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ABSTRACT

DEVELOPING A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF GOD:
A STRATEGY FOR REVITALIZING THE
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST
CHURCH IN CROATIA

by

Miroslav Didara

Advisers: Bruce L. Bauer,
Rudi Maier

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: DEVELOPING A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF GOD: A STRATEGY
FOR REVITALIZING THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH
IN CROATIA

Name of researcher: Miroslav Didara

Name and degree of faculty advisers: Bruce L. Bauer, D.Miss.; Rudi Maier, Ph.D.

Date completed: June 2005

Problem

Adventism in Croatia will soon celebrate its one hundredth anniversary. The church is becoming increasingly traditional and formal. Baptisms have been in decline for the last ten years. Gradually the less important issues such as life style, worship style, music, and food have become a focus. It seems that many members have lost sight of what genuine Christianity is all about, not knowing the difference between form and meanings and unconsciously moving towards formalism and legalism. Therefore, there is a need for personal and corporate spiritual renewal which can only

come through a deeper understanding of God and by having a closer relationship with him.

Method

Library research, questionnaires, interviews, and observations were conducted in order to discover how Adventists picture God and how that picture compares with the biblical view of God. Ten percent of Croatian Adventists participated in a survey that covered various areas of life including religion and lifestyle. On the basis of the research, an implementation strategy has been developed using a logframe matrix to set out a clear overall goal for revitalizing Adventist churches in Croatia. According to the implementation strategy four pilot project churches and four pastors were chosen to field test this project.

Conclusion

It is assumed that if a more biblical picture of God is developed among the Adventist Church members, their faith will be renewed and revitalized, the church will become more caring and mission oriented, and the members will not replace genuine religion with dead forms and traditions.

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

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A STRATEGY FOR REVITALIZING THE
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST
CHURCH IN CROATIA

A Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
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June 2005

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APPROVAL BY THE COMMITTEE:

Adviser,
Bruce L. Bauer

Adviser,
Rudi Maier

Director of D.Min. Program
Skip Bell

Dean, SDA Theological Seminary
John K. McVay

Date approved

Dedicated to Nadica
Friend, Wife
and
Companion in Ministry

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

HDZ	Croatian Democratic Union
NDH	Independent State of Croatia
JNA	Yugoslav National Army
SDP	Social Democratic Party
PTSD	Post Traumatic Syndrome of Disorder
ICTY	International Crime Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NT	New Testament
NIV	New International Version of the Bible
OT	Old Testament
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version of the Bible
RSV	Revised Standard Version of the Bible
MBTI	Myers-Briggs Type Indicator
NLT	New Living Translation of the Bible

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The thesis of this project is that a clearer understanding of the biblical image of God is integral to a strategy for revitalization of the Adventist Church in Croatia.

The Problem

Studies in comparative religion show that different religious groups portray God differently. Even within religious groups such as Christianity, the understanding of God varies. Protestants tend to view God differently from Roman Catholics, for instance.¹ These varying views result in different worldviews, which translate into different practices in worship and differing attitudes toward personal and corporate social responsibility and accountability.²

Recent developments within the Adventist Church show that members have a diverse picture of God. It appears that our picture of God varies from person to person. Members often have a picture of God that is incomplete, narrow, and distorted and that keeps them from making biblically informed judgments, particularly concerning religious and ethical issues. These diverse and faulty understandings of God also affect

¹Mary Douglas and Edmund Pery, eds. "Anthropology and Comparative Religion" *Theology Today* 4, no. 41 (January, 1985), 410.

²Brian Turner, *Comparative Religion*, <http://www.comparative-religion.com> (8 June 2005).

attitudes on issues such as worship, lifestyle, and music.¹ A gap between so called “new” (“young”) and “old” (“older”) generations of Adventists is widening because of different understandings of God and His dealings with people.

It seems that most church members are not aware of how crucially important their understanding of God is and how that understanding impacts in so many areas of the Christian life. A wrong or distorted picture of God can also affect personal spiritual life, worship in the church, as well as the corporate influence of the church in the community. When people do not have a biblically based picture of God it causes them to rely on tradition for the foundation of their faith. A tradition-based faith causes many to fear any changes in the Church since the members have rarely been taught the difference between theology and methodology, between form and meanings in the practice of Adventism.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this dissertation seeks to find ways to revitalize the Adventist Church in Croatia through developing a program that will help people to come to a deeper understanding of the biblical picture of God. Revitalization would make the Church a more vibrant, loving, caring, and mission-oriented community of believers with a clear purpose for its existence. Revitalization should also contribute to making worship more meaningful and experiential, resulting in the personal, spiritual, and social growth of members on their spiritual journey. In accordance with that purpose, seminars and workshops will be organized to equip and train members for ministry.

¹It is not rare to hear from the pulpits in the Adventist churches in Croatia how some members, even some pastors, criticize new trends that are entering churches such as lifestyle, contemporary music, changes in worship style, and even new approaches in preaching of the Gospel.

An emphasis on creating small group activities will help create an environment for making friends and sharing the Gospel. Finally, inspiring and vibrant worships will encourage people to develop a personal relationship with God.

Significance of Study

There is a great need for presenting the God of the Bible in a clear and systematic way to help pastors and church members gain a better understanding of who God is. Those who know God better will love him more. This project particularly seeks to help young people rediscover for themselves the God they have heard about but have never come to know personally.

A distorted picture of God causes believers to misunderstand who they are. A better understanding of the biblical picture of God will help people to understand the difference between the substance and content of truth and the wrappings or forms that carry that truth. This study will hopefully help people in developing a closer relationship with God and strengthen their assurance of salvation, helping them to increase their desire and enthusiasm for sharing the Gospel with others. Finally, a biblical image and understanding of God will help members avoid moving toward extremes, abandoning their faith and the church, and from becoming legalists who unconsciously replace true religion with rules and traditions. Unfortunately, many with a legalistic attitude are often closed towards new ideas and changes in the church since they are scared about losing their identity, even though many have no clue of what that identity is all about. Those who draw closer to God will experience personal security, peace, joy, and happiness which makes life more fruitful and worth living.

To achieve that ambitious goal, various activities have to take place such as preaching and lecturing on biblical pictures of God, and coaching and training pastors and members who are willing to adopt this concept for the revitalization of their churches.

Basic Assumptions

This project will attempt to teach church members and train pastors, in various places, about the biblical picture of God.

First, it is assumed that the pastors and the members of the four pilot project churches will participate and adopt this project for revitalization. Second, it is expected that the main goal of the project will be achieved in four years time if the project is correctly and wholeheartedly implemented. Third, it is assumed that the Croatian Conference will support the project financially by providing pastors and church members with all the means needed in order to achieve the main goal of the project. Fourth, it is assumed that the four pilot project churches will fully cooperate and be willing to sacrifice time and money in their service to the Lord and to the people in their communities.

Limitations

This dissertation is of a practical nature so its theology is based almost exclusively on studying the names and images of God in the Bible. No attempt was made to go into deep theological discussions about the nature of God. The implementation of this strategy will be limited to the four pilot project churches. This strategy will be implemented mainly through sermons, seminars, and workshops.

Definitions

The expressions “image of God,” “our picture of God,” and “our understanding of God” are used interchangeably in this paper depending on the context. These expressions show how believers experience God emotionally and relationally as well as how believers cognitively know about Him. The expression “imagery of God” is used as a means, in relation to metaphors, pictures, and various symbols that carry some knowledge about the character of God.

Methodology

Research for the theological studies in chapter 2 was conducted in libraries in Croatia, at Newbold College in England, and downloaded from the Internet.

A cultural and social analysis of the Croatian society was conducted in order to find out which factors influenced the formation of the Adventist worldview and impacted the believers’ picture of God.

Quantitative research was collected from 10 percent of the Adventist membership in Croatia by using a survey consisting of seventy questions covering major areas of life and religion. The survey results have been incorporated into this paper using maps, charts, and graphs. Qualitative research was carried out by doing in-depth interviews with seven Adventists plus observations in several churches.

An implementation strategy has been prepared based on the logframe matrix. Seminar, workshops, and five sermons will share the survey results and findings of this research.

Overview

This dissertation consists of five chapters. The first chapter introduces the problem, purpose, basic assumptions, and methodology of the project. Chapter 2 deals with my spiritual and temperament profile, and how it influences my ministry and understanding of God. Because of the practical purpose of this paper my theology is based on studying the images and names of God in the Bible in order to develop a deeper and more experiential understanding of God. Chapter 3 provides a historical, social, and religious analysis of the Croatian society and presents and analyzes the findings of a survey conducted among the Seventh-day Adventists in order to find out what their picture of God is. Chapter 4 provides a strategy for the revitalization of the Adventist Church in Croatia through seminars, workshops, and small group activities and presents the first early results from the four pilot project churches. Chapter 5 gives a brief summary, conclusion, and offers recommendations for future projects and research.

CHAPTER II

PERSONAL, SPIRITUAL, AND THEOLOGICAL
FOUNDATION FOR MINISTRY

Personal Spiritual Journey

Personal History

I was born in 1950 in the City of Osijek, Croatia, in a rather large Catholic family. I have two brothers and three sisters. Even though my parents were traditional Christians, they were highly moral and honest people. Although our family was poor, our neighbors and friends respected us. Thanks to an old Adventist lady who visited us around the time when my youngest sister was born we eventually became Adventists. Actually, she was an ordinary woman who simply lived her Christianity. She brought a basketful of cakes, fruits, and other delicious food to our house leaving a big impression on all of us and especially my mother. She began to visit us more frequently and invited my mother to her church. My mother went to church due to her kindness towards us but with no intention of changing her beliefs. Nevertheless, a year later my mother became an Adventist. Soon afterwards our whole family became Adventist.

I was baptized at the age of fifteen in the Adventist Church. When I was eighteen I joined the army and at twenty I went to the Adventist college to study

theology. After thirteen years in ministry I went to Newbold College where I earned a M.A. in Systematic Theology. Currently, I am the Personal Ministries Director in the Croatian Conference and teach theology part-time at the Adriatic Union College. Previously, I have been a Union Youth Director, an editor of two magazines, *Signs of the Times* and the youth paper called *Odjek*, and a pastor. I have been in ministry now for thirty years.

I am happily married to Nadica and we have two boys, Nenad (twenty-eight), and Daniel (twenty-seven). Both of them work for the Church.

There are four main events or periods of time that have heavily influenced and shaped my spiritual life. Firstly, it was children's Sabbath School in my home church in Osijek. My first visit to the Adventist Church was at the age of five. Among the first people I met were three women who taught in the children's Sabbath School. I will never forget them. They made Jesus and God real to me. Their shining faces reflected their faith. They were the first ones in my life who portrayed God to me as a very friendly and loving God who was interested in me even though I was a child.

Secondly, life in the army influenced my later life significantly. As an Adventist, I decided to be faithful to God and refused to work on Sabbath, which caused me certain problems. I was imprisoned for several days, during which time I prayed more and learned how to depend on God, and thought about my earlier call to ministry. It was during that time that I experienced God's care and grace. As a result I decided to accept God's call and prepare for ministry.

Thirdly, a significant change happened in my life and my ministry when our first son was born. Never before had I understood what it meant to be a father or a

parent. Suddenly my wife and I became parents and became responsible for someone's life. This helped us to better understand God's relationship to us.

Finally, my studies at Newbold College, from 1987-1992, helped to shape my worldview, my theology, my spiritual life, and my ministry. By living in a multicultural environment, I experienced the meaning of diversity. Unexpectedly I had to give up my previous belief that Adventism is understood and practiced in the same way everywhere. In that mosaic of languages, cultures, views, and opinions I had to adjust not only my own worldview, but also how I saw God.

Temperament MBT

While taking the course *Spiritual and Theological Foundation for Ministry*, I learned the importance of personality types. Although I had pastored for many years I had never paid much attention to temperament types, neither did I see any close connections between one's temperament type and the way of understanding and practicing faith.

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator¹ (MBTI) is a tool for identifying sixteen different patterns of action or "type indicators" such as: extraversion (E), introversion (I), sensation (S), intuition (N), thinking (T), feeling (F), perceiving (P), and judging (J). Each person can have only four type indicators marked by four letters, for example; INFP—stands for an introvert, intuition, feeling and perceiving person. Others may have different patterns depending on the combination of type such as:

¹D. Kiersey and M. Bates, *Please Understand Me: Character and Temperament Types* (Delmar, CA: Gnosology Books, 1984), 4.

ENFP, ESFJ, ISTJ, etc. There are sixteen four-letter possibilities for temperament groups.¹

According to the MBTI, I am an ESFJ personality type. I am quite open with a straightforward attitude in communication with others, which is occasionally not very much appreciated. With such an attitude, some people and even my colleagues sometimes misunderstand me. As an “E” person, I have no problems making new friends or communicating with people. Being an “S” type of person I am mostly interested in practical aspects of Christianity although I enjoy intellectual discussions as well. People with such an approach are interested in *real theology*.² My letter “F” reminds me that I am a value-centered person, which means that I am more interested in values than in logic. I recognize and appreciate fair, honest, and sincere people. As a “J” person I like to live according to a plan, have things done systematically and on time. I am interested also in seeing the overall picture.

I now begin to realize just how immensely my personality type has affected my leadership style and my pastoral ministry. The programs and events that I am in charge of are generally well planned and organized. I have never had serious problems working with church members and church boards. In circumstances when I was convinced that something was just, fair, and right I was very persistent and prepared to stand for it. This approach has helped me to succeed on many occasions, even when the chances for success may have been very slim. Occasionally, I have learned to give

¹Ibid., 12.

²Jon Dybdahl, Doctor of Ministry lecture at Newbold College, July, 2002.

up an idea when I realize I do not have enough support for it. I also like to please people with decisions if possible, but not at any cost. I believe that happy and cared for people in the church are those best to work with.

Being aware of my personality type has helped me in realizing to what extent it influences my approach and understanding of theology. Some theologians believe that personality type is the main factor in whether people will become fundamentalists or liberals in their spiritual understanding of God and their practice of faith.

Spiritual Gifts

As a part of this study, I have studied spiritual gifts. In taking the *Spiritual Gifts Inventory*¹ I have discovered my primary spiritual gift is *administration*, which means that I have the “ability to plan and work, to delegate responsibilities, track progress and evaluate effectiveness of producers.”² I am task oriented and I enjoy doing projects.

My secondary gifts are exhortation, evangelism, and leadership. I am convinced that “spiritual gifts do not exist in isolation from the fundamental nature, knowledge and abilities of the individual.”³ Without doubt there are some exceptions or circumstances when God gives some individual supernatural gifts such as healing, prophesy, a gift of speaking, or interpreting foreign tongues. Looking back on my life

¹D. R. Dick, and B. Miller, *Equipped for Every Good Work* (Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 2001).

²Ibid., 38.

³Ibid., 9.

I can clearly see how my gifts have influenced my ministry. For example, my “J” personality mirrors my preaching style. I am systematic, clear, always trying to make a good structure which listeners can remember.

Leadership/Interaction Styles

According to Dick and Miller’s PCL¹ program, a second tool for personal discovery within the context of community, is *Leadership/Interaction Styles*.² Since I am a *director*³ and *pleaser*,⁴ I like sharing my ideas with others. I find those who are willing to participate in their realization. I tend to rely on reason rather than intuition. I am interested in clear results regarding what I have been doing. As a leader, I have learned how important teamwork is and how to put ideas into practice. In my opinion, the crucial thing for any leader is to have a clear vision and set a goal. After that, it is y important to find the right people who will be willing and able to achieve it. I trust those in the team and expect them to be creative, conscientious, and hard working.

¹PCL stands for *Profile of Congregation Leadership*, which is a program used by Dan Dick aiming to equip pastors and church leaders to work through three tools such as: Spiritual Gifts Inventory, Leadership/Interaction Styles Survey, and Spirituality Type Indicator.

²*Leadership/Interaction Styles* tool points to the ways we behave with one another. It is to help leaders identify their dominant styles and develop an appreciation of the dominant styles of others.

³*Director style* means that those persons are task oriented, focused on results, stick closely to the agenda, speak with authority, say what they think; they are logical, they tend to value reason over intuition and like practical ideas that yield measurable and tangible results.

⁴*Pleaser style* is a people oriented person. Pleasers seek to maintain a balance and harmony. They try to keep everyone happy and are therefore often frustrated. They are also sensitive relationship builders, good listeners, and problem solvers. Pleasers are diplomatic and want to listen to all sides before they make decisions.

Spirituality Web

There are six types of spirituality that represent different ways in which people encounter God. These types are, Head Spirituality, Heart Spirituality, Pilgrim Spirituality, Mystic Spirituality, Servant Spirituality, and Crusader Spirituality.¹ As I am a *Pilgrim*² individual, I naturally had some difficulties in recognizing my strongest and my weakest sides, my spiritual and natural gifts. For quite some time I have struggled to find out how to be sure whether I am called by God or by a man. Over the years, I have learned asking questions in order not to find answers. I have learned that growth also happens through difficulties and hardship. God leads me in unusual and unexpected ways. In my *Corporate Spirituality Web*³ I am a *heart*⁴ spirituality type. I enjoy stories from the Bible as well as life stories. I share them with others because they provide guidance for living a faithful life while strengthening my relationship with God and others. I believe that prayer is still the closest way of communication with God. I believe that our worship should be designed for the spiritual formation of the believers and it should be not only an intellectual but also an emotional/heart

¹Dick and Miller, 74 passim.

²*Pilgrim* is a spirituality type of person who seeks for meaning, looks for answers, accepts what makes sense, and sees faith formation as a process—a journey.

³The *Corporate Spirituality web* consists of six Spirituality Types such as: crusader, head, servant, heart, mystic, and pilgrim which are reflected in the way church practices each of the means of grace.

⁴*Heart* is spirituality type of person that focuses on a relationship with Jesus, believes that faith sharing is essential, has a strong commitment to prayer, and has a deep relationship with God and others.

experience. “Our relationship with God includes both, the way we approach God and the way we experience God.”¹

Task Type Preference

According to my “*Task Type Preferences*,”² I am a project-oriented person, which is very true in my ministry. While I was a youth director, I used to organize seven youth congresses, numerous youth rallies, summer camps, youth seminars, and evangelistic campaigns. In addition to that, as an editor of two magazines, I was continually involved in some kind of a project. Although it can be very exhausting at times, I did enjoy them. Successfully completed projects with tangible results give me additional strength for new ones.

As Personal Ministries Director in the conference, I have the privilege of working closely with pastors and churches running evangelistic campaigns, training church leaders, and running seminars in order to equip them for a more efficient service for God. I try to encourage the members to experience the joy of sharing their faith.

Search for a Biblical Picture of God

This section deals with five major points. First, it discusses the human need of God and the importance of finding him. Second, it deals with various biblical names and pictures of God and compares them with the often distorted pictures of God which

¹Dick and Miller, 76

²*Task Type Preference Survey* explores four ways people like to do work.

people have created. Third, it looks at the impact of biblical images of God on theology. Fourth, it discusses the significance of understanding the power of images in society and in human life. Finally, this section discusses the impact of one's image of God on personal faith, the quality of one's relationship with God and other people, as well as one's mission to the world.

Sources of Understanding God

Who and what is God?¹ This is a crucial question in our discussion. What we think about God will affect our entire life and our final destiny. Every person whether Christian, Muslim, Animist, Hindu, Buddhist, or atheist, has some picture about God. Obviously, those pictures and ideas about God vary among different religions and cultures.

Muslims believe that God (Allah) is unapproachable by sinful humans, that love and compassion are not among his strong characteristics, and that Allah is too mighty to interact personally with humans.²

Hindus believe that there are millions of different gods in existence.³

Buddhists believe that there is no such thing as a personal God but only local deities, which are necessary to assist humans in various tasks in life.⁴

¹The word god is a general term for deity. In the Bible the word is used to refer to the deity worshiped in the Judeo-Christian tradition and to deities worshiped by other peoples, god or gods. (Harper's Bible Dictionary (HBD) (1985), s.v. "god.")

²Randy Southern, *The World's Easiest Guide to Understanding God* (Chicago, IL: Northfield Publishing, 2003), 15.

³Pierce R. Beaver, *World's Religions* (England: Lion Publishing, 1985), 184-95.

⁴*Ibid.*, 184-195, 231.

Mormons believe that God was once a man and that he still has a physical body made of flesh and blood.¹

New Agers believe that God is an impersonal force that pervades all creation and that everyone and everything is ultimately god.²

Christian Scientists believe that God is an abstract concept, synonymous with such terms as *Life, Truth, Love, Principle, Mind, Substance, Intelligence* and *Spirit*.³

Deists believe that God created the world and then left it to operate on its own, without any guidance, direction, or intervention from him.⁴

Our concept of God is important, because it will strongly influence the way we approach life, treat others, deal with tragedies, make sense of the world, and worship God, as well as having an impact on our self-respect and our mission to the world. For example, a person who believes that God is unapproachable will probably live his life in fear, being uneasy and unsure about how to please his God. A person who believes that God is found within human nature has no reason to think about atonement for sin. A person who believes that God is an abstract concept is unlikely to pursue a personal relationship with God.⁵ These are a few reasons why it is so important to have a correct picture of God.

¹John W. Walsh, *The Articles of Faith*, <http://www.lightplanet.com/mormons/> (7 Feb 2005).

²Kenneth R. Wade, *Secrets of the New Age* (Washington DC: Review and Herald, 1989), 20.

³Southern, 15.

⁴Richard Rice, *The Reign of God* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1985), 77.

⁵Ibid, 16.

The Jewish affirmation of faith begins with probably the best-known text from the Torah. "Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength. And you must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands I am giving you today," (Deut 6:4-9). Reading this passage leads to at least two logical questions: How can we relate to and love someone we cannot see or talk to face-to-face? and Why is it important to know and relate to God?

Without knowledge of God there is no knowledge of self. . . . Our wisdom, in so far as it ought to be deemed true and solid Wisdom, consists almost entirely of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves. But as these are connected together by many ties, it is not easy to determine which of the two precedes and gives birth to the other. For, in the first place, no man can survey himself without forthwith turning his thoughts towards the God in whom he lives and moves; because it is perfectly obvious, that the endowments which we possess cannot possibly be from ourselves; nay, that our very being is nothing else than subsistence in God alone.¹

The Bible tells us that there is a God and that he is interested in us (Gen 1:1; Isa 49:15-16; Matt 10:29-31), that we are all affected by sin and, as a result, our perceptions of the world, of ourselves, and of God are distorted (Rom 3:23; Matt 7:3-5; 1 John 1:8). We as humans tend to create God in our own image (Isa 44:9-20). This creation comes from a variety of experiences we have had in life.² Life experiences create the lenses through which we see the world and God. Because of that we all have different pictures of God. The question then arises, who is right? The answer must be no one and everyone. It depends on what we want to emphasize.

¹John Calvin, "Institute for the Christian Religion," <http://www.smartlink.net/~douglas/calvin/bk1ch02.html> (20 June 2002).

²Norma Dearing, *The Healing Touch: A Guide to Healing Prayer for Yourself and Those You Love* (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books, 2002), 17.

Christians believe that the best way to know God is to let him speak about himself. He has already done that through nature, his acts in history, his written Word—the Bible, Jesus Christ his Son, and through personal experience in daily life. This paper assumes that God exists and can be discovered.¹ It is important to look at these in order to see what lessons we can learn about God.

The existence of the world is evidence that there must be some source for it. There must be a Creator and Sustainer of everything, and that humans should be accountable to him. It also appears logical that one can also learn about a Creator God from nature by looking at its design, order, beauty, variety, laws, and purpose. This Creator whom Christians call God must be much greater than his majestic creation.

The second source of information about the Creator God comes from his acts in history. It is difficult to accept the claims made by some theologians and religions that God is not interacting with human life and the history of this world.² The Bible says that God is actively involved in the events and on this earth. For example, God gave his promise to Abraham that he would create a great nation from his offspring (Gen 17:6). On another occasion the Bible mentions that God had sent his son Jesus “when the time had fully come” (Gal 4:4). We are neither forgotten by God, nor lost in the universe, for God cares for his creation.

¹There are four main arguments for the existence of God: cosmological, teleological, ontological, and moral.

²Deism denies the fact that God has any present interest in the activities of this world, and he takes no part in its current operation. Rice, 53.

The third source of knowledge about God is the Bible, God's revealed Word.

"Surely, the Sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7). The Bible is not a collection of thoughts by men about God but the knowledge that God gave through the prophets about himself (2 Pet 1:21). It reveals God's plan of salvation, it tells us who we are, where we came from, and what the purpose of our life is (Eccl 12:13). It tells us that we are created in the image of God, but that we are not gods (Gen 1:26).

