and controls the lifestyle. It also excludes and even dismisses the potential for traditional Christian media. It not only promotes a secular worldview but it demands that users conform to its perspectives, and renders Christian forms of evangelism impotent.

Thirdly, we react to secularism in the form of commercialism. Because the new media is expensive, and because mass media opens the possibility for greedy gain, taking money from participants in popular culture becomes a focus. Culture has been degraded into materialistic commercialism. Culture is treated as a product and the value of culture depends on that of a product. It becomes more important to sell at any cost, and whatever sells must be promoted regardless of its effect. The content of popular culture depends fully on its consumers. Entertainment and pleasure sells better than productive things that improve the consumers' life and spirit. Entertainment and pleasure are intoxicating and are never satiated, making them great commercial products. In the meantime life gets worse, productivity is reduced, morality is corrupted, and spirituality killed.

There have been studies on the relative impact of popular culture. Its influence is stronger on the youth than on adults, and particularly on youth from poor family backgrounds. This is a critical finding. The 'art' of popular culture—the images on television, on radio and in music, in movies and videos, magazines, comics and even theater tend toward pornography and obscenity. They also emphasize the present more than eternity, and stimulate entertainment and addiction rather than realizable dreams and strategies for survival. They result in demoralization rather than empowerment. In such a situation, the youth become enfeebled, and prevented from developing a capacity to meditate on the Word of God, and all possibility to get closer to God. And here we come to some serious defects in church education—the only means available to protect and direct our youth.

A Dualistic Paradigm on Culture

The majority of the Adventist youth in Korea today are drifting from Biblical values and Adventist religious traditions as a result of the influence of popular culture. They are being seriously impacted by secular values. The Adventist Church faces competition from a variety of cultural effects. It is confronted by new problems requiring innovative wisdom. The possibility of handing down its traditional Adventist values intact to the next generation is being questioned. But can it afford to just walk away? Can it give up and retreat into a separate world, far from the madding crowd? Can it survive by shutting itself away from culture, society, and the world? Isn't there any way it can transmit the essential Adventist values to its secularized youth? These are the questions the Adventist Church must ask, and must find the moral fortitude and spiritual optimism to face and resolve.

Seventh-day Adventists already live differently than Adventists traditionally did. They dress and adorn themselves in ways that would have been frowned on in the recent past. They get married, get divorced, and get remarried at the drop of a hat. Worship styles, musical preferences, and recreational activities have changed. Members are exposed to similar magazines, television, videos and even movies to what the rest of the community is exposed. There is no question that the members have changed. But the Church officially clings to its traditional standards and values. There is increasing dissonance between church pronouncements and member lifestyles. There is inconsistency in evaluations of today's culture.

The official position is a dualistic critique of culture. This paradigm declares that the orthodox beliefs and teachings and practices of the Adventist Church are good because they are from God, while everything that goes on outside of the church is evil and from the Devil. Everything is clearly identified as black or white and good or bad. More than anything else, this simplistic critique promotes dissonance between faith and culture, with the church always judging and devaluing popular culture. Can this dualistic paradigm be standing in the way of creative solutions to the impasse between the church and the world its members live in?

Has the church done its job when it pronounces judgments on everything outside of the church? Has it fulfilled its mission when it has isolated itself from culture, society, and the world around it? I will say strongly "No." There is no avoiding the challenge of today's popular culture. This is the environment that surrounds the church. The influence of culture is inescapable. The

church cannot separate itself from its environment. Between working hours the community immerses itself in popular culture. And Adventist youth are doing the same. There is already a huge cultural gap between traditional teachings the real-life situation of its youth. The youth are as far from traditional Adventism as our adults are from the medieval church.

Worse than the gap between mouthed values and real life, the Adventist youth are being psychologically damaged by this dissonance. They suffer the effects of guilt. Low self-esteem and a lack of confidence are common. Some live hypocritical lives, pretending one thing and doing another. Some live in constant fear of being found out, or being humiliated. There is residual guilt as the result of the severe conflict between 'spirituality' and their real-life situation. Between the values they have been taught and their secret lives.