The fourth source of knowledge about God is Jesus Christ. This form of revelation is God's fullest representation of himself. In the book of Hebrews, we read that Jesus is "the radiance of his glory and the exact representation of his being" (Heb 1:3). It is very unlikely that the author of Hebrews would come to that conclusion on his own, for that kind of conclusion and knowledge surpasses the human ability to discover such information by personal logic or thinking. When Philip asked Jesus "Show us the Father, Jesus replied: 'Don't you know me, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father'" (John 14:9). Similarly, Jesus answered Thomas: "If you really knew me you would know my Father" (John 14:7). It is quite clear from Jesus' words that by knowing him we get to know God his Father.

The fifth source of knowledge about God comes from personal experience. Though it is fully subjective and very personal, it is very important and often comes from answered prayers, and a personal sense of peace that builds faith and commitment to him. Personal experience includes forgiveness and God's protection

(Isa 43:2-3). Christians experience God's guidance in their lives on a daily basis and that makes Christianity real.

Who then is the God of the Bible? Can we really know him or could it be that we create him in our minds as we search for the unknown? David Ariel tried to give an answer by stating that,

Most of us carry in mind an image of God shaped by our religious traditions, our education, our experience and our personal belief. Beginning at an early age, we hear about God, ask questions about God, experience religious moments, and think about our own beliefs. For some the private belief plays an important role in life and provides a foundation of faith and certainty. Many people believe that God is a higher, supernatural being, who has created life and presides over the universe and humanity as a being, a moral watchful ruler, one who is accessible to us at special moments, like a caring parent who provides reassurance and comfort when we are in distress.¹

David Griffin calls this common faith the "generic idea of God."² Many are not satisfied with this idea because it is not spiritually compelling enough for those who desire to feel God's presence in their daily lives. It does not explain the gap between the belief in our being created "in the image of God" and the reality of living in a world of suffering and conflict. Also, the generic idea which often presents God in masculine terms as a father is less meaningful to women seekers.³

How is it possible to know God personally? Some say that the Bible itself portrays two different faces of God. In the Old Testament, according to their reasoning, God is portrayed as an angry, merciless, and unapproachable God, a God

¹David S. Ariel, *What do Jews Believe? The Jewish Faith Examined* (NY: Rider, 1996), 12.

²Ariel, 13.

³Ibid., 13.

who destroyed the world by the flood in the time of Noah (Gen 6), while in the New Testament he is portrayed as a loving, merciful, and approachable God in the image of a father (Luke 15). Others disagree and say that the same loving God is found throughout the entire Bible, but that his revelation of himself is misinterpreted by humans, his dealings with people and this world in different times and in different cultures are misunderstood. Who is right? What is the truth about God?

There is no better and more reliable understanding of God than that which comes from his self-revelation—the Bible.¹ Christians find in the writings of the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament an extensive record of God's attempt to provide man with a knowledge of himself and the divine perspective on humankind. We undermine the value of this large body of sacred literature if we insist that God is unreachable. On the other hand, because the revelation of God in the Bible is limited, we have to acknowledge that we can only know God as much as he allows us to know.

Distorted Image of God

The Bible says that God created a man in his own image (Gen 1:28; Ps 8:5) but sin has degraded humanity. "For all have sinned and fall short of the Glory of God" (Rom 6:23). The phrase "to fall short of the glory of God" may mean two things. First, we have lost the glory of God that was given to us at the time of creation. In other

¹General Synod of the Church of England, *We Believe in God: The Doctrine Commission of the Church of England* (London: Church House Publishing, 1987), 27.

words, the image of God in us has been gradually distorted and we have become depraved.

Second, the same phrase “to fall short of the glory of God” may mean that sin has changed our view of God and our understanding of him. We are not able to see God in his glory and power as Adam and Eve did before they sinned. Another consequence of sin was a broken relationship between humans and the Creator.

Another terrible consequence of sin is that it has also distorted God’s image in us. The Bible tells us that in the beginning God created man in his own image (Gen 1:26), which basically means that man is made in the image¹ and likeness² of God. This complex subject cannot be examined in detail here, but is only noted in passing. God is a Spiritual, not a material being. We do not look like God physically. The image of our Creator, which we all bear, is primarily an invisible, inner likeness. Human attributes of personality, mind, creativity, capacity to love and express emotions, the existence of a will, conscience, imagination, memory and moral responsibility, and the capacity for worship,³ has made humans very much like God. Therefore, humanity started from a very high level of maturity, but because of sin, the image of God in man has changed. In Romans 3:23 the apostle Paul talks about the

¹The Hebrew word for image is *tselem* and means an object similar to something else and often representative of it. The word is used to speak of statues or replicas of tumors. Likewise the Latin phrase *imago Dei* means image of God with the same meaning as the Hebrew word *tselem*. See Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology, An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 442.

²The word likeness in Hebrew *demut* also means an object similar to something else. Grudem, 442.

³Grudem, 445.

sudden loss of God's glory at the moment of sin. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Likewise, the Gospel teaches that the image of God has been restored in us through the second Adam, that is Christ (Rom 5:15-19), though the deteriorated physical powers of the body are restored only in a limited way until "this mortal puts on immortality."

Human Search for God

Man has been searching for God right from the beginning. As created beings we depend on our Creator who can satisfy our most important needs. Gerard W.

Hughes expressed his search for God in a very unique way:

I have never seen You, touched You, heard You, tasted You, smelled You. You are invisible, yet enveloping all things, elusive yet inescapable, remote yet closer to me than I am to myself, unknowable yet the source of all my knowing, no thing yet sustaining all things, for in You all creation lives, and moves, and has its being. In you are all things: without You there is nothing. Creation is Your sacrament, Your Eucharist, a sign and an effective sign of Your presence, yet You are not the sign: You are in it, but not of it, You are always beyond, always greater. My mind can not encompass You, but my heart longs for You.¹

No matter whom we are, either rich or poor, educated or uneducated, we are all in one way or another way struggling in life and sooner or later the time comes when we need God. We want to know him, see him, experience him, and even touch him. We want to build a much closer relationship with the God we worship. Our personal experiences are important but untrustworthy when it comes to understanding God because our perspective is very limited. It can be well illustrated by an Indian folktale. Six blind persons wanted to discover for themselves what an elephant was like. One

¹Gerard W. Hughes, *God Where Are You?* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1997), 55.

person felt the pachyderm's massive side and concluded that an elephant is like a wall. The other felt the animal's trunk and concluded that an elephant is like a snake. The third felt its tusk and concluded that an elephant is like a spear. The fourth felt its legs and concluded that it is like pillars. The fifth felt its ears and concluded that an elephant is like a large fan. Finally, the last person felt its tail and concluded that an elephant is like a rope.

Each person based conclusion on personal limited perspective and experienced it in a way that made sense to him. None of the six persons, however, even came close to accurately describing what an elephant is like. The same principle applies to people who are trying to pigeonhole God based only on personal experience. What appears to be reality concerning God may actually be absolutely wrong or only partially true. This is why Christians have to be very cautious with our conclusions about our knowledge of God. This is one of the main reasons why people need to study the biblical images of God and to believe that the Bible can give the most appropriate picture of God.

Interestingly enough, God's main desire is to reveal himself to us as much as we can comprehend. He wants to have close relationships with his creation (Gen 3:8). He waits to show us who we are and who he is. The Bible is filled with examples of how God wants to relate to humanity and how he wants people to relate to others (Amos 3:7; Isa 43:1-4).

God is the first one who is interested in us and wants to communicate and relate to us, because we mean so much to him. Specific revelation can be defined as God communicating directly with humanity. The following are some examples of how

this has occurred: (1) People hear God's voice (Adam and Eve, Gen 3:8-19; Abram, Gen 12:1-3; Moses, Exod 3:4-22). (2) People have dreams from God: prophets--Isaiah, Jeremiah, kings--Pharaoh (Gen 41), Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 2), and ordinary people--Joseph, Pilate's wife (Matt 27:19). (3) People have visions: prophets (Isaiah 1:1), apostles (Acts 10:17-19), and ordinary people (Acts 9:10).

These three ways of specific revelation of God were significant and yet subjective because it is very difficult to verify whether such revelations are true or not. And what is even more difficult is to know whether they are from God or not. However, it would be wrong to ignore or undermine these means, because we know from Scripture that God uses them as ways to communicate with people. Through these revelations he uses various names to describe his nature and character, and his revelation expresses his relationship with the world and gives various images and pictures to inform humanity about himself.

Names of God

Before we look at the names of God used in the Bible, we will briefly look at the instances where no personal name of God is written, but where simply the term "name" is used to indicate its importance. It is in relation to Abraham (Gen 12:8; 13:4), Moses (Exod 33:19; 34:5), Israel (Lev 3:21; 2:2, 32), and the priests of Israel (Deut 8:5; 21:5). The *name* of God is "wonderful" (Judg 13:18), and to be called in worship (Gen 21:33; 26:25). We can conclude that such phrases as "the name of the Lord" or "the name of God" refer to God's whole character.

In the New Testament we find the same. The name *Jesus* is used in a similar way as was the name of God in the Old Testament: Salvation is through his *name*

(John 1:12). Believers are to gather in his *name* (Matt 18:20). Prayer is to be made in his *name* (John 14:13-14). The servant of the Lord who bears the *name* of Christ will be hated (Matt 10:22). The book of Acts makes frequent mention of worship, service, and suffering in the *name* of Jesus Christ (Acts 4:18; 5:28, 41; 10:43; 19:17). From the Bible texts mentioned above it is clear that the word name is used as a synonym for God, his personality, and his relationship with his creation.

In our time and in Western culture, personal names are little more than labels to distinguish one person from another. But in Scripture, the names of God are like miniature portraits and promises. In Scripture, a person's name identified the person and stood for something specific. It is found quite often that a person's name was followed by a translation or explanation of the meaning of the name. For instance, the name Jacob means deceiver (Gen 27:36). It was later replaced by the name Israel (Gen 32:27, 28) meaning, a winner.

This is also true with the names of God. Naming carried special significance,¹ and was a sign of authority and power. This is evident in the fact that God revealed his names to his people rather than allowing them to choose their names for him. This idea is also seen in the fact that God often changed the names of his people: Abram to Abraham (Gen 17:5), Sarai to Sarah (Gen 17:15), and Jacob to Israel (Gen 32:28).

¹In ancient times the names of gods were viewed as "verbal cult-pictures" Menander and Aristides represent the viewpoint that the higher a god stood, the more names he had. Alternatively the Stoics attempted to overcome polytheism by transferring all the many names to one god Zeus. Here the plurality of names expressed fullness of being. But many names of the God of the universe can be transmuted into namelessness, in that no name does justice to the fullness of the godhead. *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (1980), s.v. "Names of God."

Even people changed the names of people, such as Nebuchadnezzar changing the names of Daniel and his three friends (Dan 1:8).

Names of God in the Old Testament

The most common and most used names in the Bible are: *El* and *Elohim*, *Jehovah*, *Addonai*, and *El Shadai*.

El—God ("mighty, strong, prominent") is used 250 times in the OT. See Gen 7:1, 28:3, 35:11; Num 23:22; Josh 3:10; 2 Sam 22:31, 32; Neh 1:5, 9:32; Isa 9:6; Ezek 10:5. *El* is linguistically equivalent to the Muslim *Allah*, but the attributes of *Allah* in Islam are entirely different from those of the Hebrew God.¹ *Elah* is Aramaic for god. *Elah* appears in the Hebrew Bible in Jer 10:11 (which is in Aramaic, and is plural, gods). In Daniel (in the Aramaic sections) *Elah* is used both of pagan gods, and of the true God, also plural. *Elah* is equivalent to the Hebrew *Eloah* which some think is dual; *elohim* is three or more. The gods of the nations are called *elohim*. The origin of *Eloah* is obscure. *Elohim* is the more common plural form of *El* and is used 2,570 times in the OT, meaning God as Creator, Preserver, Transcendent, Mighty, and Strong.²

Jehovah—Lord, Yahweh is the covenant name of God and occurs 6,823 times in the Old Testament and is first used in Gen 2:4 (*Jehovah Elohim*). *Jehovah* is from the verb "to be," *havah*, similar to *chavah* (to live), "The Self-Existent One," "I am

¹Denny Frederick, *An Introduction to Islam* (New York: Macmillan, 1985), 172.

²Judah David Eisenstain, *Jewish Encyclopaedia*, "Names of God," <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com> (25 May 2005).

who I am" or "I will be who I will be" as revealed to Moses when he was at the burning bush (Exod 3). The name of God was thought to be too sacred to be uttered, abbreviated, or written, *Jhvh*, without vowel points, and is called the *tetragrammaton* because of the four letters. Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings use *Jehovah* almost exclusively. The love of God is conditioned upon his moral and spiritual attributes (Dan 9:14; Ps 11:7; Lev 19:2; Hab 1:12). Note that Deut 6:4, 5 is known to the Jews as the *Shema* because it uses both *Jehovah* and *Elohim* to indicate one God with a plurality of persons.¹

El Shaddai—God Almighty or God all sufficient is used forty-eight times in the Old Testament and thirty-one times alone in Job. It was first used in Gen 17:1, 2. (Gen 31:29, 49:24, 25; Prov 3:27; Mic 2:1; Isa 60:15, Ruth 1:20, 21 and in Rev 16:7).

Adonai—Lord (*Adonai* is plural, the singular is *adon*) means Master or Lord and is used 300 times in the Old Testament and is always plural when referring to God. The singular refers to a human lord and is used 215 times to refer to men. The word was used first in Gen 15:2. The name *Adonai* is used extensively in Isaiah, 200 times by Ezekiel, and 10 times in Dan 9.²

The next group of names is used only occasionally but still with the clear purpose of widening human understanding of the character of God. Several of them will be used here to illustrate the point: *Jehovah-Jireh*—The Lord will provide (Gen 22:14). God always provides adequately when the time comes. *Jehovah-Rophe*—The

¹Lambert Dolphin, *The Names of God*, October 2000, <http://www.ldolphin.org/Names.html> (24 June 2005).

²Ibid., 7.

Lord who heals (Exod 15:22-26) from *rophe* ("to heal") implies spiritual, emotional, as well as physical healing (Jer 30:17, 3:22; Isa 61:1). God heals the body, soul, and spirit, all levels of man's being. *Jehovah-Nissi*—The Lord our banner (Exod 17:15) connected with the idea of God on the battlefield, from the word which means to glisten, to lift up (Ps 4:6). *Jehovah m'kaddes*—The Lord who sanctifies (Lev 20:8), meaning to make whole, set apart for holiness.

Jehovah-Shalom—The Lord our peace (Judg 6:24). *Shalom* is translated peace (used 170 times) meaning whole, finished, fulfilled, and perfected. *Shalom* is also related to welfare (Deut 27:6; Dan 5:26; I Kgs 9:25, 8:61; Gen 15:16; Exod 21:34, 22:5, 6; Lev 7:11-21), and means the kind of peace that result from being a whole person in right relationship to God and to one's fellow human beings. *Jehovah-Tsidkenu*—The Lord our righteousness (Jer 23:5, 6, 33:16) is from *tsidek* (straight, stiff, balanced, as on scales, full weight, justice, right, righteous, declared innocent). *Jehovah-Rohi*—The Lord our shepherd (Ps 23) comes from *ro'eh* (to pasture). *Jehovah-Sabaoth*—The Lord of Hosts, the commander of the angelic host and the armies of God (Isa 1:24; Ps 46:7, 11; 2 Kgs 3:9-12; Jer 11:20; Rom 9:29). *El Roi*—God who sees (Hagar in Gen 16:13). *Yesha*—Savior (Isa 43:3). Jesus is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew Joshua. The latter is a contraction of *Je-Hoshua* ("Christ," the anointed one is equivalent to the Hebrew *Messiah*).

There are some other Jewish names of God which are neither common nor regarded as sacred as those previously mentioned: *Emet* (Truth), *Tzur Yisrael* (The Rock of Israel), *Elohei Avraham*, *Elohei Yitzchak*, *ve Elohei Yaacov* (God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob), *Ehiyeh sh'Ehiyeh* (I Am That I Am), *Avinu*

Malkeinu (Our Father, our King), *Ro'eh Yisrael* (Shepherd of Israel), *Ha-Kadosh*, *Baruch Hu* (The Holy One, Blessed be he), *Melech ha-Melachim* (The King of Kings), *Makom* (literally, the place; meaning the Omnipresent), *Magen Avraham* (Shield of Abraham), *Eyluth*, (Strength, Ps 22:19). *Tsaddiq* (Righteous One, Ps 7:9), *Gaol* (Redeemer, to buy back by paying a price, (Job 19:25); *Abir* Mighty One (to be strong), Gen 49:24.¹

As we have seen in Judaism the name of God is more than a distinguishing title. It represents the Jewish conception of the divine nature, and of the relation of God to the Jewish people. According to Jewish tradition, the number of divine names that require a scribe's special care is seven: El, Elohim, Adonai, Yhwh, Ehyeh-Asher-Ehyeh, Shaddai, and Tzevaot.² According to Jewish tradition, the sacredness of the divine names must be recognized by the professional scribe who writes the Scriptures, or the chapters for the tefillin³ and the mezuzah.⁴ Before transcribing any of the divine names a person prepares mentally to sanctify himself. Once a person begins to write a name he does not stop until it is finished, and must not be interrupted while writing it,

¹*Encyclopedia Judaica*, Jerusalem, c1972, s.v. "Image," See also *The names of God in Judaism*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Names_of_God_in_Judaism (6 June 2004).

²*The Jewish Encyclopedia*, 1972, sv. "Names of God."

³*Tefillin*, also called *phylacteries*, are leather objects used in Jewish prayer, containing biblical verses. They are an essential part of morning prayer services, and are worn on a daily basis (except on Sabbath and festivals) by many Jews. *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Jerusalem (*EJJ*), c1972, s.v. "Tefillin."

⁴In Judaism, a *mezuzah* (plural: *mezuzot*) is the scroll inside a case with the Hebrew letter *w* character inscribed rightside up on the upper-exterior of the case. The term is often applied to the case in which the scroll is mounted, as well as the scriptures within. Jewish law prescribes the affixing of the *mezuzot* on doorposts. Since almost every Jewish home has a *mezuzah* on its front doorpost, historically, it was a means of recognition in times of persecution. The scroll contains two paragraphs from the Torah (Deut 6:4-9; 11:13-21) that specifically command the practice of hanging the *mezuzah*. The scriptures are written in Hebrew. *EJJ*, s.v. "Mezuzah."

even to greet a king. If an error is made in writing, it may not be erased, but a line must be drawn through it to show that it is canceled, and the whole page must be put in a genizah¹ and a new page begun.²

It can be concluded that God depicted himself as strong, glorious, noble, righteous, gracious, king, father, brother, light, creator, someone who gives, strengthens, remembers, knows, blesses, protects, saves, judges, restores, and so on. It is evident that each and every name offers something new and different about the character and the nature of God. All these names and images provide us with some idea of who God might be and how he might look. The variety of the names clearly suggests that there is no single name that can fully present the nature and character of God. However, all these names represent the Hebrew concept of the divine nature or character of God and his relationship with his creation and particularly with humanity.³

Names of God in the New Testament

The New Testament also uses various names for God but I will only look at the most commonly used names. *Kurios*—Lord is found some 600 times in the New Testament. It means lord, master, owner, power, and might, the one who has control

¹A *genizah* Hebrew "burial"; derived from the Persian word *genizakh* "storehouse, treasure" is the storeroom or depository in a synagogue, usually specifically a cemetery for worn-out Hebrew language books and papers on religious topics. It also was traditionally used to store away books viewed as heretical that, due to the presence of the Hebrew name of God, could not be thrown away or burned according to traditional Jewish law. *EJJ*, s.v. "Genizah."

²Ibid.

³The Jewish Encyclopedia, 160.

over people, things, and himself. *Kurios* always contains the idea of legality and authority.¹ This is one of the most common names for God in the NT. *Despotes* is twice used with reference to Christ (2 Pet 2:1) meaning an owner, lord, master (of a house) who usually had absolute authority over his household. This name occurs ten times in the New Testament (Luke 2:29; Acts 4:24; 2 Pet 2:1; Jude 4; Rev 6:10).² *Theos*—God, (equivalent to the Hebrew Elohim), divine, deity, divinity, is used 1,000 times in the NT. *I Am*, Jesus upset his countrymen, especially when he said, "Before Abraham was, *I Am*," John 8:58. Note also his claim to be Jehovah in such phrases as I AM the Light of the world, "the bread of life," living water," "the Resurrection and the Life," "the Way, the Truth and the Life" in John's gospel.

Other NT titles for Jesus are: Shepherd of the Sheep; Master; King of kings; Lord of lords; Bishop, and Guardian of our Souls; Daystar, Deliverer, Advocate, Last (or Second) Adam, Ancient of Days, Branch, Chief Cornerstone, Immanuel, First Born, Head of the Body, Physician, Rock, Root of Jesse, Stone, Potentate, Chief Apostle, Real High Priest, Pioneer and Perfecter of our Faith (or Author and Finisher); Lamb of God, Lamb Slain before the Foundation of the World, and Lord God Almighty.³

Comparing the names of God in the OT with the names and titles for Jesus in the NT, it is evident that the NT continues to use the OT names of God, but adds some

¹"Kurios," *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown (Exeter: MI: Paternoster Press, 1976 and Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1980), 2:2510.

²Brown, 508.

³Dolphin, 3.

new names and titles, which widen and deepen our understanding of him. What is particularly interesting about the NT names and titles of Jesus is that they offer some new and different characteristics of God from those mentioned in the OT. Some examples are: First and Last, Lamb of God, Lamb Slain, Advocate, Head of the Body, High Priest, and Perfecter of our Faith. The book of Hebrews elevates this revelation of God in Jesus as the ultimate one (Heb 1:1-3). Satan is taking advantage of the sinful human nature, attempting to hide this revelation given through the Son and this is the major source of spiritual problems and decline. Revival occurs when Jesus is presented and understood as God, Creator, Redeemer, and Savior. To conclude, it is clear that the names of God in the Bible denote the character and attributes of God. The variety of names suggests the inadequacy of human language in expressing spiritual realities, and also, the possibility for the cross-cultural and cross-lingual understanding of the expressions. Therefore, God's titles are human expressions of supernatural revelation sharing God's personal relationship with people through the plan of salvation.¹

Occasionally Jesus used names of God from the OT and applied them to himself. He also spoke quite frequently about his divine origin, which often irritated some religious leaders who accused him of committing blasphemy. Several references and acts emphasized his divine origin and his equality with God. These cases are important because they give us some insight into the nature of God.

¹"God" *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (SDABC), rev., ed. Francis D. Nichols. (Washington DC: Review and Herald, 1978), 1:170.

The New Testament speaks about the personal character of God. On one hand it may seem illegitimate to transfer to God the full concept of human personality because of his divine attributes. On the other hand we are only capable of speaking of him in concepts which are a part of our personal experience. He experienced our pain, suffering, and sorrow as well as our joy, love, and peace. It is true that we do not experience things in as perfect a manner as he does, but we were created in his image which suggests that from a human point of view our feelings, personality, and moral comprehension are similar to his. We are not completely dissimilar from Jesus, though we are degraded and incomplete mentally, emotionally and physically because of sin, yet we are a related version.

The NT pictures a God who speaks and acts, who reveals himself through word and deed. He works in sovereign absolute power (John 5:17). He makes his will known in command and demand and brings everything to the goal that he has determined.¹ Only the spiritual man is capable of knowing God (1 Cor 2:11) and penetrating the depths of God.

The Holy Spirit has also been presented by various names, such as: Counselor, Comforter, Baptizer, Advocate, Strengtheners, Sanctifier, Spirit of Christ (not the same as the spirit of Christ), Spirit of Truth, Spirit of Grace, Spirit of Mercy, Spirit of God, Spirit of Holiness, and Spirit of Life. The Holy Spirit has been symbolized in the OT and NT by breath or wind, fire, water, oil, light, and a dove. This figurative language is an excellent way to present an unimaginable and unseen God to human beings.

¹Ibid., 2:75.

These metaphors are pictures that are a part of human life and experience. In this way, God becomes a part of the human subjective experience.

Images of God

The Bible contains various images of God. It is important not to confuse the names of God with images of God though they have the same purpose to tell us something about God. The images in literature are used as figurative language: a figure of speech, especially a metaphor or simile, someone closely resembling someone else.¹ In addition, an image is an artificial imitation or representation of the external form of any object, especially of a person. With reference to biblical language it is used as appearance, form, semblance, likeness, also copy, symbol, or a mental picture or representation of something.² Some dictionaries suggest that the basic meaning of the word “image” in Hebrew (*tselem* or *selem*) is “representation,” a meaning sufficiently broad to include both concrete and abstract aspects of the word.³ Similarly, the images of God are in fact pictures and metaphors that in a broad, general, and symbolic way convey the message about God in the context of culture. These images were well-known pictures from daily life so people could easily understand them and relate through them to the one the images symbolically represent.

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³*The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (ABD), (1992), s.v. “Image.”

The expression “image of God” is a key term for understanding the divine-human relationship in biblical thought.¹ The Scriptures use two kinds of images in presenting God. On the one hand God is described in personal images and terms such as: a warrior (Exod 5:3), a shepherd (Ps 23), or vine-keeper (Isa 5:1-7), a solicitous father (Hos 11:1), or mother (Isa 49:15), and a passionate lover (Hos 2:16). On the other hand there are also some impersonal images of God *which* describe him as a rock, a shield, and a fortress (Ps 144:1-2).

The book of Hosea uses various imagery of God more than any other book of the Bible. At least fifteen imageries are mentioned there such as: husband, lover, king, watchman, lion, leopard, bear, moth, cedar, lily, water, dew, rot, olive tree, and pine tree.

Why are images so important? They help us to understand and memorize realities around us. Images are not abstract ideas, but pictures. In fact, they are a powerful combination of thoughts and feelings.² Therefore, images are loaded with emotion and enable us to relate to abstract and remote objects.

The abundance of biblical images makes it clear that no single image or title is comprehensive enough to capture the nature of God and God’s relationship with all creation.³ The biblical writers do not seem to be worried that we will mistake birds,

¹ABD, s.v. “Image of God.”

²Juanita R. Ryan, *Seeing God in New ways - Recovery from Distorted Images of God*, April 2001, <http://www.nacronline.com/dox/library/images.shtml> (24 June 2004).

³Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, Temper Longman, III, eds, “God,” *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 333.

women with brooms, kings, and rocks for God.¹ They simply use those images to make a point. Images of God, drawn from various categories of social relations and nature, abound in the Bible. Sometimes the categories are mixed, as in Moses' judgment against the Israelites: "You were unmindful of the Rock that bore you; you forgot the God who gave you birth" (Deut 32:18). Typically, rocks do not produce offspring and gods do not writhe in travail (the Hebrew meaning of the verb translated "give birth"), but the combination of these images captures the steadfastness, compassion, labor, provisions of God, and the shamefulness of forgetting these gifts.² To regard any of them as insignificant is to squander the guidance and revelation contained in the Scriptures.³

Biblical images of God give us a sense of being and belonging. Our identity is found in the image of God "For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God" (Col 3:3 NAB). They help us to experience and exercise true freedom in our lives. Positive images of God create in us positive images of ourselves and give us hope. For different reasons people have a negative image of God.

Our images of God are based often on the foundation of our expectations in relationships with other people, including God. Our images of God, therefore, may not be the same as our doctrinal affirmations about God. We may affirm that we believe in a God of love, and grace, but our image of him may be one of an abusive bully. If this

¹Elena Solvang, *Images of God*, <http://www.thelutheran.org/0111/authors.html#solvang> (20 June 2004).

²Ibid.

³*Encyclopedia of Theology*, (c1975), s.v. "Images."

is the case then it is most likely that it will have a more powerful impact on our emotions and our behavior than our doctrinal statement about God. This is so because our image of God is rooted in formative experience.¹ Ryan talks about three reasons why we have to examine our “private images of God.”

The first reason is because images have a powerful impact on our behavior without our conscious awareness. For instance, if a person describes God as a bully, there is a real fear of being punished or persecuted by him. Such an attitude will keep that person locked in self-destructive behavior because of a wrong picture of God.² Second, if our image of God is distorted, then our whole relationship with God can be distorted, too. Our notion about God will influence the quality of our relationship with him.³ Third, people should pay attention to their images of God because if their picture of God is distorted, their picture of themselves will most likely be distorted as well, and this will correspond to self-destructive thoughts and behaviors. In other words, a negative picture of God will cause a negative picture of oneself. “The image of God terminology clearly affirms the preeminent position of humanity in the created order and declares the dignity and worth of man and woman as the special creation of God.”⁴ It is impossible to have a right picture of us and a wrong picture of God. It is because all our spiritual, intellectual, and physical strength comes from our

¹Juanita R. Ryan, *Seeing God in New ways—Recovery from Distorted Images of God*, <http://www.nacronline.com/dox/library/images.shtml> (24 June 2004).

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴*ABD*, s.v. “Image of God.”

relationship with God. This is why our personal imagery of God should be verified by the biblical picture of God.

Some people regard the "Old Testament God" as a stern God, very concerned with people keeping the divine rules, a God characterized by thunder and lightning on Mt. Sinai. To support this rigid picture of God people often refer to the God who turned Lot's wife into a pillar of salt for looking back at Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:26) against the warning not to do so, or the God who told Abraham to sacrifice his only son, Isaac, and then stopped Abraham in the nick of time (Gen 22:12). Therefore, for them the God of the OT is an unfair, judging, merciless, and angry God. In some cases God is presented as a Judge (Hebrew *shaphat*) who will judge between those who do right and wrong (Gen 18:25). This is a one-sided, narrow, and distorted view of God.

Yet, there is another group of texts which present the God who walked in the Garden of Eden during the cool of the evening (Gen 3), the God who compares the nation Israel to an adulterous wife whom God still loves passionately (Hos 2-3) or, reversing the gender imagery, the God who has more tenderness toward Israel than a mother has "for the child of her womb" (Isa 49:15). There are also Bible texts that talk about a merciful God whom the prophet Jonah criticized after the people of Nineveh converted, much to Jonah's surprise and disgust. He is also presented as a Shield (Hebrew *magen*) which means God is our shield and protector (Ps 3:3, 18:30). In Deuteronomy there is another image of a mother eagle (Deut 32:11, 12) which again represents God's care, protection, and relationship with his children. In Psalms God is presented as a Shepherd who cares about his flock, feeds it, and protects it (Ps 23;

79:13; 95:7; 80:1; 100:3). Throughout the Bible God is presented as the Deliverer, the one who has delivered his people not only from bondage in Egypt but from the bondage of sin. He also delivered the Israelites from their enemies (Ps 18:2).

Another time God is presented as King (Hebrew *melekeh*) who deserves all our respect and admiration (Ps 5:2, 29:10, 44:4, 47:6-8, 48:2, 68:24). Why? According to Plato this involves a concept of a philosopher-king image. The king will put people in order, he knows all things, he cannot be thwarted because he oversees all things, and he has wisdom and power.¹ In Ps 72 we see a different image of kingship which can be called the image of the savior king. Here we see that the greatness of the king lies in his readiness and effectiveness with which he redeems and puts things in order. “The king will defend the poor, defend the children of the poor, and punish the wrongdoer (Ps 72:2, 4). The savior king is constantly meeting, redressing, and redeeming that which is alien to his will. So, in the biblical image of kingship we see at least two facets used as a model of divine sovereignty.”² In some other cases God is called *Zur* which means “God our Rock” (Deut 32:18; Isa 30:29). Here again we see the picture that presents strength, protection, and safety that comes from God.

Furthermore, Isaiah calls the Messiah “Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God (*El Gibhor*), Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (Isa 9:6). In these names and pictures of the Messiah, Jesus introduced an acceptable and desirable image of God in human perception. The prophet Daniel was shown an image of God with long white hair and

¹The Doctrine Commission of the General Synod of the Church of England, *We Believe in God* (London: Church House Publishing, 1987), 149.

²Ibid.

beard calling him the *Attiq Yomin* (Aramaic) “Ancient of Days” (Dan 7:9, 13, 22).

Obviously, here the idea expressed is one of authority, experience, wisdom, knowledge, and God’s timelessness.

By visual imageries the Bible explains an invisible God. God said in Hosea, “For I am God not man” (Hos 11:9). This statement has come in the book as climax of God’s love, mercy, and care for Israel. What God is saying here is “I am far greater than any of those images. I am the one that nothing can compare with.

Some Christians believe that the images of God in the NT are offering a different picture of God compared to that in the OT for many fondly remember the parables of the Good Shepherd (John 10) and the Prodigal Son (Luke 15).

In the NT God is even more often described in personal terms than in the OT. Jesus uses many different images to describe the kingdom of God and indirectly therewith the personhood of God (Matt 13) showing God as a sower of seed, fisherman, pearl merchant, and housewife. While there are thus multiple *images* to describe the infinite and incomprehensible reality of God, relatively few of these images can be employed as the governing concept within theology purporting to describe the God-world relationship.¹

One of the most famous images of God in the Bible is that of a friend. In John 15:12-15 Jesus calls us his friends, which is a special status and a new level in his

¹Joseph A. Bracken, “Images of God Within Systematic Theology,” *Theological Studies* 63, no. 2 (2002): 363.

Table 1. Variety of Images of God in the Bible Divided in Groups

IMAGES OF GOD IN THE BIBLE			
PERSONAL		IMPERSONAL	
Human		Nature	
Relational		Animate	
Father	Matt 6:9-13	Lion	Hos 5:14
Mother	Isa 49:15	Leopard	Hos 13:7
Son	Gal 4:4	Bear	Hos 13:8
Brother	Gen 33:10	Moth	Hos 5:12
Husband	Eph 5:22-28	Eagle	Deut 32:11, 12
Friend	John 15:12-15	Dove	Lk 2:24
Lover	Hos 2:16	Hen	Mtt 23:37
Hierarchical		Inanimate	
		Plants	
King	Ps 47:6-8	Cedar	Hos 14:6
Lord	Ps 47:6-8	Lily	Hos 14:6
Master		Burning bush	Exod 3:2-4
Occupational			
Merchant	Matt 13:45	Olive tree	Exod 3:2
Potter	Matt 13:43	Green pine tree	Hos 14:8
Baker	Isa 64:7	Matter	
Judge	2 Tim 4:8	Rock	Ps 94:22
Watchman	Gen 18:25	Stone	Ps 94:2
Shepherd	Hos 9:8	Shield	Ps 28:6
Housewife	Ps 23	Elements	
Sower	Lk 13:20,21	Water	John 4:10, 11
		Dew	John 4:8
		Fire	Hos 14:5-6
		Appearances	
		Rot	Hos 5:12
		Wind	Hos 5:12
		Sun	Rev 1:16
		Lightening	Zak 9:14
		Thundering	Job 26:14

relationship with us. Abraham, too, was called a friend of God, which confirms the idea that God wants to build a strong relationship with us on the basis of friendship. Do we fully enjoy this new status? Maybe we are not quite sure what it means in real life.

Christians need to remember Jesus' story about the Pharisee praying in the temple saying, "O God, I thank you that I am not like the rest of humanity," while the tax collector at the back simply struck his breast and said, "O God, be merciful to me, a sinner" (Luke 18). Jesus' description of the Pharisee is as stern and uncompromising as his view of the tax collector is compassionate. This story presents two people with different pictures of God and about themselves. The common image of a loving and generous NT God should not erase the need for ongoing conversion and respect for him.

So far we have seen numerous names and in particular images of God used in the Bible to depict him in order to make him more understandable and more real to us. However, it is quite clear from the Bible that in no circumstances did God allow his people to make material images—idols to represent God. On the contrary, God, in the second commandment, strictly forbids making any image that might represent him to be worshipped (Exod 20:4-6; Isa 44).

Personality of God

The Bible offers very little information about the physical appearance of God. In fact Jesus said that "God is spirit" which would indicate that he has no physical body (John 4:24). Can it mean that he has no body at all? This is a question on which Christians differ. Those who believe that God has a body see support in the biblical statement that man was created in the image of God (Gen 1:27), which seems to suggest a physical similarity between man and God. They reason that if humans have

bodies then it is logical to assume that God too exists in some kind of bodily form.¹ In addition, some other biblical passages attribute physical characteristics to God. Adam and Eve heard the sound of God walking in the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:8). Isaiah and Daniel saw him seated on a throne (Isa 6:1; Dan 7:9).

On the other hand, many Christians disagree with the idea that God has a body. They see support for their opinion in the second commandment that prohibits manufacturing and worshiping images (Exod 20:4-5). Another reason that some claim that God has no body is because it is hard to understand how he could be everywhere at once. In addition, a body is thought to depend on its environment, as we know from our experience. It enables us to function within our specific environment.²

However, Jesus said to the Samaritan woman at the well: “God is Spirit and his worshipers must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:24). Here Jesus emphasized that because he is an infinite spirit being, he cannot be subject to the same limitations as finite material beings. Consequently, he is not so much concerned with visible places and forms of worship.³ Because God is of a totally different category of being from us, he should not be thought of in terms of size, shape, or destination, because “no one has ever seen God” (John 1:18). Yet, it is difficult to think about God as something shapeless such as steam, a cloud, or energy and nothing else.

However, we should not get discouraged by those incomprehensible

¹Rice, 73.

²Ibid., 74.

³“God,” *SDABC*, 5:941.

characteristics of God. Jesus said that we will be able to see God in heaven, “Blessed are the pure in the heart for they will see God” (Matt 5:8). John adds in 1 John 3:2, “for we shall see him as he is.” Other biblical texts express the same idea and give us strong reasons to believe that God is really the one we can relate to and one day we will be able to dwell in his presence when sin and the consequences of sin is removed.

Human Images of God

It is very common in the Bible to talk about God in an anthropomorphic way, which means he has been portrayed in human images. On some occasions God uses male images and on others female images when he talks about himself. God has been portrayed as one who has a heart (Gen 6:6), arms (Num 11:23), eyes (Ps 33:18; Heb 4:13), fingers (Exod 8:19), hair and head (Dan 7:9), and a face (Exod 33:20). Not only that, God can see (Gen 1:31), hear (Exod 2:24), smell (Gen 8:21), sit (Ps 80:1), and walk (Lev 26:12). Though God’s whole being can never be fully understood nor perceived by human senses, he has decided to make himself known in human terms. Assigning to God human characteristics helps us relate to and interact with him more easily on a personal level.

Male Images of God

The Bible quite frequently presents God using male and female images as it talks about God. It is worth mentioning a rule to bear in mind as we read and think.¹ Be careful not to go too far in applying the images of God. God is not exactly the same

¹Melanie A. May, “Image of God,” *Theology Today* 54 (April 1997): 102.

as the image that is being used to represent him. Care should also be applied as we talk about the male or female images of God.

The image of God as father is probably the most frequently used in the Bible, though there are only eleven places in the Old Testament where God is designated as "father." In the Gospels alone God is designated as a father one hundred and seventy times by Jesus in his attempt to present God and his relationship with humanity. Here are some Bible texts which use that image of a father to represent God (Num 1:9; I Sam 16:6; Exod 4:22-23; 2 Sam 7:14-15; Ps 2:7; Gal 4:6).

How appropriate is it to use the image of a father to represent God? Radical feminist Mary Daly seeks for a total revision of the idea of the father image of God. In her book *Beyond God the Father* she takes the view that "the father image is the cornerstone of self-alienating mode of existence which produces rape, genocide and war. When the father-god and all his works are renounced, a new heaven and earth of mutual respect, truth and vitality will come about."¹ She argues for a symbolization which is not anthropomorphic; "neither the Father, nor the Son, nor the mother is God. God is the verb who transcends anthropomorphic symbolization."² Daly goes even further promising that "when we move beyond symbols we shall enter a new realm of energy and possibility for human happiness."³

¹Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father, Towards the Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (Boston: Beacon, 1973), 95.

²Robert Hamerton-Kelly, *God the Father, Theology and Patriarchy in the Teaching of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 6.

³Daly, 97.

Sigmund Freud offers his own understanding of the image of a father. For him “the father is the source of all morals and religion; every human being must work through his or her relationship to the father on the way to maturity.”¹ This is yet another controversy in Freud’s psychoanalytic theories. He sets forth his controversial thesis by saying that behind religion and morals lies the memory of the murder of the father at the dawn of human history.² According to him, religion and morals are merely ways in which the repressed memory of this deed finds expression.

To many people, neither view of the image of a father, as mentioned above, would give a satisfying picture of God as a father. This is because we have different fathers depending on our personal experience with them. Those of us whose father was caring, protecting, and loving would appreciate this image of God. On the other hand those who had a bad, careless, neglecting, and maybe abusive father³ would not be happy with the image of a father representing their God.⁴

This suggests that people see and judge things not only through knowledge but through personal experience as well.

The Bible uses the image of the Father in at least two symbolic ways. First, it is a general or indirect symbolization, which means that God is seen in connection with human fathers. He is the “God of the fathers” (Exod 13:13), a God who is known through a personal relationship he had with our ancestors. He is the high God and the

¹James Strachey et al., *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (London: Hogarth, 1964), 23:112.

²Hamerton-Kelly, 4.

³I know a pastor’s son who rejected the father image of God because he was continually mistreated by his earthly father.

⁴Dearing, 18.

near God, involved in the lives of the families and tribes (Isa 42). He is the transcendent originator who determines all things. The symbol of his being and presence is the father of the family, who in turn is responsible for family worship and obedience to God. To share God's blessing one had to belong to a family. Thus, the status of the father was divinely sanctioned and the divine was involved in the history of the individual and society at the most intimate level of the family.¹

The second way is referred to as direct symbolization, where the Bible uses either simile or metaphor: God is like a father, more than that, he is our father. Here a parental metaphor is used for God. "Among the prophets, God is called father directly in order to emphasize his care for his people, as a foil to their sin—sin as an expression of ingratitude."² Thus we have a symbol of a free relationship and divine kindness in the father as presented in the Old Testament.

Jesus called God his father. The term occurs 170 times on the lips of Jesus in the gospels. It is an amazing fact that Jesus, in all places, with one exception in Mark 15:34 when he cried from the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" invokes God as "Father."³

Concerning the gender of God we have to be very cautious about our conclusion. It is true that the Bible usually talks about God, linguistically speaking, in

¹Hamerton-Kelly, 27.

²Ibid., 51.

³Ibid., 73.

grammatical male gender terms, but it is not enough to conclude that God is of male sex as human males are. The fact that he is portrayed in the image of a father does not suggest that he must have been a male, as in our understanding of an earthly father. People tend to look at this image of God in all aspects, sociological, emotional and physical, just as we look at earthly fathers. This does not have to be.

Female Images of God

The Bible contains female images of God (Hos 11:1-4; Num 11:11-12). For example, God is compared with a mother when Jesus said that the kingdom of God is like a woman who takes flour and prepares bread (Luke 13:20, 21). Another female image of God in the Bible is where God is compared to a mother hen (Luke 13:34) and an eagle (Deut 32:11, 12). The same God is both a mother eagle who pushes her young out of the nest and teaches them to fly and feed themselves, at other times the mother hen helps her chicks relax within the security of her loving wings.¹

The feminist approach reads into these images of God that God is a female not a male. There is even a movie titled *God is She* where a woman is portrayed as the Savior of the world dying on the cross. To prove this idea from the Bible would seem to be an impossible task. Yet there are those who for some reason looking through the feminist lenses see it as a possibility.²

¹Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, *The Divine Feminine, The Biblical Imagery of God as Female* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1988), 93.

²Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (NY: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1992), 17.

In the OT God compares his everlasting love towards his people with a mother and her love towards her child (Isa 42:6, 16; 49:15). Here God has compared his perfect love with a woman's imperfect one. It is used because a picture of a mother's love is something we can understand and relate to.

Parental Image of God

God uses the imagery of a parent to describe his relationship with Israel in Hosea. "When Israel was a child, I loved him, . . . it was I who taught Ephraim to walk, taking him in my arms" (Hos 11:1-3). In addition, there are those who prefer the image of God as a parent. Some people pray to God as, "Dear heavenly Parent." Such people say that God cannot be looked at as either father or mother but rather both. They believe that the image of God as a parent combines the father and mother characteristics and shows the fullness and perfection of both but has nothing to do with the gender of God.

There are those who see the Godhead as a family and to them there is God the Father, the Holy Spirit is the Mother, and Jesus Christ is their Son. Those who accept this concept of God are actually humanizing God by ascribing to him human characteristics, including having offspring. This image of God is far from the biblical concept of God and carries just a fraction of the fullness of God.

"With respect to the God we serve, we have to distinguish between the reality of God and how we see him. Even with the biblical revelation available to us, we develop different perceptions or understandings of God. We see in the Bible that God allows us to see him differently. This position allows us not to absolutize our own

understanding of God. Therefore, our interpretations of God are not absolute but can be adequate for God's purpose."¹

We have to see through the spectacles of our culture, education, and our personality type. As our knowledge about the world constantly changes and grows, it is the same with our understanding of God.

Childhood Image of God

Though we regard ourselves as being adult and mature it does not necessarily mean that our image of God is mature. It depends primarily on our knowledge and experience with him. The apostle Paul spoke about this in 1 Cor 13:11, "It's like this: When I was a child, I spoke and thought and reasoned as a child does. But when I grew up, I put away childish things. Now we see things imperfectly as in a poor mirror, but then we will see everything with perfect clarity. All that I know now is partial and incomplete, but then I will know everything completely, just as God knows me now."

Childhood images of God reflect a childhood faith. Fair enough; we all have to start somewhere. An adult faith, however, requires more adult images of God, that is, new mental pictures which can help adults better understand a God never fully captured in human language. Childhood images of God as judge and father can be complemented by other biblical images of God, such as those portraying God as potter and mother. Childhood images of God are not automatically upgraded to adult images. They may need to grow if we are to have a vibrant, adult faith. Often a childhood image combines something true (God is all-powerful) with a mistaken conclusion (God will never let anything bad happen to me). If we fail to see how

43. ¹Charles H. Kraft, *Anthropology for Christian Witness* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996),

our childhood images of God are incomplete, we risk stunting our growth toward an adult faith.¹

However, with God there are resources for the spiritual journey from infancy to adulthood which are not available apart from him.² Our images of God can and should grow as we grow physically as well as spiritually.

Jesus the Perfect Image of God

Jesus is the fullest and the most complete image of God. Philip, one of his disciples, once asked him to show them God the Father. He replied, "Don't you know me, Philip? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, show us the Father? Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in me" (John 14:7-10)? In fact, Jesus says here that it is possible to know God and the best way to do that is through him.

Probably the most powerful text about Jesus' equality with God is mentioned in Heb 1:3 (REV). This is one of the most direct statements on Christ's deity. "He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb 1:3). If Jesus is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being then he not only knows God but he is God. Therefore, he is the only one in a position to represent God to us in the way and manner he sees is best for us.

¹Pat McCloskey, *Are Our Images of God Growing?* <http://www.americancatholic.org/About/sitemap.asp> (24 September 2004).

²Hamerton-Kelly, 104.

In his prayer to his heavenly Father, Jesus said, "Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent" (John 17:3). John is saying that true knowledge of God is much more than mere intellectual and factual knowledge of him. To know God means to love him, to get into a close relationship with him and to obey him wholeheartedly. In addition, Jesus is saying that only those who know God can enjoy the benefits of eternal life (John 14:5-21).

Significance of the Concept of Image

Role of Image

Though our knowledge about God appears to be rather theoretical and philosophical it should also be practical and experiential. Human beings need to express things in a more practical way, which often includes the use of forms, rituals, and events. Everything we do requires a certain form or ritual in order to communicate certain meanings. We often confuse forms and meaning and have problems knowing how to differentiate between the various aspects in our religious life. It is worth looking at the role of forms and rituals. Forms and meanings are always supposed to go together, though it is possible that the first meaning attached to a form can be gradually lost, and then the form itself can become meaningless. When we interpret an activity, the meaning is primarily a matter of substance, answering the questions who, what, and particularly why.

A form is a structural thing and it answers the question how we do things. For instance, we eat for pleasure and to survive: that is the meaning of eating. But how we eat, whether we sit, stand, lie down, use a knife and fork, or just fingers, is a form. Forms have to do with esthetics, meaning with the purpose. The same principle is to

be applied when it comes to religious matters, including our worship style and our lifestyle. "Many assume that forms such as baptism, the Lord's Supper, and even preaching and other church customs are sacred in and of themselves. But anthropology helps us understand that forms and rituals are important not because the form itself is sacred, but because the meanings that may flow through that form are sacred. It is idolatry to exalt the form to a position where our focus is on it rather than on what God seeks to communicate through that form."¹

In the religious realm, most forms can be used as long as they serve the purpose of communicating biblical meanings. When forms themselves become the purpose or the focus then their existence is questionable. When forms carry no substance then there is no justification for them. If the allegiance is to Christ, does it matter if the structures are more like Muslim, or Hindu structures than Western "Christian" structures? The crucial dimension is primarily commitment not religious structure. On the one hand, if people's commitment is not to God through Christ, no set of structures will save them. On the other hand, if their commitment to God is through Jesus, any structure that carries that meaning will do.²

Finally, it seems that forms without meaning are meaningless and meaning without form is powerless. Jesus spoke about this problem quite frequently in order to point out what is to be regarded as most important in people's lives.