It is imperative that the church heal not harm its youth. The church must help the youth to delight in the word of God and proudly live as Christians, and at the same time be discerning and protected from damaging temptations and harmful secular values. This is central to the mission of the church. This is the way the church can spread the gospel and bear the fruit of Christian character accordingly. The Adventist Church must accept the challenge of this age in an all-embracing way. Popular culture in the twenty-first century is the primary challenge of the church, it all its breadth and depth. The church must deal with individualism and pluralism, and with the rapid changes in moral values. It must find a way to promote ideal lifestyles for this age.

Clear Choices: Fundamentalism and Liberalism

Piety and fundamentalism may be the major elements that prevent effective concern within the church, and that block successful responses by the church. The idea that Adventists must be primarily concerned with "spiritual life" and "things above" renders it impotent. The blanket counsel to avoid secular culture as much as possible drives the issue underground. The Adventist Church may want to restore its 'golden years' of fundamentalism in the face of the bewildering diversity of this age and the almost irresistible challenge of popular culture. However such an option is less and less feasible.

Post-modernism is even more threatening. Post-modernism doesn't even aspire to offering a viable perspective on life, but entices us to live within the variety of choices there are in our

pluralistic society. Some people are becoming weary of relativity, and many are longing for more definite and fixed perspectives to trust and depend on, and are becoming attracted to traditionalism again. These people will support the preservation of traditional Adventism, and a revival of traditional spirituality in the church. The quickest resolution for culture shock is a return to fundamentalism. In this sense, current fundamentalistic trends may be one of the responses the Adventists are making to preserve their spiritual identity in the midst of the rapidly-changing twenty first century.

Fundamentalism focuses its critique on the corrupt aspects of popular culture and modern society. It puts great emphasis on the negative aspects of this society. It concentrates on exposing evil aspects of today's society and culture. This negative trend makes people devalue and despise this complicated world. They divide the complicated reality of this world into two parts, such as good and evil, beauty and ugliness, truth and falsehood, angels and Satan, holiness and secularism, and so on. As a result, this trend leads fundamentalists to think that this world is full of evil and that they, only they, are the only good people left, the remnant.

That fundamentalism can survive in this information age is astounding. And yet, the enormous amount of knowledge and information never daunts fundamentalists. In some way it is fueled by evidence against its values. That can easily be seen in the Hindu fundamentalist movements in India, and in the Christian fundamentalist movements in the United States. Media disclosure and criticism of fundamentalism seems to fuel its spread. So though it may seem to be a remedy for anomie—or loss of identity—for the Christian, it may be counter productive in the long run. This dualistic approach may help individual Christians maintain their piety, but it sabotages the possibility for the church to fulfill its mission to keep its youth, and to reach the unreached in the future.

Christians in the twenty-first century will never be satisfied with fundamentalistic solutions. Fundamentalism denies the successive roles of God as Creator, Savior, and Judge. God's creative and redemptive participation and providence for His creation makes it impossible to simplistically divide everything into two parts, good and evil. Also, fundamentalism neglects its responsibility to act as God's steward in the world. Those Christians trying hard to keep their spiritual identity and fulfill their responsibility in the world are more attractive than fundamentalists failing to meet the challenge of today's popular culture. Mechanical and

simplistic dualistic explanations are not persuasive or useful. True Christians should avoid the temptation of fundamentalism. And especially should they be wary of the critical spirit that goes hand in hand with that judgmental stance. Our role is not to judge and humiliate anyone different from ourselves in this world with a different lifestyle.

Liberalism is the other apparent alternative. Should the Adventist Church embrace liberalistic trends, which is the antithesis of undesirable fundamentalism in every respect? We are not talking here about the concept of theological liberalism or radical relativism. That movement has lost its steam. We are talking about the way people evaluate culture. Fundamentalists focus on a "new emphasis on traditions" as an anchor in this rapidly changing age. Liberals focus on "the pursuit of pluralism." Liberals consider liberty as their characteristic value, and are strongly against the regulations that arise out of general or artificial principles. Liberals within Adventism will be applying the same perspective to their church. They would be against traditional Adventist cultural rules and regulations that are just rules without sound reasons. They would be very generous and accepting as long as the spirit of the gospel is preserved. That does not mean that they accept every religion as equal, or every denomination as equivalent. They don't accept every form of music or every style of fashion as being equally good and acceptable. This kind of liberalism doesn't deny the reality of good and evil or of God and Satan. It is an approach to classification of the world. It rejects mechanical and rigid dualistic categories. It is open to life, and open to its cultural environment. It is prepared to evaluate everything with its own set of Christian criteria.

Liberalism may appear to be too accepting and compromising towards secularism. Fundamentalism may appear too aggressive and hostile against it. Liberalism stresses the public accountability of faith, seeing continuity between Christianity and the human experience. Fundamentalism is hard and harsh concerning its separation from this world, nurturing and maintaining the identity of Christians. Is there no way to take the best from these two worlds? Is there a spiritual journey that pursues both the preservation of identity and public accountability?

Christian Responsibility: Things To Be Done

Christians must be more prepared to encounter the twenty-first century as the impact of popular culture on this society increases. With the future in mind, the church should give more

attention to its youth; the same youth who are under the heavy influence of popular culture and are willing to accept it. Unfortunately, the youth are so responsive to popular culture that the adults have a hard time understanding what is happening, or are unable to give any meaningful critique of it. At the time when we need to understand it we are left behind. How can we help the youth build an environment where they can grow in wisdom and grace? Adults must participate in building a new appropriate Christian culture that is possible and acceptable to its youth. That does not mean bringing everything into the church indiscriminately, and setting up a mirror secular culture within the church.

Whatever new twenty-first century Christian culture we create, it must incorporate a right view of creation, the nature of man, a Christian understanding of sin, an appropriate joy in repentance and participation in the process of salvation. It must include the responsibility of mission, a mission-oriented life, and so on.

The first challenge is to create a culture where words and deeds are consistent and transparent. We need to find a way to live a life according to the word of God. We need to find a way to apply the will of God to today's modes of consumerism, to today's occupations, to today's new forms of relationship between men and women, and between husbands and wives. We need to discover appropriate methods of raising today's children. We need to become comfortable in mixing and mingling with ordinary people, to participate in some of their recreation and even their entertainment. We need to find common ground in appreciating the fine and performing arts with our peers. This is the way for Christians to fulfill their cultural responsibility.

The church must identify the gaps between church traditions and practices and the essential teachings of the Bible, and fill in the gaps with things appropriate to our age. Only then will the church attract and persuade our youth to put themselves under the discipline and training of the church—to accept spiritual authority.

The church must have the discernment to identify the risks and the dangers threatening the spirituality of our youth. It must be able to critically discern the dangerous messages in the cultural environment. Certain attitudes towards sex and marriage, towards life and the value of man that are promoted in videos and movies are counter-productive to Christian living. These alternative messages need to be discussed and evaluated together with the youth. Pastors should help their church members develop the ability to constructively critique current culture in the

light of the word of God. With this kind of discernment, pastors should be ready to comment on the possible risks, and be ready to suggest solutions and alternatives. They should put much effort into convincing the youth of the joy and happiness found in God. This will only be possible if the youth are approached through their own cultural modes and styles.

Christians are to be reminded of their responsibility to maintain culture. They should do their best to live a good life and to contribute to aesthetics and participate in the promotion of justice in their society and their culture. That it can be done through the church itself, and through Christian civil processes. Christians should be foremost in participation in these kinds of activities. Culture is not merely *a matter of preference* but is *an obedient life according to the will of God*. Christians are not *those who separate their lives from those of others*, but rather *those who enrich their lives through serving others*.

Christian Practices for the Twenty-First Century

Christians are to practice a range of activities in order to be more responsible and more broad in their lives when facing the twenty-first century:

We Should Confirm the Sovereignty of God

Theology is based on "the sovereignty of God." Therefore the church should pursue a consistent relationship between life and the spiritual journey. The church should set up constructive bridges between the spiritual life and its theology.

All the things in this world are under God's sovereignty because He is the One who created this world and everything in it. Therefore, it is impossible to divide everything into two parts— sacred and secular, holiness and secularism. Spirituality, economy, politics and culture are under God's control, which means He works not only through the Bible and Christian traditions but through governments, financial institutions, cultural organizations and personal experiences— through culture. Dualistic thinking and prejudicial attitudes interfere with social responsibility. This could be balanced by re-emphasizing the sovereignty of God in all the world. Calvin confessed that the universe is the stage manifesting the glory of God. The sovereignty of God must be acknowledged in all aspects of society.