"Blind guides! You strain your water so you won't accidentally swallow a

¹Kraft, 13.

²Ibid., 241.

gnat; then you swallow a camel" (Matt 23:16). "How terrible it will be for you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! You are so careful to clean the outside of the cup and the dish, but inside you are filthy—full of greed and self-indulgence." "Blind Pharisees! First wash the inside of the cup, and then the outside will become clean, too" (Matt 23:24, 23).

It is clear that Jesus put the substance of the message first and then come the forms and style. In the end, do we need forms and rituals? The answer is yes. We can mention several reasons. First, forms and rituals provide people with security and comfort in the times of crisis and insecurity. In the face of such situations people often turn to religious rituals to satisfy their need to control the future or at least do something in the time of crisis. Second, forms and rituals make it possible for the members to effectively participate in religious life and recognize their religious and social identity. Third, forms and rituals provide opportunity for reaffirming unity and togetherness. Fourth, the forms and rituals enable people to express their relationships to supernatural beings and reverence to God. Fifth, forms and rituals can help people to have fun and enjoyment in their religion.¹ However, it is important to recognize that forms and rituals are subject to change whenever they lose their meaning, and are appropriate only as they carry biblical meanings.

History of Image

Since one of the purposes of this paper is to look at our notion of the image of God, and compare it with the biblical image of God, it is good to try to define the

¹Ibid., 13.

word image and its meaning in human culture. Images have been used throughout human history in every culture. In ancient times they were used in both Mesopotamia and Egypt and the literature from that past world provides a basis for determining how those people understood images. To them images were not meant to depict what a god looked like, but represented attempts to describe certain qualities or attributes of a deity.¹ Therefore, the primary purpose of an image was to represent the god himself.²

What then is an image? There are various definitions that try to explain what an image is. "Image is an actual or mental picture: a picture or likeness of somebody or something, produced either physically by a sculptor, painter, or photographer, or conjured in the mind."³ Since the notion of an image presents a complex concept it is not surprising that various words are used even in the NT Greek to express its meaning. The most commonly used are the two words for image, *eidolon* and *eikon* meaning: character, image, mark or stamp, idea, appearance, copy, form, figure, type, likeness, visible impression, reflection, example, model, idol, icon, etc.⁴

Even God created humanity in his image, showing the importance of images for the Creator God. Images are the conveyers of ideas, messages, and meanings. Thoughts and forms take shape with the use of images and the meanings attached to them. It is possible to have a personal image of something or a collective image of some concept or item.

¹*Judaica Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Image of God."

²*ABD*, s.v. "Image of God."

³*Ibid.*

⁴*SDA Bible Dictionary (SDABD)* (1960), s.v. "Image of God."

Picture theory has a very long history, going back to Plato or even Democritus (Thomas, 1987), and until quite recently it was almost universally accepted (White, 1990). All versions hold that having visual imagery involves having entities, in the head or in the mind, which are like, or functionally equivalent to, inner pictures. These pictures are thought of as being composed of copies or remnants of earlier sense impressions, complexes of visual sensations, which were themselves picture like. "Picture" is, of course, strictly appropriate only to copies in the visual mode (upon which most discussions of imagery concentrate), but, if this sort of account really works for the visual, then it seems at least initially plausible that similar "copy" theories could be devised for the other sensory modes.¹

Psychology of Image

There are positive and negative images. How do we know which are which? It should be quite simple. Those that motivate us to good actions are positive and those that motivate us to bad actions are obviously bad.

Images help us to remember more easily and retain ideas, and identities of people longer. We relate to images very easily and often emotionally. We adopt them and live with them. In fact, they are a part of our everyday life. An image, for instance, such as a national flag can cause deep emotions to flow. A national anthem as an audio image can have the same effect. It seems that most societies today are image driven societies. All sorts of pictures and images are everywhere around us, attached to our daily reality. There are traffic signs, warning signs, various images on giant advertisement boards, as well as all sorts of pictures and objects that mean something to us.

¹Nigel J. T. Thomas, "Are Theories of Imagery, Theories of Imagination? An Active Perception Approach to Conscious Mental Content," *Cognitive Science* (1999): 207-245, <http://www.calstatela.edu/faculty/nthomas/im-im/im-im.htm> (6 June 2005).

Just think a bit about the importance of the names of certain products and the image it generates. A name like Mercedes or Nike carries certain symbolism¹ with its own easily-recognized brand, logo, or trademark. So, when a person sees, for instance, the trademark of Mercedes, we immediately know that it represents not only a car but it carries the idea of pride, status, and reliability. The power of an image is unquestionable; the only thing is how we use it.²

Social Aspect of Image

Images are everywhere around us. They catch our attention and convey a certain message to us. In today's society it is not only important who a person is but how they dress, what car they drive, and who they are with. The media creates new images and removes old ones.³ Today when the world has become one big global village, images, like many other things, are crossing cultural, political, religious, and social borders, entering different worldviews and even changing them. However, images are not always equally understood in cultural settings different from the ones in which they were originally created. As Christian anthropologist Kraft correctly pointed out, "Any form of image borrowed from one culture to another will have at

¹Nigel Thomas, "Mental Imagery," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2001 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2001/entries/mental-imagery>> (1 June 2005).

²Sandra Yin, "The Power of Images," *American Demographics* 23, no. 11 (November 2001): 32.

³Thomas, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2001/entries/mental-imagery> (1 June 2005).

least some different meanings in the new culture.”¹ In a way the same happens with biblical images because of time and cultural differences.

Spirituality and Image

Images and forms of expression used in our religious life are not our spirituality. Images are only a vehicle for transmitting an idea or message to people. But indirectly speaking, images are an excellent way to embody an idea and make it real, alive, and practical. In the spiritual realm images are very important for they help people to make invisible things visible and remote things close. Because of the images used, when we eat bread and drink wine at the Lord’s Supper, we are able to imagine the unimaginable and experience something that belongs to the spiritual realm. Even though we are aware of the fact that bread and wine are only symbols of a spiritual reality, and not reality as such, they still help us to relate to that abstract reality more concretely and more experientially.

In his preaching ministry, Jesus made extensive use of stories, parables, and images for several reasons. First, he used them as a vehicle to convey spiritual and abstract messages about the Kingdom of God to his listeners. Second, he wanted to capture the attention of and hold the interest of his listeners. Third, they helped people remember the message through stories. Fourth, people could recognize and identify with those stories and images. To be able to do that efficiently Jesus had to know the psychology of the human mind and had to know how it works.

¹Kraft, 163.

Relationships Through Images

People often regard the Bible as a history book or a literature book, or a theology book, and that is true: but many fail to recognize that the Bible is primarily a book that speaks about relationships. It begins with God's relationship with Adam and Eve, and all of creation. Then it continues with God's communication with the patriarchs as representatives of humanity. Even the Ten Commandments are given primarily to protect relationships, not to judge sin. In the NT we see that God sent his only Son Jesus Christ not because of his desire for adventure but because "he loved the world so much that did not spare his Son" and it is the best proof of how he relates to us. This clearly shows how much we matter to God. But, that is not the full story about relationships. To make it effective and complete God expects us to respond to him sincerely, and to be faithful and fruitful in life.

We often think and talk about our identity. We are even worried about whether as a church or an individual believer we still have a clear sense of our Adventist identity. Unfortunately, it seems that we have forgotten that our identity does not come from certain peculiar doctrines or a lifestyle, but from a close relationship with God through Jesus Christ. As Jesus said: "I am the vine and you are the branches; if a man remains in Me and I in him he will bear much fruit" (John 15:5-17). In John 3:34, 35 Jesus pointed out very clearly what Christian identity meant to him. "You must love one another. All men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another."

Probably the most important question at this point is how to build strong relationships with God. We should remember that we are as close to God as we choose to be. Like any friendship, we must work at developing our friendship and relationship

with God. It will not happen by accident. It takes desire, time and, energy.¹ There are a number of ways to do that and we will mention only a few basic ones.

First, there is need for a constant personal search for God and his purpose in our life. Without God, life has no purpose, and without purpose, life has no meaning, without meaning, life has no significance or hope.²

Second, people must find time for God. There is a saying; “time is love.” We find time for the people and things we love. There are numerous ways to spend time with God. Notice several possibilities:

- a. Take a walk in nature and enjoy God’s wonderful creation
- b. Read the Bible and other spiritual literature and meditate upon it
- c. Have personal prayer, walk and talk with God

Third, practice your faith in your life and share it with others. This will help you experience your Christianity not just as a set of beliefs and forms but as a living faith expressed through a love relationship with God and people.

Fourth, worship God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, all your strength in any way you feel, providing that it is appropriate and in according to biblical principles and as the Spirit leads you. God desires your full devotion, not just little bits of your life (Heb 12:28). True worship happens when your spirit responds to God’s spirit. God designed you to communicate with him.³ The best style of worship

¹Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 90.

²Ibid., 30.

³Ibid., 105.

is the one that most authentically represents your love for God. Your relationship with God today is the foundation for your growth since it is a long lasting process.

Impact of the Images of God on Spiritual Growth

A biblically correct picture of God helps build a stronger foundation for personal faith and genuine Christianity. Developing mature images of God can be challenging, enriching, and scary at the same time. Challenging, because as we come closer to God and get to know him we begin to see his holiness and realize our sinfulness and need for genuine change. Enriching, because those who understand God better, experience more and more of the love of God, and love him more in return. Scary, because it requires giving up tradition, including forms and rituals which have become meaningless and burdensome. Yet for many, traditions and forms are inseparable from the core values of their faith.

As our understanding of God increases, so too our faith will increase, and it will become natural for the forms to become of secondary importance to us with relationship becoming the most important. Ellen White says that spiritual maturity does not come simply by the passing of years but through full surrender to Jesus. "Men and women become adults spiritually not with the simple passing of years but rather when they begin to recognize how much their images of God fall short of the reality and how much God stretches us to respect all men and women created in the divine image (Genesis 1:26-27). When we truly convert, we surrender our idols and accept life on God's terms. Only then can our images develop until we see God face-

to-face, so to speak, at the eternal banquet.”¹ The biblical images of God can help us in developing spiritual disciplines such as meditation and prayer, fasting, solitude, submission, service, worship, and celebration.

Developing the Images of God

Images of God develop through the believer’s spiritual life. Richard Foster in his book *Celebration of Discipline* describes the spiritual disciplines that are life creating and life changing.² In these ways our images of God are enriched.

Prayer is the central avenue that God uses to transform us. If we are unwilling to change, we will abandon prayer. Nobody can force us to pray. It must come out of our heart from a personal desire and sense of need. In prayer, we begin to think God’s thoughts, to desire what he desires, to love the things he loves, to will the things he wills. Prayer can be in the form of prayers for our personal well-being, for forgiveness of sins, a prayer for physical and emotional healing, intercessory prayer, and prayers of thanksgiving. In spite of the fact that we cannot explain exactly how prayer works, we still can experience its effects in our life. The God we serve wants us whole.

“Prayer is heaven’s ordained means of success in the conflict with sin and the development of Christian character. The divine influences that come in answer to the prayer of faith will accomplish in the soul of the suppliant all for which he pleads.”³

¹Ellen, G. White, MS 89.2, 1990. Research Center, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI vol. 13.

²Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1999), 125.

³Ellen G. White, *Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, c1911), 564.

Solitude, as a spiritual discipline, is more a state of mind and heart than it is a place. The idea is not to be away from people but to hear the divine whisper better. While loneliness is inner emptiness, solitude is inner fulfillment.¹ It is a special time when we are in silence, meditation, and a state of listening to the voice of God. The best example of practicing solitude in life was Jesus. He would regularly cultivate this discipline because he needed to be alone with his Father. Solitude was the main source of his spiritual and emotional strength. In solitude, we meet with God and our image of God is enriched.

Submission is “the ability to lay down the terrible burden of always needing to get our own way, . . . only submission can free us sufficiently to enable us to distinguish between genuine issues and stubborn self-will.”² Jesus has called his followers to submission by making the astonishing statement; “If any men would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me” (Mark 8:34, 35). We often wrongly understand the meaning of the word self-denial. Self-denial does not mean the loss of our identity but the opposite; we find our identity in God and we are willing and able to serve him and people. When that happens we can love

¹Foster, 122.

²Ibid., 141.

people unconditionally—a reflection of the image of God.

Service and submission go together. In fact, submission prepares and leads us into service. As Jesus “came not to be served but to serve” (Matt 20:25-28), so it is with his followers. Willing service requires humility and self-sacrifice if it is to be acceptable by God. Unselfish service brings blessings in the first place to those who serve and after that to those who are served. True service is not primarily a list of things we do, neither is it a code of ethics, but a way of living.¹ Though service, we experience for ourselves the servant-hood of Jesus. Servant-hood was a primary image of his mission and leadership style.

Worship is one of the spiritual disciplines that enables God’s people to approach God. Worship is the human response to the divine initiative. True worship happens only when the Spirit of the Lord touches our human spirit and heart. We worship God not only for who he is but also for what he has done for us. We worship him for his goodness, faithfulness, justice, mercy, and any of his dealings with us and upon us. As we contemplate these pictures of God, our own image of God grows. True worship enables us to hear the call to service clearly so that we respond, “Here am I! Send me” (Isa 6:8).

Forms and rituals do not produce real worship but can be an avenue for worshippers to encounter God. The forms and rituals practiced in the worship often have cultural rather than theological significance. As human beings, we need forms in order to visualize and solidify spiritual and transcendent matters, but it is worship

¹Foster, 165.

(using those forms) that enables us to encounter the reality of God.

Celebration should be at the heart of all spiritual disciplines. It arises from a heart that is thankful for what God has done and has been doing for us and through us. When Jesus was leaving this world he bequeathed his joy to his disciples, "These things I have spoken to you that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full" (John 15:11). If we have experienced forgiveness, freedom, healing, and the joy of salvation, then we have immeasurable reasons to celebrate God. Through the Bible, God's people are invited to experience how good God is and to give him thanks. Celebration gives strength and brings joy to life. It builds a positive image of God. Paul's challenge was "that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have power to comprehend together with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God" (Eph 3:17-20).

Understanding God is a lifelong spiritual journey that never ends. On one hand, we are never sure how much we know God and how close to him we are. On the other hand, the Bible tells us that those who search for God will find him in various ways and circumstances. God has presented himself to humanity in various images. We have learned that none of his images is a complete picture of God and that each image takes its meaning from the culture where they originated. Therefore, it is logical to conclude that our favorite images of God will be those that fit our personal experience best and that we can most easily understand and relate to.

The apostle John knew what genuine Christianity was all about. “Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is born of God and knows God. But anyone who does not love does not know God for God is love. Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other” (John 4:7-10). Therefore, true knowledge of God develops a genuine relationship with Christ that then produces genuine love towards him and people. Love makes the image of God become a reality of living.

Conclusion

Our understanding of God is personal and subjective; therefore, it is subject to change. The challenge is not to put God into the box of our sin-affected and limited way of thinking. We have to be aware of the impact that filters of sin, culture, education, personality, and heredity have on our understanding of God. Different people read and understand even God’s revelation differently and personally. No two people in the world have an identical understanding of God. My understanding of God was formed by the life experiences I had, the culture I lived in, and by the spiritual life on which I have journeyed.

God has presented himself in many different ways, through nature, through various names and images in the Bible, and through Jesus Christ—God himself. All this happened for only one reason, so that human beings would come to know God. We have also learned that our knowledge of God is reflected in everything we believe and do. It affects our relationships with God and with people. It is also reflected in the quality of our worship and our mission. The better we know God the more we will love him (1 John 4:8, 9) and the more we will grow spiritually, socially, and

emotionally thus fulfilling the role and purpose of our life. This is why there must be a constant search for God, being aware of the fact that human beings can never know him fully nor know him completely.

The whole idea of this paper can be illustrated by the image of a tree. The most important part of a tree is its roots, even though they are invisible. If the roots are healthy, they will serve the entire tree well. Similarly, if our spiritual roots (our picture of God) are biblically correct they will help us develop a strong relationship with God that is represented by a strong and healthy trunk. From a tree trunk grow branches which bear fruit. Similarly, from our relationship with God grow spiritual branches such as our core values, personal spirituality, the restoration of the image of God in us, and motivation for mission and service to humanity that is the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

My entire spiritual and theological foundation for ministry is based on these understandings of the image of God. Everything in life and ministry depends on a knowledge, understanding, and relationship with God. The more biblical the picture of God, the more meaningful and purposeful will be the Christian life, witness, and ministry.

The next chapter will look at a number of factors that affect our understanding of God and the world. These factors include the social and cultural environment, education, religious background, our personality type, heredity, and above all sin. Chapter 3 looks at those obstacles more extensively.

CHAPTER III

HISTORICAL, SOCIAL, AND RELIGIOUS ANALYSIS

This chapter will give a cultural analysis of Croatian society and review recent Croatian history to discover the factors that have influenced the worldview of Croats. Special attention will be given to factors that have formed the worldview of Adventists in Croatia and consequently formed their understanding of God.

History

The Republic of Croatia is one of Europe's youngest countries, internationally recognized in 1992. The Republic of Croatia has 4,437,460 inhabitants.¹ The official language is Croatian, and the script is Latin. The currency unit used is the *kuna*. The City of Zagreb is the capital and is the commercial, cultural, academic, and trade center of the country.² The majority of the population is Roman Catholic (88 percent) while the rest are Serbian Orthodox (5 percent), Muslims (1.3 percent), and Protestant Christians of various denominations (1.2 percent).³

¹*Republic of Croatia Statistical Report*, official web page of the government, 2002, www.hr/wwwhr/abouthr/index.hr.html (21 April 2004).

²Josip Semtija, ed., *Opća enciklopedija Jugoslovenskog Leksikografskog Zavoda* (Zagreb, Croatia: Jugoslavenski Leksikografski Zavod, 1977), 515.

³*Republic of Croatia Statistical Report*.

Fig. 1. Map of Croatia Today.

Source: <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/europe/croatia>

First Yugoslavia

Croat history extends back thirteen hundred years to the seventh century¹ when the Croats first populated the region.² During this period, Croats lived under many different rulers. In 1929 the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenians was renamed “Yugoslavia” and existed until 1941.³ The kingdom was an institutionally centralized monarchy and failed to grant equal treatment to all three nations. Croats were unhappy

¹Sematija, 386.

²Trpimir Macan, *Povijest Hrvatskog naroda* (History of the Croatian People), (Zagreb: Skolska knjiga, 1971), 14.

³*World Factbook*, April 2005, <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/hr.html#Intro> (2 June 2004).

with the treatment in this country and started to demand more autonomy or self-rule.

Independent State of Croatia

On 10 April 1941,¹ with the help of Germany, the *Nezavisna Drzava Hrvatska* NDH (Independent State of Croatia) was proclaimed. This new regime was closely allied with Nazi Germany. The aim of the Ustasha regime was to create an ethnically pure Croatian territory. In order to achieve this and remain in power, the NDH opened a concentration camp in Jasenovac, Croatia, similar to those in Germany and Poland. Between 60-80 thousand innocent people were killed there.² Among the victims of that concentration camp were Serbs, Gypsies, Jews, some Croats, and people of other nationalities, though Jews and Serbs appear to have been the primary victims.³ Fortunately, that regime lasted only until the fall of Nazi Germany.

Second Yugoslavia

After World War II, the second or communist Yugoslavia was established under the leadership of dictator Marshal Josip Broz Tito and his partisans⁴ who called themselves the People's Liberation Army. As communists were anti-fascists, they fought against Nazi Germany and the nationalist regime of the NDH. When Tito and

¹Macan, 200.

²Marcus Tanner, *Croatia, A Nation Forged in War*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 19997, 152.

³Ibid.

⁴The partisans were people of all nationalities who joined the anti-fascist movement in the territory of the Slavic Balkan countries. They fought under Tito's leadership against Nazi Germany and the NDH.

his partisans came to power, they pursued escaping Croatian civilians and soldiers, called *Domobrani* (home-defenders), who were part of the regular NDH army.¹ In order to avoid partisan revenge and execution, they fled Croatia and sought refuge in neighboring Austria.² There, they surrendered to the allied forces believing that they would be protected from the pursuing partisans. However, the Allies handed them over to Tito's partisans to let them do with them as they wished.³ Tito's partisans killed between 60-100 thousand Croats at Bleiburg in Austria. Just a few hundred managed to escape death. The Croats today regard the Bleiburg killings as the biggest crime that has been committed against them.⁴ During the communist era, no one ever spoke about this tragedy. However, this unfortunate event remained a psychological and emotional obstacle to many Croats and prevented them from accepting the second Yugoslavia as their own country.⁵

The second Yugoslavia was comprised of six republics: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Slovenia, and Serbia (see fig. 2) with two autonomous regions Vojvodina and Kosovo inside Serbia. Four different languages were spoken: Macedonian, Slovenian, Croatian, and Serbian. However,

¹Tanner, 168.

²Ibid., 169.

³Ibid.

⁴Count Nikola Tolstoy, *The Bleiburg Massacres*, 1990, http://www.serendipity.li/hr/bleiburg_massacres.htm (2 June 2005).

⁵Tanner, 170.

there were several other national minorities that spoke their own languages including Hungarians, Albanians, Romanians, Bulgarians, and Gypsies.

In this newly created state, the Croatian and Serbian languages, which are very similar, were treated as one language, called Serbo-Croatian, and it was made the official language throughout Yugoslavia. However, in the various republics people spoke their own native languages, regardless of the government's pressure to unite them all under one language.¹ The tension about the language issue had been constant throughout Yugoslavia.

While Tito was alive, the country of Yugoslavia remained united. He was a dictator who did not allow any ethno-national awareness. Croats felt oppressed and were especially concerned about their language, which was a key element in giving them a sense of identity.²

¹A. David Dryker and Ivan Vejvoda, *Yugoslavia and After: A Study in Fragmentation, Despair and Rebirth* (Essex, England: Longman, 1996), 202.

²Tanner, 190.

Fig. 2. Map of the Second Yugoslavia 1945-1991.
 Source: Marcus Tanner, *Croatia a Nation Forged in War*.

Disintegration of Second Yugoslavia

The beginning of the 1990s brought about various changes that helped to create an environment conducive to the disintegration of the second Yugoslavia. The years of so-called democratic change began in 1990 when a multiparty political system was allowed.¹ Numerous political parties were organized in Croatia, most of whom had the prefix *Hrvatski* (Croatian) in their party name. Yugoslavia had also become involved in a democratic process and no one knew the outcome. The winds of democracy were blowing throughout the nation and people expected miracles to happen in their undefined and unknown future.

¹Ibid., 221.

Independent Country

The Croatian people took a chance and voted for the HDZ (Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica)¹ which then led Croatia towards its independence. Shortly after the elections on 19 May 1991, a national referendum was held with one question, whether or not people wanted Croatia to become a sovereign independent country.² Ninety-three percent of the people voted for independence. The Republic of Croatia became an independent sovereign country that was recognized by the European Union on 15 January 1992.³

War and Post-war Impact

Serbia, Yugoslavia's largest and most powerful republic, strongly opposed the disintegration of Yugoslavia. It armed⁴ Serbs living in Croatia and used them in order to keep the failing Second Yugoslavia alive, and if possible, united. A bloody and destructive war followed. Over 7,000 people were killed, 20–25,000 people were wounded, and over 600,000 people of all nationalities in Croatia were displaced from their homes.

As a consequence of the war, over 60,000 people, mainly war veterans, became sick with PTSD.⁵ Unemployment rose as soldiers returned home after five

¹Ibid.

²Stipe Mesic, *Kako smo srušili Jugoslaviju (How we have over-thrown Yugoslavia)*, (Zagreb, Croatia: Globus International, 1992), XIII.

³Ibid., 274.

⁴Dyker and Vejvoda, 207.

⁵PTSD stands for the Post Traumatic Syndrome of Disorder

years of war.¹ In addition, many business collapsed either because of the loss of their traditional markets or because factories were destroyed during the war years.² With over four hundred thousand people unemployed, the economy almost collapsed, bringing down many banks with it. Poor privatization of state companies contributed to the insolvency and collapse. War veterans were committing suicide almost daily at rates twice as high as the rest of population, for they had become the most vulnerable social group in Croatian society.³

By 2004, the people of Croatia were beginning to recover from the consequences of the war. They were rebuilding their country. The damaged or destroyed houses were rebuilt, the land was being cleared of land mines, the refugees were returning to their rebuilt houses, and the stabilization of the banking system was progressing. There was an optimistic increase in economic growth of 4.1 percent over the last two years.⁴ The infrastructure is being rebuilt with modern highways to improve communication and transport throughout Croatia. Tourism has again become the main source of national income.

¹"PTSP se siri kao karcinom i metastazira u obitelji" (PTSD spreads like cancer and impacts the family) *Vjesnik* (Zagreb), 27 May 2000.