We Should Restore the Spirit of Priesthood of All Believers

Christians have righteousness by faith, not by deeds. However it is critical for their spiritual health that they participate in work in this world. Christians should not only be free from commissioned evil, but must not omit to respond to the accepting grace of God through their grateful lives. Christ's calling of Christians is a mission to this world. They should do their best for their neighbors as well as for their community in all aspects of their common lives. They should be exemplary in their personal and family relationships, and in their roles and responsibility in their society and in their working places. A dualistic perspective harshly separates holiness from secularism, and pastors from lay people. All Christians, pastors and so-called lay-people, are called to serve God in this world. All careers are ministries under God for others. Therefore, all the careers Christians hold are sacred, and their working places are religious places because it is the place where they fulfill their spiritual calling. This spirit of priesthood of all believers is as important as the teaching on the sovereignty of God. Adventists need to take this seriously. Now is the time for the church to encourage its members into action in their church and community.

We Should Have a God-Centered Materialistic View

Materialism is an essential element of the twenty-first century. Any spiritual journey needs to deal with materialism. Materialism is not limited to money. It also includes everything we own or are able to own. It even includes the things we seek to possess. Lust is an inappropriate desire. Pride is an inappropriate satisfaction with possession. However, aside from these inappropriate responses to possession, God the Creator built the possibility of material ownership into us. The right and the pleasure of ownership is a part of being a human being. The challenge is to channel ownership into a means of loving God and loving our neighbors as ourselves.

Christians are to remember that materialism is a tool, not a measure of our value in our own eyes, or in the eyes of others. Man should not be judged by what he owns, not should his goal be to increase his value through possessions. We are already created in the image of God, we don't need to grasp at being more than what we are. Understanding this will prevent Christians from destructive materialism in a consumer culture. It will help them remember to focus more on the transcendent perspective of God, even though they live in this world. A God-centered materialistic view will help us manage what we have and own productively for spiritual purposes.

Being faithful in small things will help us lead a spiritual life. Factoring in the sovereignty of God with regard to material possessions will encourage Christians to be just stewards.

We Should Form the Culture of Christian Community

It is already a challenge to establish any kind of community in today's individualistic culture. However the church is well placed to do just that. It should be our priority to promote and enable community and good relations within families. This can be one of our contribution to the twenty-first century. Remembering that we are parts of the body of Christ will strengthen our capacity for community. The church is different from other organizations or institutions. It confesses Christ as its Savior, and has a mission to serve the world. The church members have a chance to encounter and accept culture through their own community. Community is the ground of spiritual life as well as the focus of spiritual education.

Church members cannot form or experience true Christian culture if the church is unable to become a community of repentance, prayer and service. Christian teaching can only be understood in the context of the wider community. The traditions of the church should be interpreted in the context of the community we live in, and be constantly re-interpreted according to the present situation. This also applies to the application of the counsels of Ellen G. White in her 19th century world to our youth in the twenty-first century. Principles transcend the passage of time but forms seldom do.

Christians also have a responsibility to create and develop Christian alternatives to unacceptable cultural practices. Some of these will be more secular than sacred in nature. The church has a great responsibility in finding as well as supporting those who are able to do this work and through it attract and spiritually awaken church members. Such a Christian cultural movement necessitates a reevaluation of the use of our church resources, even our use of the space and facilities of the church.

We Should Wholly Restore Spirituality

The youth in the twenty-first century are faced with seemingly endless choices, however there is one characteristic that runs through all of the forms of popular culture. Most of them emphasize a zealous interest in "this world" and distract to indifference any thought of "the world to come." However, doing this for some time, many begin to think about the future, and even

begin to long for something better, for "the world to come." There is emptiness in immediate gratification. Curiosity regarding "spiritual things" can lead the bored to the conclusion that all of those endless choices do not satisfy spiritual desires. Seekers after spirituality are often lured into New Age involvement.

The new interest in spirituality in this age needs to be noted and clearly recognized. The church should put new emphasis on the true spirituality of Christianity. Spirituality is something comprehensive as well as holistic. It starts from a mysterious relationship between God and man. It can lead Christians into a holy life. Holiness is living a God-centered life. God-centered lives will eventually lead Christians to live lives of temperance. Temperance in the things of this world will leave space for a closer relationship between God and Christians. And will leave more room for reading God's word and praying.