²Ivan Cifric, ed., "War in Croatia and the Environment," *Socijalna ekologija* 2 (April-June 1996): 213.

³Miroslava Rozankovic, "Godisnje se ubije oko 100 branitelja, cak 76000 zatrazi pomoc," (Since the end of the war around 100 former soldiers commit suicide every year and 76,000 ask for help) *Vjesnik*, 27 May 2000. Jovan Bamburac, "Suicide Problem in Croatia Today," *Journal of Social Psychology* 22 (1994): 141. Ivka Bacic, "Stopa samoubojstva među braniteljima dvosstruko veca od one u opcoj populaciji" (The rate of suicide among the war veterans is as twice as much than among the rest of the population), *Vjesnik*, 5 October 2004. Dragica Kozaric-Kovacac, "Epidemiological Indicators of Suicides in the Republic of Croatia," *Journal for General Social Issues* 57 (2002): 155.

⁴*Republic of Croatia Statistical Report.*

The healing of war wounds continues very slowly. It has proved easier to rebuild the material damage than it has been to rebuild the spiritual and emotional damage.¹ Many believe that it will take several generations before all the wounds have healed and the country is fully rebuilt. The relationships between Serbs and Croats in the areas affected by the war are still far from satisfactory. The two groups continue to have difficulty coping with anger and pain and many horrible memories in the minds of people still hinder the healing and reconciliation process. Croats have their own country, but they still feel that justice for what happened to them in the past has not been realized. Their struggle for identity has caused them to overemphasize the importance of their nationality.

Croats are learning how to develop and implement democracy in their very vulnerable society. The years under foreign rule and the dictatorship of kings and politicians have molded the people's understanding of society. It takes time for mindsets to change. Changes have happened so quickly that many people have not kept up with them. Therefore, people react to these changes differently, assessing them as very positive to very negative. In particular, fifty years of communism affected the people's ability to make decisions for themselves.

Socio-Economic and Political Situation

During Croatian history, various political systems and rulers have governed the country. In addition, various ideologies including capitalism, nationalism,

¹Cifric, 460-475.

communism, socialism, neo-capitalism, and democracy have left their footprints on the Croatian people, forming their worldview, and influencing their lifestyle.

The communists did not tolerate independent opinions, especially those that were contrary to the government. In the one party system, everyone was expected to be a part of one system and think in a communal sense. This created a dependant attitude among many people because they all belong to the Party. The Party took care of them with various social benefits. The war veterans were positioned on all levels of society and enjoyed special financial benefits. The lower socio-economic class in society was like a huge machine in which everyone was supposed to serve the person above him.¹ Such an environment heavily influenced people's worldview and formed a specific mindset.

Since 1992, Croatia has existed as an independent country founded on democratic principles and the rule of law. Not all changes have been implemented overnight and the mindset of many people has not changed with the change of the political system. For instance, as the communists mismanaged the economy and increased taxes, the people in Yugoslavia gradually developed the mentality of cheating the government by not paying their taxes.² They felt that the government was unjustly taking too much. The majority of people in Croatia, including some Adventists, still have a similar mentality today. Occasionally one might hear an

¹Ibid.

²Sanja Kapetanovic, "Tek ce proracun otkriti Sanaderove prioritete" (The budget shows Snader's priorities), *Vjesnik* (Zagreb), 24 December 2003.

Adventist say, "If God does not require from us more than 10 percent why should we pay so much tax to a worldly, corrupt government?"

In the Croatian mindset, every government is regarded as corrupt and self-serving rather than honest and people-oriented. The majority of people mistrust any political system or government. It will probably take years before people change their negative attitude toward the government.

The Croatian economy is gradually recovering from recession and destruction caused by the recent war. Changes from socialist and communist management to a market economy are visible everywhere. In the United Nations Report, Croatia places 47 out of 175 countries concerning the quality of life. According to the same report the life span in Croatia is 74 years. Croatia has an average total product per capita of US \$9,170.¹

Since the introduction of the new market economy, worker's rights and benefits have diminished and job insecurity has increased. This situation contributes to the general discontent of the people and creates tension in society.

On the other hand, there are signs that things are moving forward for the better. Large supermarkets, trading chains, and big shopping centers have flooded the Croatian market. There are clear signs that indicate that Croatia is becoming a consumer rather than a producer society.² More and more choices are offered in

¹Tihomir Ponos, "Hrvatska Zemlja Visoke Kvalitete Zivota" (Croatia is enjoying the good things of life), *Vjesnik* (Zagreb), 13 July 2003.

²John Fox, "Hrvatska i europska potrosacka kultura," *Drustvena istrazivanja* 8, no. 4 (May-August 1999): 475-676.

almost every segment of life. Shopping by credit cards and via the internet is becoming a normal part of life.¹ Computer technology is spreading rapidly. Over a million people have access to the internet.² Mobile phones have become affordable and accessible for almost everyone, especially children and young adults. People live fast paced and busy lives. These various changes are visible in all segments of society and have helped shape Croatian worldview.

Cultural Setting

Croatia is at the crossroads between the East and the West, bordering central Europe and the Balkans. It is also between the Mediterranean world and continental Europe. The Western and Eastern as well as Mediterranean cultures have significant influence. Interestingly, Croatian society is not multicultural.³ There are twenty-seven national minorities in addition to the Serbian minority but they are very few in actual number, totaling less than 6 percent of the population.⁴ Each of those minorities tries to speak its own language and tries to keep alive its own culture and traditions even though they have been fully integrated into Croatian society and culture.⁵ Because they are relatively few in number, they have no significant impact on society as a

¹Tihomir Ponos, "Tko bolje prodaje svoju robu—crkva ili hipermarketi" (Who sells the goods better—church or hypermarkets), *Vjesnik* (Zagreb), 25 April 2004.

²HINA—Hrvatska informativna novinska agencija (Croatian informative newspaper agency), *Vecernji list* (Zagreb), 16 July 2004.

³<http://www.croatia-in-english.com> (19 September 2004).

⁴*Republic of Croatia Statistical Report*.

⁵<http://www.hr/wwwhr-bin/search?srch=culture> (28 October 2004).

whole. They are generally regarded as a rarity and a symbol of diversity rather than as significant groups in Croatian society.¹

This cultural setting means the majority of the people in Croatia have little experience in living, understanding, and embracing different faiths and cultures. A significant number of people in Croatia have never lived next to someone who is of a different faith, culture, or language.² For these reasons, minorities are not adequately understood or protected. However, there is currently a trend to improve this situation in Croatian society.

Croats speak one language, Croatian, though there are several dialects that are spoken by people residing in different regions. The diversity of dialects and even languages among the national minorities are usually connected with various customs, which include religious and social feasts and festivals when people wear colorful national and regional costumes, sing songs, and play various old and rare games. Croats are generally hospitable and have recently emphasized national awareness, due mainly to the fact that during the centuries, they have had their nationality and language suppressed.³

Through a general awareness of the need to pay taxes has grown, many Croatians still try to avoid paying taxes and tax avoidance is not generally regarded as something very inappropriate or wrong. This is a part of the legacy left behind by

¹<http://www.hr/wwwhr-bin/search?srch=minorities> (28 October 2004).

²<http://www.lifestyle.hr> (28 October 2004).

³<http://www.hrvati.hr> (28 October 2004)

communism. Many Croats in Croatia are not hard working people, not because they are naturally lazy, but again because of the legacy of the communist era.¹ It is interesting that when Croats go and work abroad they are known as hard working people and are highly respected workers. High technology is entering quickly into Croatian society. The computer and the Internet as well as television with satellite programs are having a strong influence. New trends in the world are quickly crossing cultural and political boundaries and are having an impact on the society. Gradually, people are becoming more secular and more open to new ideas and global perspectives. The changes are visible and seem to be irreversible.

Education

Compulsory primary education for children begins at the age of six or seven, lasts for eight years, and is free for all children between six and fifteen. The literacy rate in Croatia is over 95 percent. The Communist and Socialist governments regarded education as very important. To them, education really meant the formation of someone's personality. Marxism and Socialism were compulsory subjects at every level of education. Since Croatia became an independent country, Marxism and socialism have been removed from the schools and religion has become a compulsory subject instead.

The government recently introduced an anti-stress Yoga seminar entitled *Yoga in Everybody's Life* for teachers, promising to pay the cost for those who attend these

¹Tihomir Ponos, "Nakon Tita drzava propala granice ostale" (After Tito the country disappeared but the borders remained), *Vjesnik* (Zagreb), 5 July 2003.

seminars. The Catholic Church reacted immediately, warning the government and the public that these seminars are actually promoting “a new worldview and that this is a way to introduce Hinduism and new religious practice” into our schools,¹ indicating the sensitivity of Croatian society as well as the power of the Catholic Church.

Although secularism and new trends are invading Croatian society, families in Croatia are generally quite traditional. Croatians generally respect their family roots and ties. Customary celebrations such as birthdays, anniversaries, the birth of a child, and funerals are still very important. However, some changes are happening with regard to family matters. For instance, the average number of marriages in the period 1991-2000 was 35 percent lower in comparison with the period 1961-1970.² There were 38 percent fewer marriages in 2001, than ten years ago. In addition to that, 27 percent of the population are married couples without children, and 57 percent have children.³ The annual birth rate is 1.12 percent. Of the entire population, 48.13 percent is male while 51.87 percent is female. The current trend is towards a negative population growth. Every year the equivalent of one town of five thousand people disappears.⁴

¹Romana Vukadin and Tina Jokic, “Joga u skolama” (Yoga in schools), *Vecernji-list* (Zagreb), 16 July 2003.

²*Republic of Croatia Statistical Report.*

³*Ibid.*

⁴*Ibid.*

Sports

Sports play a very important role in Croatian society, and occasionally they play a role that is more than entertainment. Sociologists in Croatia think that the great successes of the national teams and individual players lift the spirits of the Croatian people in the midst of their dissatisfaction and frustration with the gloomy political and economic environment. For example, when the Croatian tennis player, Goran Ivanisevic, won the 2001 Wimbledon tennis tournament, the entire nation was watching and “participating” in his victory.¹ When he arrived home, he was treated as a national hero and over a hundred and fifty thousand people gathered in the city square to honor him.² One Catholic priest said of Olympic and world championship skiers, Janica and Ivica Kostelic: “The qualities of the Kostelic family should be inherent in every Croatian. Those qualities are: pride, a sense of self-sacrifice, self-giving, love, togetherness, honesty, and truthfulness. They have shown us spiritual values and how to love our country and family.”³

Worldviews

Though the Croatian society is in many ways a monolithic society, it is by no means a ‘one worldview’ nation. Various factors have been involved in forming a

¹“Zasto smo svi ludi za Goranom” (Why are we all so crazy about Goran), *Vjesnik*, 11 July 2001.

²HINA, “Gorane, cijeli Split i cijeli svijet te voli” (Goran all of Split and the whole world loves you), *Vjesnik* (Zagreb), 12 July 2001.

³Pavle Primorac, “Kostelici su Pokazali da se na Klevete najbolje odgovara uspravnim hodom i ‘bjegom u pobjedu’” (The Kostelic have shown that the best answer to slanderers is to walk upright to ‘run away with the victory’), *Vjesnik* (Zagreb), 23 April 2003.

plurality of worldviews. However, the new worldviews are a combination of several but with different emphases.

The socialist legacy has been particularly evident in at least two significant areas of life. First, the mindset of the people is to expect the government to make decisions about everything, while the people expect to follow the rules and be loyal to the government. In return, the government is expected to provide free education for everyone up to the age of twenty-seven as well as health insurance and child benefits. In addition, communist Yugoslavia attempted to build a personality cult around President Tito and around the socialist party.¹ Tito was portrayed as a savior of the people. People are accustomed to having strong leaders who give them a sense of security and direction. This was evident after the election of the first democratic Croatian president, Franjo Tuđman. The people regarded him as the father of the nation in the same way as President Tito had been portrayed as the father of Yugoslavia.

Though communist Yugoslavia was led by atheist leaders, religion among the people was generally preserved. Communism left a certain impact on the people's understanding of religion and God and socialism contributed to the development of secularism and its influences on religious life. As a consequence, there are a large number of secular Christians who regard themselves as believers but are only token Christians, unlike those who actually practice their faith.

¹Milos Raseta and Aleksandar Stojanovic, *Nas Tito* (Our Tito), (Zagreb, Croatia: Spektar Zagreb & Otokar Kersovani Rijeka, 1980), 67.

Nationalist

Croatians are a strong, nationally-minded people, a mindset that developed out of their turbulent history. They had to fight for their language, their freedom, and the establishment of a sovereign independent country. They developed a complex from being a minority in the former Yugoslavia. All these factors contributed to the development of a strong sense of nationalism in their new country. Many third and fourth-generation Croats who immigrated long ago regard themselves as first being Croat rather than the nationality of their new country. It seems that oppression, the injustices Croats experienced, and their struggle for an independent country have created this strong awareness of national identity and their nationalistic worldview.

Atheist

During the fifty years of communism in the second Yugoslavia, three successive generations were raised under communist and socialist ideas. These ideas penetrated every segment of society. At the age of seven children were initiated into a communist youth organization by taking part in a special ceremony, which meant that they had achieved a special status in the communist structure. National war heroes were used in the schools as role models for children.¹ For the communists, there was no God so they had to invent their own gods. Many people subconsciously accepted the idea that enthrones man in the place of God.

¹Raseta and Stojanovic, 124.

Consumer

Probably the fastest changes that have taken place in forming the people's present worldview are the sudden opening of numerous supermarkets and trading chains.¹ People no longer have to go abroad for shopping. People have choices and can buy whatever they want to. This can be done easily using credit cards and through the Internet. Getting a loan to buy a new car has become common place. Croats spend more money than they earn. Croatians are becoming a deeply indebted nation. Unfortunately, people are placing more and more value on what they have rather than who they are.² This situation has created a consumerist worldview.

Syncretistic

Syncretism of different worldviews creates a combination of Christianity, secularism, superstitions, and New Age ideas. Though Croatia is predominantly a Christian country, it is strongly influenced by the new trends that are coming from around the world. Most of the people read the horoscopes that are published in every daily newspaper and magazine. Fortune-tellers, self-proclaimed healers, and those advocating alternatives for everything can be seen on television. New Age ideas pervade normal life. It was recently reported on TV that 70 percent of the books printed last year promoted New Age ideas. Many people in Croatia put together a syncretistic blend of ideas to form a worldview that will suit them best.

¹Large shopping centers have opened all over Croatia, i.e., Bauhaus, Metro, Getro, Mercatone, Konzum, Merkator, and Kings Cross.

²The author of this paper lives in Croatia and is a witness to the changes in the society.

Religious

While there are different religions in Croatia, there are common features in the area of religion. Because less than 10 percent of the population are atheists it is obvious that Croatians have generally adopted traditional Christian values as part of their worldview. The Catholic Church has a dominant influence on Croatian society as a whole, and in many ways has created a religious culture in the country. Though only 22 percent of Catholics go to church regularly, the majority of them celebrate the traditions and various religious feasts. The Catholic Church is widely regarded as a guardian of Croatian language, morality, and as the conscience of Croatian society. It influences public opinion in areas of morality such as, abortion, homosexuality, and euthanasia. During the difficult times of struggle for Croatian identity, the Catholic Church was a source of strength for the people, and is why many people in Croatia equate their nationality with the Catholic religion.

Religious Context

Catholics

The dominant religion in Croatia is Roman Catholicism, with 88 percent of the population being Catholic. Therefore, the role of the Catholic Church in Croatian society is significant and unavoidable. The Catholic Church is not only a religious but also a political power.¹ The political party that is supported by the Roman Catholic

¹Bono Zvonimir Sagi, "Novi stavovi Katolicke crkve o odnosu Crkve i drzave." (New attitudes of the Catholic Church in relation between the Church and state), *Institute of Social Science "Ivo Plar" Social Research*, 4, no. 6 (November/December 1995), 771-1024.

Church has won each election up to the present time.¹ The archbishop of Zagreb criticized the government using the phrase “grijev struktura” (structural sin i.e. establishment).² He obviously had in mind the government’s inability to resolve crucial problems such as unemployment, privatization, and corruption.

The Catholic Church has also demanded that Parliament pass a law which would forbid work on Sunday, especially with regard to trading and shopping. The excuse for this is that the Catholic Church wants its members to have the free time to go to church as well as for families to have time to be together.³

In another area of influence, the Catholic Church has launched a campaign to suggest that it is the only true guardian of Croatian identity. “There were times when the Catholic Church put the nation of Croatia instead of Christ.”⁴ Consequently, there is widespread support for the idea that every true Croat should be a Catholic and vice versa. Because of this, many ordinary people believe that if you change your beliefs and give up your Catholic faith, you have given up on being a Croat and have even betrayed your nation. Those who decide to change their faith are often regarded by their families and Catholic brethren as traitors of Catholicism and are looked upon as someone who brought shame on their families. Because family units are still strong,

¹Zdravko Mrcic, “Na Pomolu je Strategijski Raskol Između Crkve i Koalicijske vlasti” (Appears strategic secession between Church and Government), *Vjesnik* (Zagreb), 16 July 2002.

²Mladen Kevo, “Crkva je bila preblizu svjetovnoj vlasti” (Church was too close to secular government), *Vjesnik* (Zagreb), 20 October 2001.

³Ponos, *Vjesnik*.

⁴Gordan Pandza, “Bilo je Trenutaka kada je Crkva na Tron Umjesto Krista Stavljala Naciju” (There were moments when the Catholic Church had put on the throne a nation instead of Christ) *Vjesnik* (Zagreb), 13 November 2002.

this places additional pressure on anyone who decides to leave the Catholic Church and follow personal religious conviction.

During the process of becoming an independent country, more and more people turned to the church. During times of crisis people can be united in numerous ways, and in Croatia, church attendance was that uniting factor. Some researches have shown that a process of spiritual revival started at the end of the 1980s. This could indicate that the process of de-secularization has been reversed with people turning towards traditional religiosity.¹

Social changes in Croatia have influenced people to adopt religious values, which significantly affect personal social life and behavior.² The Catholic Church has spoken up against liberalism that is creeping into the church in the practice of contraception and abortion.³ The Catholic Church regards itself as the main champion to maintain the purity of the Croatian language, though some regard the Church as using old-fashioned and sometimes even archaic language.

However, the influence of the Catholic Church on Croatian society has been constant, strong, and diverse. It exerts a great impact on people's lifestyle and worldview. Its influence is extensive in the media including TV and radio. In fact, it

¹Nikola Skender, "The Religious Changes and Values in the Croatian Society," *Ministry of Science and Technology Journal* (January, 2003): 24.

²Ibid.

³Pavle Primorac, "Crkva ne smije dopuštiti kulturu smrti" (The Church should not allow the culture of death), *Vjesnik* (Zagreb), 13 September 2004.

owns two powerful radio stations. One is called *Radio Marija* (Radio Mary)¹ and the other is *Katolicki radio* (Catholic Radio).²

What is also interesting about the Catholic Church in Croatia is that it is increasingly more open towards the public³ and is introducing some changes in its attitude towards worship and public affairs.⁴ Catholics celebrate traditional Mass but contemporary worships are organized for the young and middle-aged generations. The Catholic Church in Croatia is the Roman Catholic Church, which means that it has very close ties with the Vatican. The Vatican was the first country that recognized Croatia as an independent country.⁵ Between 1996 and 2003, Pope John Paul II visited Croatia three times and each time he has elevated Croat Catholics to sainthood.⁶ These moves by the Pope cemented the ties between Croatia and the Holy See more firmly. The climax in the relationship between the Vatican and Croatia came in 1999 when both countries signed a treaty about special relationships⁷ followed by a treaty between the Catholic Church in Croatia and the Croatian government in which

¹<http://www.radiomaryja.pl> (18 February 2005).

²<http://www.sat-address.com/gk/HKR-Croatia.html> (18 February 2005).

³*Vjesnik*, 23 April, 2003.

⁴Zvonimir Despot, "Organizacija Katolicke Crkve u Hrvatskoj" (Organization of the Catholic Church in Croatia), *Vecernji list* (Zagreb), 13 November 2002.

⁵Branko Podgornik, "Papa stao iza Hrvatske kao i prije jedanaest godina" (Pope supported Croatia as much as eleven years ago), *Novi list* (Rijeka), 18 January 2003.

⁶Goran Pandza, "Treci put Papa u Hrvatskoj" (Third time Pope in Croatia), *Vjesnik* (Zagreb), 5 June 2003.

⁷"Ugovor između Svete Stolice i Republike Hrvatske" (International treaty between the Holy See and Republic of Croatia), *Narodne novine*, Međunarodni ugovori 2, 1997. n.p.

the Government of Croatia undertook numerous obligations in order to give Catholics more rights and financial support, including the return of properties confiscated during the communist era.

Orthodox

The Serbian Orthodox Church has played an equally important role in guarding the identity of Serbs. It was highly visible before and during the recent war. The Orthodox Church has adopted the same attitude as the Catholic Church and believes that all Serbs are Orthodox. Nationality and religion are two inseparable matters for the Orthodox Church as well as for the majority of Serbs. Religious feasts among families are very important and are regarded as something that strengthen family ties.

Serbs now comprise only 4.5 percent of the population in Croatia, although before the war they represented 12 percent. Interestingly, in the 2001 census, only 20 percent of the Serb population in Croatia registered as Orthodox.¹ The archbishop of the Orthodox Church, Jovan the Metropolit of the Zagreb-Ljubljana eparchy,² could not explain the census results but he said that during religious feasts, the Orthodox churches are crowded with people. Some analysts think that one of the reasons why most Serbs do not regard themselves as members of the Orthodox Church is that many only go to church for the sake of tradition.³

¹*Republic of Croatia Statistical Report.*

²The title Metropolit zagrebacko-ljubljanske Eparhije would mean the archbishop of the Orthodox Church covering the two countries of Croatia and Slovenia represented by the capitals of both countries: Zagreb (in Croatia) and Ljubljana (in Slovenia).

³Gordan Pandza, "Katolika 11 posto vise, vjernika SPC-a dvije trecine manje" (There are 11 percent more Catholics, with Orthodox believers two-thirds less), *Vjesnik* (Zagreb), 23 June 2002.

The Serbian Orthodox Church in Croatia is even more traditional than the Catholic Church and less ready for change. They still hold mass in *staroslavenski jezik*.¹ They have somehow managed to resist the outside pressure of a changing world. This is probably another reason why their members are more traditional and perhaps why so few attend services. It is logical to conclude that their understanding of God is mostly based on the medieval concept and understanding of Scripture.

Protestants

Protestants make up only 0.2 percent of the population, which means that there are 12,500² from all groups and denominations. The leaders of those Protestant denominations disagree with the figures from the census claiming that there must be at least twice as many believers but that not all of them wanted to declare themselves as belonging to any denomination even though they share the Protestant faith.³ No one group claims to be the standard-bearer for Protestantism. Most Protestants are Evangelicals and Pentecostal with several newly organized but minor churches with Pentecostal features. The Seventh-day Adventists are the third largest Protestant denomination with 3,500 members.

The presence of a Protestant community in Croatian society is important but the influence it has is very limited. There is no strong association of Protestants groups

¹*Staroslavenski jezik* is the medieval old Slavic language that probably nobody understands now except the Serbian Orthodox priests.

²*Republic of Croatia Statistical Report.*

³Pandza, *Vjesnik*, 23 June 2002.

so they have little political influence. The present government has regarded Protestants as a necessary factor of religious diversity among the Catholic majority.

Adventists

The Adventists have been in Croatia since 1908 and have developed various evangelistic and social programs that have impacted Croatian society. During the recent war, ADRA Croatia played an important role by entering the war zones to deliver basic aid to needy people. Following the war, ADRA repaired hundreds of houses in the Lika area, an ethnically-mixed community of Croats and Serbs. The President of Croatia, Stipe Mesic, attended the launch of the project and commended the church's unbiased approach to serving whoever was in need. The Adventist Church has a college at Marusevec recognized by the Croatian government as a very successful institution,¹ and has also been active in publishing, youth, and health work.

Muslims

The census held in 2001 indicated that there are 5,677 Muslims (1.3 percent of the population),² although their spiritual leader, Muftija Sefko Omerbasic, believes that there are at least one hundred thousand Muslims in Croatia. According to him, many decided not to express their religious orientation for practical reasons.³ Their impact on Croatian society is small. However, the government and the Catholic

¹Adventisticka crkva u Hrvatskoj, <http://www.adventisti.hr/atf.html> (10 June 2005).

²*Republic of Croatia Statistical Report.*

³Pandza, *Vjesnik*, 23 June 2002.

Church are more sensitive in their remarks and criticism because the Arab Muslim countries indirectly support the Muslim minority.

The Muslims in Croatia are not fundamentalist in their religious orientation and practice. Observing them from the outside, one could conclude that they are moderate and secularized. Their women generally do not wear the traditional dress. They are tolerant and adaptive to the cultural and social context in which they live. They rarely practice their religious customs publicly and their religious worldview is significantly different from the Muslims in Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina) and many other Islamic countries. They are mainly tolerant towards other religions.

Muslim leaders are often educated in Catholic and State universities and are moderate in their faith compared with those in Islamic countries.¹ They have built a Mosque in Zagreb, the capital of Croatia, which is a tolerant and multi-religious city. Their spiritual and humanitarian activities are mainly focused on their own religious group. They have their own theological seminary, with 150 students, located in the compound next to the Mosque in Zagreb. So far they have not shown any interest in proselytizing the people of other faiths.²

Summary and Conclusion

This chapter looked at the cultural and social situation in Croatian society. The country is predominately Croat and Catholic. Other minorities have little respect or

¹Ivica Milivincic, "Zemlja u kojoj slobodno djeluju sve vjerske zajednice" (A country in which all religious groups enjoy freedom), *Vjesnik* (Zagreb), 21 September 2004.

²Mirjana Grce, "Imami iz inozemstva neupotrebljivi" (Imams from abroad are useless), *Novi list* (Rijeka), 9 October 2004.

influence in the country. Proud of their heritage, language, and national achievements, the country is rapidly changing quickly under the influence of democracy, consumerism and secular influences. Croatian history has been turbulent with various political systems.

The 1991-1995 war had a major impact on recent history and influenced and shaped peoples' worldviews by testing their values and their approach to life and religion.

Adventists are a part of the social, religious, political, and cultural environment of Croatian society, sharing its positive and negative heredity and present situation. The recent history has challenged and influenced the Adventist Church in Croatia in many ways. The following chapter will look at the Church itself through surveys and interviews to see how Adventists perceive God and how that view affects their lives.

CHAPTER IV

IMPLEMENTATION OF A STRATEGY TO REVITALIZE
THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH
IN CROATIA

This chapter develops and describes an implementation strategy on revitalization of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Croatia. It will describe the Croatian Adventists understanding of God and will then devise a strategy to revitalize the Adventist Church in Croatia through deepening the member's understanding of God.

Analysis of an Adventist Understanding of God

Factors Influencing Adventist Understanding of God

The Adventist Church has been present in Croatia since 1908.¹ It has witnessed and participated in all the events in Croatia during the last century. It can be assumed that the culture, political systems, and the social environment have had a significant impact on its understanding of the Scriptures and has influenced its picture and view of God.

¹General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1909), 109.

Some significant factors have shaped the Adventist understanding of religion and God. A significant number of the Adventist members come from a Catholic background, hence their mentality and mindset has been influenced by the Catholic mentality and mindset. The majority of Adventists are not used to think creatively in regard to various aspects of a church activities. It is not because they have no new ideas but because they have been taught that everything that takes place in the church must be according to the church manual or decided by the higher organization, thereby blindly follow the prescribed liturgy and tradition as in the Catholic church.

Most first generation Adventists accept what they have been told to believe rather than personally discovering truth. They simply rely on a “higher” authority. Seldom will the members challenge a pastor’s authority or question Adventist doctrines. This attitude obviously affects their understanding of the Bible and their perception of God. However, second and particularly third-generation Adventists have begun to question some of the practices and lifestyles in the Adventist Church.

Adventist Croats have been influenced by the same circumstances that have formed the worldviews of other Croats. These influences have a strong bearing on their understanding of religion and certainly shape their picture of God. It seems that a significant number of Adventists in Croatia unconsciously identify God with the rulers and leaders of the country. Part of the purpose of my research is to determine whether these assumptions are correct.

Scriptures

First and second generation Adventists in Croatia are known as people of the Bible. There was a time when almost every Adventist read the Bible regularly, three chapters every day and five chapters on Sabbath. Some local congregations organized contests in biblical knowledge as a way to foster Bible reading. In addition, they studied the Sabbath School lesson regularly, almost without exception. Most Adventists knew the Bible very well and were easily able to quote by heart many Bible verses. Apart from the religious, cultural, and social context of Croatia, the Bible is the main factor that shapes the Adventist understanding of God. However, recently there has been a decline in reading the Bible and the Sabbath School lesson, especially among the younger and middle-aged generations.

Ellen G. White Books

The writings of Ellen G. White are a significant factor that influences the Adventist understanding of the Bible and perception of God.¹ Ellen White is highly regarded by most Croatian Adventists, but in recent times, there are signs that her books are read less often. The first generation of Croatian Adventists quoted from her regularly. Like Adventists worldwide, Croatian Adventists are inclined to quote only certain sentences or paragraphs from White's writings, frequently using them out of

¹The White books translated (with the Croatian title and date) are: *Steps to Christ* (Put Kristu 2004, 33th edition in Croatian), *The Great Controversy* (1962), *Messages to Young People* (Poruka mladima, 1968), *Testimonies for the Church Vol 1* (Svedocanstva za crkvu, vol. 1. 1959), *Selected Messages Vol 2* (Odabrana svjedocanstva vol. 2. 1975), *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing* (Misli s gore blagoslova, 1983), *The Desire of Ages* (Isusov Zivot, 1987), *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Patrijarsi i proroci, 1999), *Ministry of Healing* (Put u bolji zivot, 1998), *Acts of the Apostles* (Djela apostolska, 2003), *Prophets and Kings* (Proroci i Kraljevi, 2001).

context to suit their own viewpoint. This approach affects the understanding of the message and the application of the text.

Ellen White's writings are often read and understood in a very literal way. Most do not take into account the social and religious context of her time. Because of this approach, some have unconsciously moved towards radicalism and fundamentalism, with little tolerance towards opinions and practices that differ from their own. Therefore, White's writings have influenced the Adventist understanding of God but to an extent as yet not determined.

Religious Education

Most pastors in Croatia have finished their theological education at the Adriatic Union College at Marusevec.¹ Most teachers are pastors who also studied at the college and continued their education abroad at Collonges, Newbold College, or Andrews University. Therefore, their spiritual and theological formation has been greatly influenced by these institutions. The Adriatic Union College is regarded by most of the members and pastors as a role model for worship style and the source of sound theological teaching. The college has had a significant impact on the social and spiritual formation of the pastors and members in Croatia.

Pastors are probably the key factor in educating, training, and nurturing the church members and in shaping their understanding of God. Their understanding and

¹Adriatic Union College is the Adventist educational institution in Croatia. The Theological Seminary offers a B.A. in theology (20–25 students), secondary education for nurses and gymnasium, and a program designed to prepare students for university (130–150 students). For more information, see <http://www.open.hr/com/advent/au>.

their preaching influence people's beliefs and the formation of their picture of God. Equally important to their preaching and teaching is the manner in which pastors practice their faith in daily life. It is significant to notice that there are some differences between the older and the younger pastors. Several older pastors often complain that the church is gradually moving away from the Adventist pillars of faith by allowing change to enter the church. The changes are not of a theological nature but rather in areas such as worship and lifestyle.

Survey on Croatian Picture of God

A study was undertaken to determine the picture of God among Croatian Adventists. Surveys, interviews, church analysis, and observations of church life were used to gather data.

Questionnaire

An anonymous survey was conducted among 10 percent of the attending members in the Adventist churches. The participants were randomly chosen with close to 300 people participating. The questionnaire consisted of seventy questions relating to major areas of a person's religious, social, and personal life (appendix A).

The questions were grouped into five areas, each with up to thirteen questions. The areas were: (1) personal picture of God; (2) how the picture of God is reflected in a person's understanding of worship, (3) how the picture of God is reflected in the quality of personal life; (4) how the picture of God is reflected in relationships with other people; and (5) how the picture of God is reflected in the mission of the Church and in personal witnessing.

Survey Results

The results of the survey have been compared and analyzed according to the participants' religious backgrounds, age, level of education, and gender (see appendix B). Figure 3 indicates that according to the survey, 44 percent of Adventist members come from Adventist homes (they are second or third generation Adventist), 37 percent come from Catholic backgrounds, and 10 percent had an atheist upbringing.

Figure 3. Religious Backgrounds of the Members in the Adventist Church.

Picture of God

The first group of questions was designed to find out how Adventists perceive of God. Figure 4 shows the results with the favorite picture of God being a parent (63 percent). Sixty-nine percent indicated that God is a person, 26 percent see God as a supernatural being, and only 5 percent think of God as energy.

Figure 4. Croatian Adventist's Perception of God.

The vast majority (89 percent) believe that God has forgiven their sins, but 11 percent did not know or were not sure about their forgiveness. It is interesting to notice that although 89 percent say they believe their sins have been forgiven, only 47 percent were sure of their salvation if Jesus were to come today. A possible explanation would be that many have accepted forgiveness only rationally as a theological possibility but they have not experienced forgiveness and its blessings in their hearts. This indicates insecurity in their Christian life and suggests that it is not enough to accept a certain doctrine. Young people are less sure about their salvation with only 38 percent certain compared with 52 percent of adults. Fewer members with an Adventist background are sure about their salvation with only 41 percent answering positively compared with those with a Catholic background (53 percent) or an atheist background (61 percent), (see figure 5). A possible explanation for this attitude might be that those from an atheist background have accepted God more wholeheartedly and experientially while those from an Adventist or Catholic background have only

Figure 5. Assurance of Salvation.¹

accepted God from an intellectual or traditional perspective. This raises the question as to what it is about an Adventist upbringing that causes a lack of certainty.

Figure 6 shows the response of people to the statement "As I get older my understanding of God changes." Of those who responded, 27 percent did not feel their understanding had changed, and 6 percent did not know. Of the pastors, 96 percent answered positively. Those with an elementary level of education were the group with the highest percentage who disagreed (over 40 percent), compared with just over 20 percent among those with high school or higher level of education, indicating that

¹Abbreviations have the following meaning: All—all answers, P—pastors, Y—15-30 years, A—adults 30+, M—male, F—female, U—urban, R—rural, El—elementary education, H—higher education, Adv—Adventist background, Cath—Catholic background, Athe—Atheist background.

Figure 6. Understanding of God Changes.

having an education does influence a person's understanding of the Bible and of God.

A Picture of God Reflects on Worship

The second group of questions (17-28) was designed to find out how people's picture of God reflected on their worship. The results show certain attitudes towards worship and worship styles. We can assume that if the understanding of God is deeper and more biblical, it would reflect on the variety and spirituality in worship.

All pastors indicated that they would welcome slight changes in worship. A majority of the members is also open to slight changes in worship. Concerning the music played in the church, 85 percent said that the main criterion for music is "if it makes me feel good," then it is acceptable in the church. Personal preference seems to be the main criterion for deciding which music is acceptable in the church (see figure 7).

Figure 7. Worship Style Awareness Preferences.

Figure 8 shows that a majority of the members (74 percent) think that the use of any instrument in the church is acceptable. The rest are divided between those who believe that only an organ is acceptable (13 percent) or only a piano (4 percent), with 9 percent who do not have an opinion.

Figure 8. Acceptable Instruments in Church.

When it comes to what is important in church, 16 percent of the members list “order” as their preference. Of these, 21.2 percent come from a Catholic background and 30 percent are over fifty years old. It is affirming to see that the highest percentage (59 percent) value relationships as the most important (see figure 9).

Figure 9. Personal Church Expectations.

Quite a high percentage of members (26 percent) say that biblical worship is “as it is in the Bible.” They are probably not aware that the worship styles (see figure 10) mentioned in the Bible were shaped by the cultures of that time. Likewise, people can worship today in any culture as long it fulfils its main purpose, which is to express a two-way relationship between man and God.

Figure 10. Worship.

Figure 11 shows the responses to the question whether wearing jewelry or using hair coloring is a sign of unspiritual behavior and unacceptable for a Christian. This topic has been a major emphasis in Adventist preaching on lifestyle in the past

Figure 11. Jewelry and Hair Coloring.

fifty years in Croatia. It has been the major reason why members often judge people by their outward appearance rather than their inward walk with God. One-third of the respondents (36 percent) agree but 51 percent did not share that opinion. The church seems to be divided over this issue.

On the subject of how men should dress when they preach in the church (with or without a suit and tie) 56 percent said they should wear a suit and a tie while 35 percent would accept a person dressed more casually. Concerning ladies wearing trousers when they participate in church services, 36 percent would accept such dress but 52 percent regard it as unacceptable, while 12 percent do not have an opinion.

It is clear from the responses to the questions on worship that Adventist members are divided on these issues. It will require great skill and wisdom by the leaders to teach the members to be tolerant towards different practices while maintaining unity in Christ.

How a Picture of God Reflects on Personal Life

The third set of questions (29-43) was intended to find out how a person's picture of God is reflected in one's personal life. A number of were asked. Figure 12 shows that the majority of Adventists (81 percent) believe that God answers prayer while another 18 percent thinks he does sometimes. Adventists have a picture of God as one who is involved and responsive in our everyday lives.

Figure 12. God Answers Your Prayers.

On a question dealing with integrity 88 percent of the pastors, 96 percent of other people (51 years and older), and 72 percent of the young people indicated they would return a large sum of money if they found it. Integrity is a significant factor in people's faith and a reflection of their picture of God. Concerning the issue of donating one's organs after death, 64 percent would do so without hesitation, 24 percent do not know, and 12 percent are not prepared to do that. Over 60 percent of the members regard abortion as acceptable in certain cases, and 21 percent are against abortion in any circumstances. Almost all pastors (95 percent) accept the possibility

that abortion may be necessary in certain cases. The majority of church members (98 percent) consider homosexuality and lesbian marriages as not biblically acceptable.

Vegetarianism is practiced by 29 percent of the members and with a similar percentage among the pastors. The background of members is somewhat of a determining factor on this issue. Members with an Adventist upbringing are slightly more likely to follow a vegetarian diet (23 percent) than those with a Catholic background (19 percent), or with an atheist background (14 percent).

One-third of Adventist members, including pastors, think that it is difficult to be a true follower of Christ while slightly over two thirds think that being a follower of Christ is not difficult. Figure 13 shows that the results were similar in all categories.

Figure 13. Being True Follower of Christ is Difficult Task.

More than 90 percent of members believe their life is completely filled with meaning and purpose (56 percent) whereas 38 percent feel their life is only partially filled. The pastors' responses were more positive (87 percent). Those from an atheist background responded less positively (40 percent). Figure 14 gives the details.

Figure 14. I Consider my Life Filled with Purpose and Meaning.

Relationships With People

The fourth group of questions (44-56) was designed to discover how people's picture of God influences their relationships with other people. Two-thirds of the members graded relationships within the church from good to excellent and one-quarter graded them from satisfactory to bad (see figure 15).

Figure 15. Quality of Relationships among Adventists

In answer to the question, Do Adventists show enough tolerance towards other people and their opinions, 26 percent said yes, 25 percent do not know, but 49 percent think that Adventists are not tolerant enough towards others. Pastors had an even more negative image, with 76 percent saying that Adventists are not tolerant enough. It

appears that many have a feeling of superiority over believers in other faiths in the areas of doctrine and attitudes towards life. Adventists often feel that since they have the 'Truth' that they are right and others are wrong. Having the 'Truth' does not mean that Adventists are more intolerant of others. Christ claimed that he was the "Truth" and at the same time was loving and tolerant towards others. Perhaps, being tolerant to others is part of the 'Truth.' The degree of tolerance may also depend on a person's picture of God.

When asked if they could forgive those who had hurt them, 85 percent of the members indicated that they could forgive without much difficulty, and 89 percent said they could easily give people a second chance. When asked about Christian charity only 37 percent would almost always give something to the poor or to beggars, 32 percent would always give, and 58 percent would sometimes participate in humanitarian activities.

Two-thirds of Adventist members are willing to see women participate on an equal basis with men in the activities of the church (see figure 16). It seems however, that the tradition of not allowing women an equal chance to participate is continuing while the majority of the members disagree with present practices.

Figure 16. Women Should be Allowed to Minister the Same as Men do.

Mission

The fifth group of questions (57-70) was designed to find out how one's picture of God influences personal sharing of the Gospel and the mission of the Church. When asked if they shared their faith every time they had an opportunity, 51 percent said always and 48 percent said sometimes. However, only 32 percent of the youth take the chance to share their faith with their friends.

A very high percentage (92 percent) is in favor of maintaining good relationships and cooperation with members of other religious groups. Almost all (90 percent) reject the idea that only Adventists will be saved. It appears that an increasing number of Adventists are embracing an image of God that is more inclusive.

A change in attitude is also apparent in the area of attending cinemas, theaters, sport places, pubs, and café bars. These places were traditionally regarded as worldly and places where most members would not go even to change money. In the survey more than two-thirds of the members indicated that they would go to some of those places while only 16 percent are not prepared to go (see figure 16).

Sharing the gospel with others makes 81 percent of Adventists happy and fills them with joy. It was noted earlier, that only 37 percent actually share their faith regularly in every situation. Bridging this gap will be a significant challenge.

Figure 17. Going to a Café Bar with a Friend to Socialize is Acceptable.

Friendship outside the church is a factor in church growth and 66 percent of the members have close friends outside of the Church with whom they socialize regularly, but 34 percent have no friends outside of the Church. A little less than half of all groups (43 percent) have brought someone to Christ and baptism. Among young people, it was only 21 percent compared with 53 percent for adult members.

When it comes to the question of relevance and accommodation of the gospel to the present time and today's generation, 69 percent believed that Adventist preaching had been adapted to the situation well enough. In a similar question, 69 percent agreed that methods, style, and subjects should conform to the present time. However, 60 percent of the members did not think that the church was open enough to change. Pastors are even more critical with 83 percent answering that the church was not open enough to change (see figure 18).

Almost 80 percent think that their local church is the place where they would gladly bring their friends or relatives. This means that in spite of problems in our

Figure 18. Adventists are Open to Change within the Church.

churches, the great majority of members regard their church as an acceptable environment for inviting non-Adventists. Pastors are less certain about the environment of the church and only 63 percent agreed. The group that feels least comfortable in inviting guests to the church is young people and those with higher levels of education.

Lack of love was seen by 27 percent as the number one obstacle to fulfilling the mission of the Adventist Church, followed by inactivity of the church (25 percent), hypocrisy among the members (17 percent), inadequacy by the church to answer the challenges of the time (13 percent), formalism (11 percent), and lowering of the standards of the church (7 percent). All of these obstacles can prevent the church from growing. The respondents were asked what they thought the biggest obstacle undermining the mission of the Adventist Church was (figure 19).

Figure 19: Obstacles Undermining the Mission of the Adventist Church.

Interviews

Seven persons were interviewed in detail regarding their faith and understanding of God. Four were women and three were men.¹ The main questions asked were: (1) How do you perceive Adventism? (2) What do you consider to be the core of your faith? (3) What is your understanding of God? (4) What do you think has most influenced and shaped your picture of God and how does that picture affect your life?

All seven interviewees talked openly and freely, which helped create a detailed

¹After the purpose of the interviews was explained to the pastors, they selected the people. The following criteria were used in selecting people for interviews: first, they had to be members of the church, second, ready to talk openly and sincerely, third, they had to be from different age groups and gender and they had been Adventists for different length of time. The names of the interviewed people are changed to preserve their privacy.

picture of God. Some of them were open-minded and balanced in their views while others were less tolerant and more legalistic in their approach concerning worship, discipline, clothing, and music in the church.

A lady, Sonja¹ feels her church has the “complete truth” but she thinks that people do not live according to it. According to her, standards in the Church are being lowered little by little and she is very concerned about that. She is strongly against women wearing trousers in the church. When she was asked why she thought that way, her answer was “simply because God has said that.” In addition to this, she also said that although God is pictured in the Bible as a Friend and our Father, he is also pictured as Judge and King and this is because such images are there to teach us respect towards him and to inspire us to behave in front of him as we would before any earthly king. For the same reasons, she said that we have to keep order in the church. Sonja does not like the changes in worship style and believes that because God is the same and never changes so his Church should be the same.

Tony² is a middle-aged teacher. He said that God is his friend and that he believed that He takes into consideration all the various circumstances in our lives such as: our heredity, our culture, education, temperament, and life circumstances before he passes His final judgment on us.

¹A 68 year-old housewife, interviewed by author in Zagreb, 17 April 2003.

²A secondary school teacher, interviewed by author in Osijek, 22 October 2003

Ana,¹ a seventeen-year-old Adventist girl was baptized when she was just fourteen. She said that she regretted that action as she did it because of pressure from her pastor, whom she could not refuse even though she was not yet ready for baptism. In addition, she said that she did not understand Adventism properly, neither did she know Jesus as her own personal Savior. Unfortunately, she said, the pastor took for granted that she knew and believed everything, since she came from a third generation Adventist family, but he assumed incorrectly. She said that she accepted Adventism because of custom and environment, but that it did not mean much to her at that time. Her ideas about God were unclear and vague. She served Him as an unknown God, forcing herself to keep the standards of the church without having a personal relationship with Him. This made her an unhappy and formal Christian. She looked for entertainment in the Church rather than for spiritual food. Consequently, she felt spiritually dry and empty. What is more, she felt guilty before God for not being a true child of God. She now blames herself for not waiting for the right time, and not allowing God to reveal Himself to her as her personal savior.

Sasha,² a young Adventist man, said that God was far from him and he was not sure that God was involved in his life, or at least he did not feel it. What is more, he said that he does not believe God is interested in him and he could not accept the image of God as a Father because his father was very mean to him and his mother. He did not want to be in heaven if his father would be there. In case both of them find

¹A student, interviewed by author in Rijeka, 20. December 2003.

²An accountant in an NGO, interviewed by author in Zagreb, 15 October 2003.

themselves in hell, he hoped they would be far enough away from each other. His father was a respected church leader. For him the Church is too institutionalized, full of formalism, and is lacking in relationships.

It was interesting to talk to an elderly retired pastor, Jim,¹ who used to hold very responsible offices in the Adventist Church and was a very influential person. He sees the situation in the church as rapidly deteriorating in every possible way. According to him, liberalism is evident everywhere and the “world is entering the Church in a full-scale way.” When he talks about “the world entering the Church” he thinks about fads such as clothing, make up, wearing jewelry, traveling on Sabbath, contemporary music in the Church and disrespect of the church as a holy place. To him God is a God of law and order and it must be implemented in the church at any cost. He often glorified the “good old days” when he was “in power” claiming that then, things were in order and the Church was on the right track, which is not the case today. According to him, very few pastors still hold to biblical positions on lifestyle matters while the rest of the pastors have been swept away by the winds of liberalism.

Melissa² a nurse believes that God is omnipotent but at the same time is puzzled with the fact that He did not answer her prayers and heal her sick brother. She also wonders why she could not find a good boyfriend even though she has prayed for one for years. Because of this, she said that she is tempted to doubt God and His

¹A retired pastor, interview by author, Zagreb, 14 October 2003.

²A 27 year-old single lady, interviewed by author, Zagreb, 12 September 2003.

interest in her. To her, the Church does not care enough for its members. People in the church are cold and do not practice what they preach.

Kata¹ is a cheerful and open-minded eighty-three year old widow and the mother of eight grown children. She sees changes in the church and likes some of them while others she does not. She accepts diversity in the church and never complains about it. She is aware of the fact that the world is constantly changing and the Church should respond to those changes. She said that she was not sure that the Church always reacts properly towards new challenges but she leaves it in God's hands. However, Kata is sure that God leads this Church, even though she often cannot understand the ways in which He does it. She likes people and is still very much involved in personal witnessing for Christ through her Christian life-style, by speaking, and by handing out Christian literature. She considers herself a happy woman in spite of her hard life. The people in her church love her. She has read her Bible every year since she became an Adventist forty-six years ago. She strongly believes that she could survive and overcome any hardship in life because God is her friend and her Hope of salvation.

The picture of God that emerges from these interviews is not one but many. Sonja sees religion through regulations and standards. Her picture of God is as a ruler or a judge who keeps an eye on us to control us. Retired pastor Jim is a person who advocates resistance to almost any change in the church. He pictures God as the God of the old ways. It would be unwise and impossible to try to change Sonja's or pastor

¹An 83 year-old widow, interviewed by the author, Osijek, 5 November 2003.

Jim's opinion or attitude in understanding God. However, it is important to help them to be more tolerant towards different opinions and accept a possibility of unity in diversity within the Adventist Church.

Sasha is a representative of those who have lost their faith in God because of bad family relationships or from disappointment that the Church did not help them enough. This group of people is most vulnerable; they need a friend and a church that will make them feel appreciated and loved. Ana's case teaches us that it is a big mistake if pastors or church leaders do not lead young people to know Christ, but instead just prepare them for baptism or even worse than that, baptize them completely unprepared. Some unconsciously lead people into membership rather than into a deeper relationship with Christ and because such people do not know Jesus, the church and God Himself may lose many young people. The tragedy is that Ana still does not know God.