Worship is the communal form of restoring and maintaining spirituality. The church should place emphasis on a living worship. Worship encapsulates the spiritual traditions of the believing community; it maintains them, and presents a vision for the future. Therefore, worship is to be a faithful medium to transmit the traditions of the church. Even children's worship should not be neglected. Worship for this age needs to be renovated. The congregation is part of a changing culture, and needs to receive and express the gospel message in forms appropriate to the other changes in their lives. Worship will need new styles, new language, and even the development of new artistic expressions. While there need to be some links with the past, the present cannot be neglected. The meaning of worship can be maintained, however the forms and possible changes should be open for reevaluation. The Bible study is an important medium to reach spiritual life. However, Bible study should be related to the present situation all the time. It should be something that is connected with life today instead of merely being a means of acquiring factual knowledge unrelated to reality.

Now is the time for Christians to give more attention to the cultural grounds of this life. The reason is that Christians may be transformed into new people, into new communities. They will need to be realistic to attain God's good, pleasing and perfect will (Rom. 12:2). The only means to discern God's will in the midst of our changing culture is through our spiritual life. Living a spiritual life will lead man to be himself and to see God as He is. A mature spiritual life may be called an extensive or all-round spiritual life. An extensive spiritual life will be an active spiritual

life, discerning the relationship between God and man in a more comprehensive way. Paul says:

"So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God—even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved."(1 Cor. 10:31-33, NIV)

Note that he promotes an extensive spiritual life that includes spirituality in ordinary popular culture. And that he doesn't live to please only the insiders—not to please and appease the separated community of believers alone. He says he sought to please everybody. That could never happen with a dualistic negative view of culture and separatist living. It could not happen if we were not participants in culture and society. Seeking "the good of many" is the mode of our participation in the world. Facilitating the conversion of some will be possible in some cases.

Christians should pursue a more extensive and more integrated spiritual life. It needs to be relevant to the times in which we live; it should be practical for the community we live in. "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." (Matt. 5:16), it should be practiced in the community of believers. An extensive, integrated spiritual life will lead us to have our love for Christ "abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight"(Phil. 1:9-11). That is possible because Christ has revealed to us the ultimate goal of life. May the lives and culture of Christians lead to the ultimate goal of life, which is to glorify and praise Him through bearing abundant fruits of righteousness.

References

Kraft, Charles. *Christianity in Culture*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1979.

Kelly, Gerard. *Retrofuture: Rediscovering Our Roots, Recharting Our Routes*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999.

Niebuhr, Richard. *Christ and Culture*. New York: Harper and Row, 1951.

Sire, James W. *Discipleship of the Mind*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990.

Wilson, Henry. *Christian Fundamentalism Today*. WARC: Geneva, 1994.

Plantak, Zdravko. *The Silent Church: Human Rights and Adventist Social Ethics*. London: The Macmillan Press, 1989.

Newbigin, Lesslie. *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986.

Holmes, Arthur F. *The Idea of a Christian College*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans
  Publishing Company, 1999.

_____. *Contours of a World View*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans
  Publishing Company, 1983.

Myers, Kenneth A. *All God's Children and Blue Suede Shoes: Christians and Popular Culture*.
  Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1989.

Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity*. Blackwell: Cambridge & Oxford, 1989.

Romanowski, William D. *Pop Culture Wars: Religion and the Role of Entertainment in American
  Life*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996.

Groome, T. *Christian Religious Education*. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1981.

Nelson, John W. *Your God Is Alive and Well and Appearing in Popular Culture*. Philadelphia:
  Westminster, 1976.

Goudzwaard, Bob. *Idols of Our Time*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1984.

Im, Sung Bin., ed. *Beyond Limitation of Contemporary Culture*. Seoul: Jeyoung Communication,
  2000.

Jung, Ju Young. *Contemporary Culture and Christian Responsibility*. Seoul: Jeyoung
  Communication, 2000.

Kang, Young Ahn., ed. *Popular Culture*. Seoul: Jeyoung Communication, 2000.

Kang, Meung Gu. *Popular Culture and Postmodernism*. Seoul: Mineumsa, 1999.