The general lesson that comes out of all seven cases is that there is great need for genuine, loving Christianity and this is what most people long for. It is assumed that if people knew God better they would serve Him better. Knowing the biblical God would bring more joy and peace and the assurance of salvation into a person's life.

Observations

By mingling with Adventists, and by talking and listening, I have learned that not all Adventists have an identical picture of God. One view may be described as a picture of a rigid God, a God who is king, who is unapproachable, strict, and requires absolute obedience from His children who must fulfill all requirements for their salvation.

A second view is of a friendly God. His mercy is greater than his justice. It is easier to get along with God than with a pastor, elder, or a fellow believer in the church.

A third view is a distant God, the God of the deists, believing that he exists somewhere in the universe but that he is not close and does not interact in people's lives. A deistic God does not seem to answer prayers. People with this view of God rely more on their good ethical and Christian values than on God's constant power to enable them to live a good Christian life.

A fourth view is of a simple God. Here we see a "naive realism" or a "naive idealism," that does not search or question but merely accepts a simple statement in the Bible or from the church. Such people would often say that God told them or led them to do this and that. Some of them claim they have clearly heard God's voice.

A fifth view offers a balanced picture of God. People hold in tension the contrasting biblical pictures. To them God is love and judge, but at the same time he is creator, savior, friend, and parent. They live their faith daily and reflect their relationship with Christ in their dealings with others. They do not feel that their religion is a burden but rather, that it is a privilege and a joyous thing.

Being a pastor for almost thirty years, I have had countless opportunities to observe the lifestyle of Adventists. Though each person is different, I have noticed that there are several factions in the church, each characterized by their specific understanding of God. The majority of Adventists in Croatia, especially first, and to a certain extent, second generation Adventists, hold to the rigid view of God. They often tend to be strict and legalistic in their practical Christian life giving strict attention to

dress, diet, guarding the edges of the Sabbath, not watching TV, or listening to the radio, no reading of newspaper, playing sports, or going to the beach, and no swimming on Sabbath, no cinema, and not wearing jewelry. This group feels that all of these things are important signs of faithfulness to God and of preserving their Adventist identity.

The worship style in most Croatian Adventist churches is classical and traditional. The music is also mostly traditional. The hymns have been translated from English Adventist hymnbooks. Contemporary music is gradually entering the Church, though not without resistance from some pastors and members. In addition, some members and even some pastors are against the use of certain instruments in the church, considering instruments such as guitars, rattles, or drums as not being good enough to play sacred music.

The worship services are usually very formal and well planned. Everything goes according to the schedule and the church manual. Women, comprising 60 to 75 percent of the membership, rarely take part. Women can hold any office in the church, but cannot be ordained as elders or deacons.

Sabbath School continues to be conducted in the same way as it has for the past 30-40 years. It almost always follows the same order and style. The Sabbath School classes are very important to most of the members. Sabbath School is pretty much the same every Sabbath, so there is no excitement in anything at all. The older generation accepts this unchangeable tradition while the young people are bored and question the meaning of it all.

Through talking with many members and pastors in Croatia, I have noticed that most do not differentiate between order of worship, methods, cultural practices, and biblical principles. For the great majority of them, it is all the same. Many feel that any change in lifestyle, or the style of Sabbath School or worship, is a denial of traditional religion and a betrayal of Adventism. Many regard the package as the whole and cannot see any difference between the wrapping and the substance.

Several questions can be raised. How much do the attitudes of these members rise from their picture of God? Does their rigid worldview influence their understanding of the Scriptures? Why is there such a lack of tolerance towards those who understand and see things differently? Is their picture of God narrow and distorted?

Strategy to Revitalize an Adventist Understanding of God

Strategy Development

This chapter deals with an implementation strategy for developing a deeper understanding of God as the means for revitalizing the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Croatia.

The strategy has been developed by using a logframe which is “a matrix in which a project’s intervention logic, assumptions, objectively verifiable indicators and sources of verification are presented.”¹ A logframe is a picture of how you believe your program will work that uses words or pictures to describe the sequence of

¹European Commission, *Project Cycle Management Training Courses Handbook*, (Hassocks, West Sussex, UK: PARTICIP GmbH, Version 1.1., 2001), 73.

activities thought to bring about the change and how these activities are linked to the results the program is expected to achieve.¹

Outline of Strategy

The logframe matrix is a planning tool that enables the reader to see the entire strategy in one condensed table. In addition to identifying the goal and the purpose of the strategy it also identifies the process to be undertaken in order to achieve the goal.

The first column of the logframe shows the logical framework that presents the clearly defined goal and objectives, which will lead to the intended results of the clearly stated purpose. In the case of this project the purpose is to improve the understanding of the image of God among Adventists in Croatia. This project purpose is intended to lead to the overall goal, which is to have a revitalized, vibrant, loving, and more mission oriented Adventist Church in Croatia.

Stating a goal is important for at least three reasons. First, it helps to define the intended end result, and tells why that is significant. Second, a clear goal identifies which means, methods, and resources might be needed to achieve the goal. Third, a goal serves as an additional motivating factor. The third column lists the sources of verification, identifying the person or persons responsible, and the tools to be used in measuring the effectiveness of the strategy. The fourth column outlines the assumptions on which the project is built.

¹W. K. Kellogg Foundation, *Logic Model Development Guide*. (Battle Creek, MI: Kellogg Foundation, updated January 2004), 3.

Table 2. Logical Framework Matrix

	Objectives	Measurable Indicators	Sources of Verifications	Assumptions
Overall Objective	Revitalized, vibrant, loving and more mission oriented Adventist churches in Croatia.	Worship attendance increased by 20%, social events and potlucks doubled, participation increased by 30%.	The church boards to supervise the process and analyze the results quarterly.	The goal achievable in four year period.
Purpose	Improved understanding of the image of God among the Adventists in Croatia.	Assurance of salvation among members increased by 30%.	Survey done and analyzed at the beginning and at the end of the project.	
Results	<p>God oriented and more experiential worship services <i>established</i>.</p> <p>Need-oriented evangelism <i>developed</i>.</p> <p>Analysis of the case study comparison <i>completed</i>.</p>	<p>Increased by 20% churches adopting various worship styles by 2004.</p> <p>Small groups increased by 30%. One outreach program per year in each church.</p> <p>Compare the developments among the case study churches annually.</p>	<p>Church attendance and quality of worship monitored and analyzed quarterly. Reports of the small group leaders analyzed monthly.</p> <p>Four case study churches surveyed and compared during a four year period.</p>	<p>Conference will support project and accept my rearranged work in the office. Majority of the pastors and members willing to adopt this strategy. The four case study churches willing to cooperate.</p>
Activities	<p>Preach and lecture on biblical picture of God and its affect on worship, evangelism and daily life.</p> <p>Lecture on the relationship between our understanding of God and our self-respect.</p> <p>Two lectures on difference between form and meaning and its impact relationships.</p> <p>Coach pastors and members on revitalization of their churches.</p> <p>Conduct a seminar on how to develop friendship based on the LDi* approach.</p> <p>Conduct four case studies comparing two urban and two rural churches.</p> <p>Prepare analysis and share vision with church.</p> <p>Develop working strategy based on the lessons learned from case study churches.</p>	<p>*LDi stands for a LIFEdevelopment.info approach in personal ministries</p>		

Overall Goal

The overall goal of the project was to create revitalized Adventist churches in Croatia, helping them become vibrant, loving, and mission oriented. The need for such a project became more obvious after conducting research on the spiritual and theological basis for ministry and after looking at the survey results.

The second column of the logframe lists the verifiable indicators, which are vital in the evaluation of the progress and outcomes of the strategy. The logframe outlines verifiable indicators for the overall goal, as well as the purpose and the results of the strategy.

Project Purpose

The purpose of the project is to improve the understanding of the image of God among Adventists which will lead them to become more active and mission oriented. The assumption is that if members have a deeper and more biblical picture of God they will also improve the quality of their personal relationship with God, which will then result in an enrichment of all spheres of their life.

Results

The project seeks to help Adventists (1) become more God oriented by establishing worships that are more experiential in the four pilot project churches, (2) develop need-orientated evangelism, and (3) analyze the four pilot project churches to gather lessons for future projects.

Implementation of Strategy

The strategy is to share a plan with pastors in Croatia to revitalize the Church. Four pastors will be selected with whom the vision of implementation of the strategy will be shared. Also, four churches will be chosen as pilot projects. Two of these churches will be small with around thirty members from rural areas, and two will be from urban areas with a size of around one hundred members each. The findings and the experience gained from the four pilot projects will help to start similar projects in other churches in the future. An evaluation process will also be developed in order to monitor progress and success. The implementation strategy seeks to do the following:

First, the project team, together with the church board, will establish the purpose and clear goals of the strategy in their specific churches. It is intended that the goals will be realistic, achievable, and measurable.

Second, in order to identify the strong and weak points of each church a survey will be conducted and results will be analyzed from each church. This baseline data will be necessary for evaluating the results of the strategy.

Third, a realistic timetable for a four-year period will be outlined, including exact commencement and completion dates, and some indication of when tangible and verifiable progress results may be expected. This form of structure will keep the participants focused on their vision and motivate them to complete their strategy.

Fourth, a constant monitoring process will be established. The implementation of periodic surveys, intentional observation, and record keeping will document and verify progress.

The strategy will be implemented in coordination with the pastors participating in the pilot studies. The four pastors will be involved in doing a church analysis and preparing their churches for the major seminar and workshops aimed at developing a better understanding of the image of God. Church members in those four churches will be asked to apply their new understanding of God to their spiritual life. Opportunities will be provided¹ in which members can share their enhanced spirituality and understanding with each other.

This project envisions a process that will take place over several years. The project will be initiated by sharing the vision, goals, and the purpose with church members, followed by a detailed church analysis, periodic seminars, and workshops. Various ideas and concepts about God will gradually be introduced. Monitoring and progress evaluation will take place to help review principles, and in some cases to redefine objectives and methods in order to achieve the intended goals.

Members will be encouraged to approach this project as part of their spiritual journey rather than just a project to be completed. Their personal faith, love, and dedication will be absolutely crucial for the overall goal to be achieved.

The first and the most important element in the implementation of such a strategy is the presence of genuine and sincere Christians; though it is not easy to measure someone's spiritual quality or the genuine Christian qualities of a church. Surveys of the members, both before and after the seminars will provide some

¹Meetings will be organized in order to provide an opportunity for sharing personal thoughts and understanding of the image of God.

indication of the level of assurance of salvation the members experienced at that time. Another indicator is the quality of relationships among the members. An indication of this has been gained through observing how members interact with each other, in relation to the frequency and length of time they spend in talking to each other, eating with each other, and praying with each other, as well as how much they participate in joint projects. These types of activities will indicate how much they value their relationships and how much they trust and respect each other.

A precise time schedule has been set up for the implementation of the strategy including specific events. The time sequence of events to achieve the strategy and the intended completion time simplifies the process of evaluation and makes it more accurate.

It is intended to have a working team to use various sources of verification such as: surveys, interviews, and check lists of attendance. Alternatively, a church may monitor and analyze the survey results. Various reports on how many people participate in certain programs, projects, worships, and small groups will be used by the working teams and church boards. Further reports, which may be of significance to these teams, may include the number of programs conducted in places other than the church premises and information regarding the newcomers in the particular church.

It is believed that this approach to revitalizing the Adventist churches in Croatia will deliver positive results. In addition, it is assumed that some pastors will adopt this approach as a means for revitalizing their churches. It is also assumed that a significant majority of the church members will also welcome this approach and participate in seminars and the implementation of the strategy. And finally, it is

assumed that the Croatian Conference will demonstrate their support for this plan and will support it financially as well as accepting the rearrangement of my time commitment in the conference office.

The verifiable indicators for the specific purpose of the project will be the attendance of church members at seminars and workshops which are intended to enable them to gain a deeper understanding of God. Various feedback forms, such as interviews and questionnaires will be used as a means of verification. The results will be continually compared with results from earlier baseline surveys.

It is important to know the assumptions on which those surveys are based. The first assumption is that at least several pastors will accept the strategies and several churches will want to see their churches revitalized and changed for the better. The second assumption is that this strategy will, if carefully and faithfully implemented, bring revival and positive changes to those churches. The third assumption is that some segments of the strategy may need to be adjusted or changed.

The first step in implementing the strategy will be the selection of the participant pastors and churches that are willing to adopt this vision of church revitalization as their own and commit themselves wholeheartedly to this project. The second step will be to plan the overall program with the four selected pastors and establish an implementation plan for their churches.

Pilot Project

The four pastors,¹ and the pilot project congregations have been selected, two from urban and two from rural areas.² The urban churches have approximately one hundred members each, the rural congregations between thirty and forty members. The reason why two churches in similar categories have been chosen is to enable leaders to monitor and compare the implemented strategies and progress made in each location.³ The majority of the churches in Croatia have between twenty and thirty members. Only a few churches have a membership greater than one hundred. It is believed that the lessons learned from the pilot project churches will be of great value in applying this strategy in the future.

Approval Process

After four pilot project churches have been identified, the elders and personal ministries teams from those churches will be contacted in order to share this vision with them. Before proceeding, the church boards will be requested to give their final approval and support.

Baseline surveys will be conducted in each of the four churches in order to identify their strengths and weaknesses. In addition, the various resources available in each particular church will be identified. The findings will be carefully analyzed and reports prepared for each church board.

¹The four pastors are: Ivan Didara (Virovitica Church), F. M. Spisic (Bukovica Church), Vladimir Kovacevic (Varazdin Church), and Dominik Crnogorac (Zlatar Bistrica Church).

²Two rural churches are Zlatar Bistrica and Spisic Bukovica.

³See appendix VI for suggested steps to be taken in choosing the pastors, churches, and leaders for such a project.

After the overall concept has been presented to the church board, two or three but not exceeding five members (depending on the size of the church) will be selected to be directly involved with the project. The survey results will be presented before each church board. Presentations will be given in each church to make people aware of the current situation in their church. Having identified areas of weaknesses, strengths, and need, each church board will be introduced to the strategy for revitalizing the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Croatia through developing a deeper understanding of God. Two meetings will be needed to explain the concept and the process before the church board.

After the church board has reached a consensus and accepted the strategy for revitalizing their church, the concept and strategy will be presented to the whole church. This should be presented carefully and tactfully not as just another new method but rather as something which is a natural result of their faith. The members should not get the impression that something is being imposed on them. Rather, that they will be given the opportunity to progress on their spiritual journey in which they will experience genuine Christianity and the joy of sharing their faith with their friends. It will be anticipated that the majority of members will be willing to participate in the strategic activities, which will correspond to their spiritual gifts.

Time Frame

In order to maintain momentum, a definite time frame has to be in place with strategic activities scheduled. It will be crucial to create a realistic timeframe, which will consist of at least two levels of good planning. The first level will be to define the main events with a time precise schedule which will include the starting and the

ending point of each event or activity. The second level of planning details the structure of each activity identifying who, what, how, and when the strategy will be implemented.

This approach will gradually create an atmosphere of purpose among the team members, as well as among the church members. The clearly defined structure is intended to keep people focused on the strategies and goal. Clear planning makes the vision more tangible and achievable. The time schedule will include short-term and long-term goals. The short-term goals motivate participants on their journey towards the final goal. The long-term goal is needed to keep the vision alive, constantly redirecting and enabling participants to measure the progress that is being made.

Activities

In order to achieve the ultimate goal (revitalization of the churches), numerous activities will take place as they are presented in the Gantt chart (see table 2). Each church will create a similar activity chart for itself.

Five Sermons

Five sermons, which will establish the spiritual foundation of the project concepts, will be presented in each pilot church. The sermons will be aimed towards spiritual growth through a deeper understanding of God.¹

The first sermon will deal with the question, Do we know the God we serve or do we serve an unknown God as did people from Athens? (Acts 17). The purpose of

¹See appendix III for the outlines of the five sermons.

this sermon is to challenge members to re-examine their understanding of God and attitude towards him. Is it possible to love and relate to God if he is not known? This sermon will also present the variety of means by which to know God.

The second sermon will present God as the God of relationships. The entire Bible is about relationships and shows us in particular how much God values relationships. Even the main idea of the Ten Commandments is about relationships. The purpose of this sermon is to show that spiritual growth starts by developing a close relationship with God.

The third sermon will focus on discovering God, not only rationally but also experientially. Knowing God through our personal experience is particularly important, in light of the survey results which indicated that Adventists in Croatia possess quite a good doctrinal and rational knowledge of God while only 47 percent are sure about their salvation. This suggests that for the remaining 53 percent God is experienced as being remote and hidden somewhere in space. The aim of this sermon is to help members to experience God in their everyday lives.¹

The fourth sermon titled "Love God and Hate Your Neighbor Or ..." is intended to provoke members to think what genuine Christianity is all about. It is intended to make members aware of the fact that their picture of God is reflected in their relationships with other people. This will include a study of the individual's personal

¹Ibid.

relationship with God on a permanent basis reflected in every aspect of life. This subject relates to the overall goal in that when genuine Christianity is present it naturally attracts people to the center of that religion—Jesus Christ.

The fifth sermon is called “On the Waves of the Holy Spirit” with an emphasis on our need to depend on the Holy Spirit for whatever we plan to do. Spiritual things can only be accomplished by a spiritual power—God’s Spirit.

Table 3. Monthly Activity Schedule for the First Year

Activities		4 th Qtr			1 st Qtr			2 nd Qtr			3 rd Qtr		
		10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Result: 1. God oriented worship established													
Activities:													
1.1 Preach four sermons on biblical image of God		1											
1.1.1 God values relationships the most													
1.1.2 Experiencing God													
1.1.3 Love God and hate your neighbor or ...													
1.1.4 What is genuine Christianity all about													
1.1.5. On the wings of the Holy Spirit													
1.2 Seven lectures on biblical image of God		1											
1.2.1 Knowing God by name													
1.2.2 Images of God													
1.2.3 The power of Images													
1.2.4 Factors that influence our image of God													
1.2.5 Right picture of God right picture of us													
1.2.6 Our image of God and personal witnessing													
1.2.7 Right image of God is base for spirituality													
1.3 Create meaningful experiential worship		4											
1.3.1 What is worship all about?													
1.3.2 God is God of diversity													
1.3.3 Modeling different worship styles started													
Result: 2. Need-oriented evangelism developed													
Activities:													
2.1 Coach and train pastors and members		1											
2.1.1 Sharing the vision about revitalization													
2.1.2 Small group leaders seminars, workshops													
2.1.3 Seminars and workshops on the LDi*													
Result: 3. Analysis of the case study completed													
Activities:													
3.1.1 Four church case study analysis done													
3.1.2 Shared vision with the members													
3.1.3 Members trained and equipped													
3.1.4 Mentoring and monitoring organized													
3.1.5 LDi approach presented and adopted													
3.1.6 Community relevant programs created													
3.1.7 Survey of the case study done and analyzed													
3.1.8 Results of the pilot churches compared													
Milestones:													
started	1 = Sermons about the image of God	6 = Seminars and workshops for small group leaders											
Completed	2 = Seminars on the image of God	7 = LDi approach adopted and making friends evangelism started											
	3 = Seminars on worship started	8 = Community relevant programs started											
	4 = Experiential worship style started	9 = Mentoring and monitoring program started											
	5 = Shared vision about revitalizing church	10 = Survey of the case study done and analyzed											

Table 4. Activity Schedule for 2005-2008

[illegible]

After the local church accepts the overall program, a number of well-coordinated activities will be initiated.

Seminar

The seminar consists of seven lectures on the biblical image of God. These seminars are planned as weekend meetings with two possible variations.¹

The first option is to have an intensive weekend seminar beginning on Friday evening (during the winter time) and finishing on Sunday afternoon. It begins with an opening sermon and the first lecture of the seminar. Immediately after the sermon and before the beginning of the first lecture there will be a short questionnaire with forty questions relating to the individual's personal understanding of God and how it affects personal life, worship, as well as the individual's relationships with other people.²

The seminar continues on Saturday morning, beginning with the second sermon followed by the second and third sessions of the seminar on the image of God. It is assumed that on this particular Sabbath the entire program is different in form and content from the usual worship style.

On Sabbath afternoon the seminar continues with the third sermon (provoking people to re-examine their picture of God and how it reflects in their relationships with people) followed by two lectures with a workshop in between.

The second option is for the seminars to be extended over two weekends to

¹See appendix B for outlines of the seminar.

²See appendix A for the questionnaire.

enable the people to discuss and reflect on the presentations, and encourage internalization of the concepts. It will also help them assess the value of the subjects more objectively and give them opportunities to implement some of the shared ideas.

All eight lectures are designed as a progressive journey to an understanding of the image of God. The seminar will be arranged so that after two lectures there will be time for a question and answer period which will give participants an opportunity to talk about their understanding of God and provide them with an opportunity to ask personal questions on the lecture topics.

The eight lectures are planned in the following sequence: The first lecture is designed to be an introduction to the whole seminar dealing with the human need for God and whether we can really know him. If it is accepted that we can really know God, then the means by which this can be achieved will be addressed. Alternatively, if not, then why is it so important?¹ The lecture covers the most frequently used names by which God has spoken about himself.²

The second lecture looks at the biblical images of God in order to understand their meaning then and now. These various biblical images show God's attempt to tell humanity something about himself using imagery to which all people can relate to. It is important to know that none of the images provides a full picture of God. People relate differently to those images, interpreting them through personal experience in a way which is most acceptable to them. This is why people create their own picture of

¹See appendix B for an outline of the seminar.

²Ibid.

God based on the collected pieces of the images that have somehow sparked their minds and touched their hearts.

At this stage of the seminar an individual can compare the biblical picture of God with his or her own picture of him.¹

The third lecture is on “the power of image” which examines the reasons why the Bible uses images in order to present God. Human life is surrounded by a countless variety of images to which each person relates in differing ways. There is power in the images by which attention is captured and hearts are moved to identify with them. People tend, even unconsciously, to copy their favorite images.

The fourth lecture deals with the factors that influence the formation of the human picture of God and explains why no one has the same picture of God. The more influential factors are considered, including heredity, personality type, education, family, environment, culture, political system, status in society, the Bible, and the church. These factors show that people’s experience and knowledge of the world and God constantly change. This is why there is constant change in people’s lives and change in their picture of God.²

The fifth lecture discusses how understanding the image of God affects understanding of self. People are created in the image of God, which gives everyone a unique position and status before God and helps each person to have a balanced self-respect and respect for others. Created in God’s image directly relates to the main

¹Ibid.

²See appendix B and chapter two of this paper.

topic of the paper, for if identity comes from understanding and a relationship with God, then it is crucially important for each person to search for Him tirelessly.¹

The sixth lecture illustrates how a true picture of God leads towards genuine Christianity. It emphasizes the connection between the image of God and the spiritual life, showing that a true picture of God is the basis of spirituality. People are not only flesh and bones but are also spiritual beings which is partly the meaning of “created in the image of God.” Spirituality helps in understanding the character of God and valuing the virtues that He values. Spirituality is always, in one way or another, expressed in our practical life. This is why genuine Christians cannot hide their faith or their relationship with God. Faith naturally reflects the One who is in the heart. This idea can best be illustrated by the love of God that springs from the heart of God into our heart and from us to others. Our Christian life is a lifelong spiritual journey of spiritual growth towards spiritual maturity.²

In addition, this lecture touches on attitudes toward mission which is strongly affected by one’s image of God. In fact, it is believed that a driving force for mission comes from a deep understanding of God. Therefore, the better someone knows God the more that person will be motivated to share that knowledge and experience with others.³

¹See more about the importance of the image of God in the second chapter of this paper.

²See appendix B.

³Ibid.

The seventh lecture deals with the implementation strategy for that particular church. At this stage the action plan for the project is presented along with the teams responsible for various activities such as the planning team; the worship team; the social activities team; and the literature evangelism team. Finally, the role of the members within the entire project is outlined. It is of crucial importance that every church member be given an opportunity to participate in the activities according to their personality, spiritual gifts, and preferences.

The eighth and concluding lecture gives a clear summary of the main points of the seminar. An illustration of a tree called a “tree of life” will be used to reinforce the concepts. The tree is represented as having strong roots, a strong trunk, mighty branches, beautiful leaves, and nice fruit demonstrating that only a close connection between each part can achieve the purpose of a tree. This represents a person’s spiritual life that grows out of understanding God and one’s relationship with him.

At the conclusion of the seminar people will be asked to complete the same questionnaire as the one they completed initially in order to assess the effectiveness of the seminar as demonstrated by changes in attitude, understanding, and growth.

The expectation is that at least 50 percent of the church members will attend the seminars. Attendance records will be carefully kept in order to collect the data for evaluation.

Workshops

Various workshops will be organized once a month on various theological and practical issues in connection with personal spiritual growth as well as activities which were already in place.¹

Training

When the spiritual foundation is laid as a result of the above sermons, lectures, and workshops, further training will be given to those members who are willing to participate in the life of the church in order to build an active and vibrant spiritual community. The team leaders, including the four selected pastors, will be the first to be trained in order to lead their teams into the implementation process. These seminars² will be short and often running in tandem with other activities in the church.

Short seminars with church members will be very similar to those for leaders and pastors with different emphases. Each two to three hour seminar will be held monthly and will cover topics such as: how to share the vision of church revitalization; how to organize small group evangelism; and how to conduct literature evangelism.

The plan anticipates training people to reach the postmodern generation by using the LDi approach.³ This will be an ongoing process of teaching people how to make friends and share their personal faith. The reason these seminars will be held

¹See appendix D for an outline of the workshops.

²These seminars will inform and educate concerning the Logframe and the action plans in order to make sure that every team member knows exactly what is going on and what their task is.

³LDi stands for LIFEdevelopment.info which is a specific set of materials for work with the postmodern generation.

monthly is to give the members and pastors sufficient time between the meetings to implement what they have learned and then share their experiences during the continuation of the seminar. Seminars are intended to be very practical courses prepared and run by various experts who will be invited as guest lecturers.

As corporate worship is one of the most important elements of spiritual life, it is crucial that it is meaningful, experiential, and participatory. It has become evident that for the new generation of young and even middle-aged people, worship in the majority of Adventist Churches in Croatia has become lifeless, boring, and even meaningless.

Therefore, it is imperative to instigate genuine worship experiences for those who look for more than has been offered. The changes should create a worship experience that will be more meaningful and spiritual.

The three lectures in the seminar cover the following topics:¹

1. The first lecture examines the concept of worship and will look at the biblical principles of worship and see how they can be applied today in our culture.

2. The second lecture entitled “God is a God of Diversity” deals with God’s approach towards us and everything he created. We live in a world of diversity and we have to regard it as God’s blessing rather than the result of sin. The church is also very diverse and it is crucially important to recognize diversity and respect it.²

¹ A seminar on how to create meaningful and experiential worship will be held by a guest lecturer who is an expert on worship issues.

² Ibid.

3. The third lecture explores possible models for different worship styles in Croatia, taking into account the cultural context, the needs of the people, and the particular church environment. Alternative worship experiences will be organized in order to offer not only variety but also quality in worship. The plan is to reshape and reorganize worship styles in each of the pilot project churches while respecting their resources, needs, and cultural context. The goal is to make worship vibrant, experiential, and more meaningful as well as more spiritual and attractive.¹

To achieve such an ambitious goal is impossible without considerable input from the entire church. However, first of all the worship teams should be properly trained to be able to lead churches as they reorganize worship. Second, it is important to prepare sample worships so that the members can see the possibilities for freshness and beauty. Modeling worship should also prevent members from resisting changes in worship. It is important to have the strong support of the church in order to implement this strategy. Group leaders and pastors can provide valuable input through the practical training and education of church members. The pastors and members will also monitor progress and write reports for presentation to the church board and to the project director. The Croatian conference can contribute valuable support by affirming the process of worship renewal, by providing proficient personnel, and by sponsoring worship training seminars.

¹Ibid.

Evaluation Process

It is essential to develop precise evaluation methods for both the short and long term stages of the project. This will enable leaders to know whether or not this project has accomplished its purpose, to identify what has taken place, and to assess its effectiveness. The evaluation process is important because it enables the team to ascertain which approaches should be modified, changed, or even left out of future projects. Therefore, the lessons learned from effective project evaluation will influence the planning of similar future projects.

In order to conduct a sound evaluation it is necessary for the four pilot churches to create and use verifiable indicators. These will include an increase of 20 percent in the worship attendance, social events and potlucks doubled, and members' participation in the programs increased by 30 percent. In addition, it is expected that a variety of worship styles will be adopted in all four churches by 2007. Furthermore, it is planned to increase the number of small groups in each of the four churches by 30 percent. Finally, it is planned that each of the four pilot churches will organize at least one outreach project outside the church every year. These specific verifiable indicators will enable each church to monitor the progress of the project, give some measurable indication of how the activities were transformed into results, and reveal whether the outputs, purpose, and goal have been achieved.

Monitoring teams will be established to gauge the effectiveness of the activities and measure progress towards the final goal. These people will be significantly involved in the project and will be aware of the main purpose of the project and its final goal. The team will need to be trained, and given the necessary

tools, such as attendance lists, questionnaires, the sequences of the program and people's reactions to the programs. Ultimately, the main task of monitoring is to establish sufficient control over the project, ensure that it stays on track, and make adjustments when and where necessary.

The monitoring team will report regularly to the project leader and to the church board. Some reports can be given weekly, monthly or quarterly during a program, while other reports may come at the conclusion of an activity. Most of the reports should be presented in written form, however, it may be beneficial to have a discussion with the monitoring team in order to hear their impressions. Possible recommendations should be discussed and considered for implementation. The contents of the reports should match the logframe and its related outputs in order to enable the church board and the project leader to analyze and assess progress and correct any shortcomings.

The major issue for good evaluation is the choice of criteria. In this case several criteria, applicable to this project, have been suggested.

The first concerns the relevance of the project. It is important to assess whether a project about "Revitalizing the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Croatia through a Deeper Understanding of God" is appropriate to address the problems of insecurity of salvation, member inactivity, quality of the Christian faith, and the relevance of presenting the Gospel to the world.

The second criterion is project preparation and design. This helps to evaluate the logic and completeness of the project planning process through targeted sermons, seminars, workshops, and implementation of the principles in members' lives.

The third criterion is the effectiveness of the project. This helps to assess the overall achievement of the project purpose, and how assumptions have affected it.¹

The fourth criterion is the impact of the project on individuals and local churches. This helps in assessing the effect of the project on local church activities and the quality of Christian life and its contribution to the project's overall objectives.

The fifth criterion is the sustainability of the project. It is important to ascertain how long the benefits produced by the project can continue.²

The sixth criterion is the efficiency of the project. The financial cost in this case should be no big challenge for any local church due to the fact that most of the activities are taking place in the Adventist Church facilities thus keeping expenses at the lowest possible level. Nevertheless, cost must be taken into consideration.

There should be a close connection between the evaluation and the logframe, which is effectively the road map for the implementation of the project. Since the logframe clearly defines the goal of the project and suggests major activities that should lead toward outputs, and contribute to the purpose, it is crucially important to constantly check to ensure that improvisation is minimized and that the logframe is well-utilized.

¹*Project Cycle Management Training Courses Handbook*, 64.

²*Ibid.*

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary and Conclusion

This study focused on two areas where one's picture of God makes a tremendous difference. First, on a personal level, it is important to understand our personal picture of God and find out whether that picture has a biblical basis or if it is of our own creation. The intention of this project was to help members to have a biblical view of God, and develop a personal relationship with him in order to make their Christianity genuine, experiential, joyful, and purposeful. Second, on a corporate level, it is important how the Adventist Church in Croatia views God because the corporate view impacts how loving, caring, vibrant, and people-oriented the community of faith is. A sharp decline in baptisms in the past ten years has caused many church leaders to search for something to revitalize the church. This study sought to be a part of that effort.

The first chapter of the dissertation presented an introduction and outline of the paper. The second chapter dealt with my personal and theological foundation for ministry. I shared parts of my personal experience, personal profile, temperament indicators, and spiritual gifts in order to illustrate how God has led me on my spiritual journey, and shaped me and my theology. A genuine relationship with God is of crucial importance for every person who wants to find God's purpose in life.

Therefore, it is important to realize that our picture of God influences every aspect in life. This is why my theological basis for ministry and for this paper investigated the biblical images of God in order to deepen an understanding of God and his dealing with people.

The third chapter dealt with the factors that influence our understanding of the world, God, and ourselves. An historical, cultural and religious analysis of Croatian society was undertaken to set the context for this study. In addition, a survey was conducted among Adventists in Croatia in order to find out the picture Adventist members have of God. Approximately 10 percent of the Croatian Adventist Church participated in the survey. Seven additional in-depth interviews were conducted, and observations were made of Adventist worship and lifestyle. The findings were analyzed and presented in chapter 3.

The majority of the members picture God as a parent. They believe that they have been forgiven but half are unsure about their salvation, which reflect a certain theological contradiction and perhaps a confused picture of God. Some sense that the church fails to reflect the love of God, since lack of love in the church was one of the findings of the survey.

The fourth chapter developed a strategy for revitalization of the Adventist Church through developing a more biblical picture of God based upon the biblical findings and in response to the survey. As part of the strategy, a seminar of eight sessions, has been prepared and presented in four pilot project churches. The implementation strategy was presented in a logframe matrix with a clear overall goal, purpose, and activities listed with a precise action plan and timetable.

Partial Project Implementation

This project has been implemented in four pilot project churches in the Croatian Conference. It began in September 2004 and will require a four-year cycle in order to help members develop a better understanding of God and hopefully bring revitalization to those churches. Revitalization should be indicated by social,¹ spiritual,² and numerical growth.³

The implementation of this project began with the following seven steps:

Step one: Four pastors were chosen to be trained to become advocates and trainers to implement this project in their local churches (see table 2).

Table 5. Facts About Pastors of Four Pilot Project Churches.

Name	Age	Years of Service
I. D.	57	34
V. K.	62	40
M. D.	30	4
D. C.	63	34

Step two: In consultation with the pastors, the four pilot project churches were chosen for the implementation of the strategy (see table 3).

¹Social growth in a church is evidenced by being more open towards society and becoming more involved in various church programs. Social growth means to be more involved in community activities and building relationships with people in the community.

²Spiritual growth is evidenced by the development of closer, deeper, and more mature relationships with God and with others. Sharing the Gospel with friends is also evidence of spiritual growth.

³Baptism is the evidence of numerical growth. Some members and pastors do not like to discuss numbers, but they are a tangible measurement of church growth. Numbers represent real people.

Table 6. Facts About the Four Pilot Project Churches.

Church	City Population	Membership	Average Age
Varazdin	45,000	101	48
Virovitica	20,000	103	50
Spisic Bukovica	1,800	40	48
Zlata Bistrica	2,800	28	40

Step three: The concept for the revitalization of the four churches was presented to the four church boards. A discussion followed the presentation.

Step four: Each church board selected a team to conduct the church survey consisting of forty questions. The total number of members in all four churches was 270 of whom 146 participated in the survey. The survey results were analyzed and included in seminar presentations for the individual churches.

The results of the survey will serve as a baseline for evaluation during and at the end of the projects. As table 4 shows, there is no drastic difference between the churches although they clearly show some differences. For instance, both rural churches are more open in their attitude towards women and certain lifestyle issues than the urban ones.

Step five: Between October and December 2004, the concept of church revitalization was presented to each church during Sabbath School. The project was adopted by each church at this stage.

Step six: The seminars (see appendix C for seminar outlines) were conducted in the churches between December 2004 and February 2005 (see table 4 for details). The majority of the members attending the seminars showed a high level of interest.

Table 7. Comparative Sample of Positive Questionnaire Responses

Statements answered positively	Varazdin	Virovitica	Bistrica	Bukovica	Croatia
In church the most important thing is relationships	50%	66%	76%	87%	58%
I consider myself a happy person	92%	90%	90%	86%	82%
Vegetarianism relates to spirituality	47%	24%	19%	8%	26%
Wearing jewelry shows a lack of spirituality	38%	46%	6%	19%	36%
It is not acceptable to preach without a suit and tie	48%	54%	72%	35%	57%
Women should be allowed to minister just as men do	62%	69%	100%	80%	72%
Our picture of God constantly changes	50%	53%	44%	67%	67%
The main obstacle to the church's mission is a lack of love	33%	29%	12%	35%	28%
As I get older my understanding of God changes	65%	42%	67%	58%	67%
I take every opportunity to share my faith	71%	40%	39%	50%	37%

Step seven: the monitoring and evaluation teams were set up for the purpose of monitoring attendance, preparing simple questionnaires, and interviewing members to evaluate the effectiveness of the seminars.

Table 8. Saturday Seminars Timetable and Attendance

Church	Dates	Attendance	
		Morning	Afternoon
Varazdin	15 January 2005	75	53
	22 January 2005	72	55
Virovitica	17 December 2005	87	60
	8 January 2005	80	45
Zlata Bistrica	5 February 2005	26	14
	12 February 2005	15	12
Spisic Bukovica	2 December 2005	35	28
	8 January 2005	32	28

Problems Encountered

1. It was not easy to find pastors willing to make a long-term commitment to this project. The attitude of pastors who were approached seemed to indicate a fear of possible failure and the potential for guilt if they did not succeed. The fear of possible failure made it equally difficult to find churches willing to adopt the project. Many churches prefer a short-term approach that produces quick baptisms, to an unknown approach perceived to have many risks and requiring a long-term commitment. It was a challenge to maintain the motivation level of the members for an extended time. Consequently, the burden of planning, promoting, and presentation of programs fell on the shoulders of a few people who readily tended to become emotionally exhausted and in some cases discouraged. Most of the members tended to regard the implementation of the project as a campaign rather than as an ongoing process.

2. Each church encountered the problem with some members who seemed committed to resisting and criticizing every hint of change. Generally, these members

seek to maintain the status quo and regard themselves as the door keepers or protectors of the church.

3. A major problem encountered was the sudden transfer of two pastors from the four pilot project churches to other locations. This had the potential to jeopardize the revitalization process in those two churches.

Lessons Learned

The major lessons learned from this activity are listed below and should be considered in any future project:

1. To my surprise and contrary to my expectations, the rural churches were not less open to change than the urban churches in the study. It was more a generational issue than a rural versus urban issue.
2. Seminar attendance increased significantly (up to 50 percent) if the event took place on Saturday alone rather than extending it over the entire weekend.
3. Project directors should be flexible enough to adjust plans if circumstances change or if the original plan proves to be unrealistic or inadequate.
4. Sufficient time should be allowed for discussion and interaction as part of the program. If more time is required than originally planned, adjustments should be made since discussing contributes to the member's sense of ownership of the project.
5. Expect resistance from at least a small minority of members.
6. Teach until members grasp the spiritual basis for the suggested changes, which are the basis for revitalizing and transforming the church. Build and nurture the team. Encourage, affirm, and celebrate together. Sell the concept to a core group of credible, respected supporters before launching the project. Make your team of pastors

shareholders in the project. Their ownership will compel them to remain as a driving forces. Communicate with the pastors you are working with; with the team leaders and their teams; and with the whole church community.

Seven months into the implementation of the project there are some indicators of positive change though it is too early to make conclusions about the success of the project. However, things have started to happen, members have been encouraged by the seminar, and most of those who attended think they have benefited from the seminars as indicated by the results of a small questionnaire. As table 5 indicates, the majority of the members have expressed positive thoughts about the benefits of the seminar.

Table 9. Responses to True and False Questions.

	Questionnaire	T	F
1.	The seminar has helped me to develop more biblical picture of God	79	4
2.	The seminar has helped me to better understand the essence of my faith	77	5
3.	The seminar has helped me to be more careful and more tolerant in my judgment of other people	77	6
4.	The seminar has helped me to better understand my need for a deeper personal relationship with Christ	81	3
5.	The seminar has helped me to better understand the difference between essence of my the faith and the meaning of forms and rituals	79	3
6.	The seminar has helped me to realize a greater need for personal study of the Bible and prayer	78	5
7.	The seminar has encouraged me to take more time for sharing my faith with others	73	10
8.	The seminar has strengthened my assurance of salvation and made me feel a happier person in my faith	75	6
9.	The seminar has helped me better understand diversity within the church	77	5
10.	The seminar has encouraged me to participate more in church activities according to my natural and spiritual gifts	78	5

Recommendations

There is a need for further study on the image of God among other faiths such as, the Catholics, Serbian Orthodox and other major Protestant churches to compare the findings with the Adventists in Croatia.

I recommend that the Croatian Conference provide an opportunity for this seminar on the image of God to be shared with its pastors in order to challenge them to reexamine their own picture of God and to sell them on the idea of using this approach to revitalize the churches in Croatia.

I recommend that the Croatian Conference provide financial support for the adaptation, translation, and production in popular booklet form of the relevant material from this dissertation as a resource to equip pastors so that they can conduct the seminars.

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRES

Questionnaire One

Survey

This questionnaire is part of research about the image of God among Adventists in Croatia, how it reflects in their everyday life, worship, their relationship with others and the mission of the church.

This questionnaire contains 70 questions. Several possible answers/options are available for each question. Choose ONE of the offered answers by either ticking or circling the option which is closest to your understanding or attitude.

This questionnaire is anonymous and will be treated with utmost confidentiality. Circle the relevant letter/number.

About yourself:

a) Male b) Female

Your age group:

a) under 15 b) 16-30 c) 31-50 d) over 51

How long have you been a Seventh-day Adventist: _____

Define your religious background prior to becoming a member of the SDA Church:

a) Adventist family b) Catholic c) Orthodox d) Muslim e) atheist f) other

Education:

a) primary school b) secondary school c) university d) post graduate

Define your living environment of the past 15 years:

a) urban b) rural

Please read the questions carefully and answer them honestly.

1. Do you agree with the statement: God is interested in me?
a) *yes* b) *no* c) *perhaps* d) *I do not know*
2. Thinking about God makes me feel:
a) *comfortable* b) *uneasy* c) *scared* d) *indifferent/undefined*
3. Do you believe that God is guiding you in your life?
a) *yes* b) *perhaps* c) *I don't know* d) *no*
4. Do you agree with the statement: God is in control of world history.
a) *yes* b) *perhaps* c) *I do not know* d) *no*
5. Do you agree with the statement that God knows you personally and by name?
a) *yes* b) *perhaps* c) *I don't know* d) *no*
6. Do you believe that God has forgiven all your sins?
a) *yes* b) *perhaps* c) *I don't know* d) *no*
7. Our relationship with God is best reflected by:
a) *regular church attendance* b) *our treatment of other people*
c) *our behavior when nobody sees us* d) *how much we pray*
8. According to my understanding God is:
a) *energy* b) *a person* c) *a supernatural being* d) *I don't know*
9. Of the images of God that we find in the Bible, which most relates to your understanding?
a) *king* b) *judge* c) *Father and Brother* d) *friend* e) *Lord*
f) *all of the previously mentioned* c) *none of the previously mentioned*
10. In your opinion which image best reflects God's nature?
a) *a husband* b) *a wife* c) *a parent* d) *all of those*
11. God is present in us and in all around us:
a) *yes* b) *no* c) *I don't have an opinion*
12. Salvation is attained:
a) *exclusively as a gift of God's grace* b) *as merit for keeping the Ten Commandments*
c) *by a combined effort of God and Man* d) *I don't know*
13. God loves me no matter what I do:
a) *yes* b) *no* c) *I don't know*
14. Do you agree with the statement: There is nothing I can do to earn salvation.
a) *yes* b) *no* c) *I don't know*
15. I am witnessing evidence of God's work in the world on a daily basis:
a) *yes* b) *no* c) *I don't know*

16. Do you agree with the statement: The older I get, my understanding of God gradually changes.
a) yes b) no c) I don't know
17. What type of worship style do you most prefer?
*a) always in the same style and order b) always different
 c) slight changes d) I don't have an opinion*
18. The music that is played in church is acceptable if:
*a) it makes me feel good b) it is slow in rhythm
 c) it is traditional d) I don't know*
19. The Bible is clear about the kind of music that is most acceptable to God?
a) yes b) perhaps c) I don't know d) no
20. In your opinion which instruments are acceptable to be played in church?
a) any instrument b) organ and piano only c) none d) I don't know
21. The most important element in worship is:
*a) there is a good sermon b) there is good music
 c) when people participate d) hearts are filled with joy and praise*
22. What form of worship would be biblically correct?
*a) depends on the culture b) the type we find in the Bible
 c) any type of God-centered worship d) I don't know*
23. When it comes to sermons, which topic is your favorite?
*a) God's law c) Christian values and standards
 d) the prophecies d) I do not have any*
24. In church, the most important thing for me is:
*a) order b) the program
 c) relationship among church members d) I don't know*
25. Do you agree with the statement: All forms of chit-chat in Church should be disallowed.
a) yes b) no c) only about spiritual matters d) I do not know
26. In your opinion is it acceptable for ladies wearing trousers to take part in church services?
a) yes b) no c) I don't know
27. Do you agree with the statement: It is not acceptable to preach in church without a suit and a tie?
a) yes b) no c) I don't know
28. God may be worshiped in a number of different ways:
a) yes b) no c) I don't know

29. Should taxes and all payments the state requires be paid without exception?
a) yes b) no c) *I don't know*
30. Do you like most people?
a) yes b) no c) *it depends*
31. Do you believe that God answers your prayers?
a) yes b) no c) *I don't know* d) *sometimes*
32. Do you consider it unacceptable and unspiritual to wear jewelry, color your hair etc., for a Christian?
a) yes b) no c) *I don't know*
33. If you happened to come across a large sum of money, would you look for the owner and return the money?
a) yes b) no c) *I don't know*
34. Would you report illegal workers to the authorities?
a) yes b) no c) *I don't know*
35. Do you consider a vegetarian diet to be related to the spirituality of an individual?
a) yes b) no c) *I don't know*
36. Do you consider yourself to be a happy and satisfied person?
a) yes b) no c) *more inclined to say no than yes*
d) *more inclined to say yes than no*
37. Would you be willing to donate your organs after your death?
a) yes b) no c) *I don't know*
38. Do you consider abortion to be acceptable in certain cases?
a) yes b) no c) *I don't know*
39. Do you consider homosexual relations and marriage to be biblically acceptable?
a) yes b) no c) *I don't know*
40. If your life were to end today, would you be sure of your salvation?
a) yes b) no c) *I don't know*
41. When it comes to diet, I am:
a) *vegetarian* b) *vegan* c) *neither*
42. Do you consider being a true follower of Christ to be a difficult task?
a) yes b) no c) *I don't know*
43. Do you consider your life to be filled with purpose and meaning?
a) *definitely yes* b) *definitely no* c) *partially yes* d) *partially no*

44. How satisfied are you with relationships among church members?
Mark 1 to 5. 1 2 3 4 5
 (Mark one of the numbers on the scale from 1 to 5, one is lowest and 5 is highest.)
45. Do Adventists show enough tolerance and understanding towards other people and their opinions?
a) yes b) no c) I don't know
46. In your opinion, do Adventists live according to their beliefs and doctrine?
Mark 1 to 5. 1 2 3 4 5
47. Do you live in accordance with the doctrine of the Adventist Church?
Mark 1 to 5. 1 2 3 4 5
48. Are you able to forgive those who have hurt you deeply and caused you grief?
a) yes b) no c) I would find it very difficult
49. Do you give to the poor and beggars in the street?
a) yes b) no c) sometimes
50. Do you help persons who are physically or mentally handicapped?
a) always b) never c) sometimes
51. If you have the opportunity do you take part in humanitarian activities?
a) always b) never c) sometimes
52. Do you lend money to others?
a) always b) never c) sometimes
53. Women should be allowed to carry out church duties just as men do.
a) I agree b) I disagree c) I don't know, I am unsure
54. Do you find time for your friends?
a) yes b) no c) very rarely
55. Do you trust people, and do you give them a second chance?
a) yes b) no
56. I feel God's presence in my relationships with other people.
a) yes b) no c) I don't know
57. Do you take the opportunity to share your faith with those around you?
a) always b) never c) sometimes
58. Should we have good relations and cooperate with members of other religious groups?
a) yes b) no c) I don't know

59. Do you agree with the statement: only Adventists will be saved?
a) yes b) *I do not know* c) no
60. Would you go into a café bar with a friend or acquaintance in order to socialize or to negotiate business?
a) yes b) no c) *I don't know*
61. The thought of witnessing about my faith:
a) *fills me with joy and excitement* b) *worries me* c) *makes me feel indifferent*
62. In my everyday life I spontaneously witness to others about my faith.
a) *always* b) *sometimes* c) *never*
63. Do you think Adventists are open enough when it comes to changes within Church?
a) yes b) no c) *I don't know*
64. Do you regularly socialize with close friends outside the Church?
a) yes b) no
65. Is Adventist preaching relevant to this generation?
generation?
a) yes b) no c) *I don't know*
66. Should the church use contemporary methods, style, and themes in its preaching?
time with its methods, style and themes?
a) yes b) no c) *I don't know*
67. Has your Christian witness ever resulted in someone being baptized?
a) yes b) no
68. Is your local church a place to you would gladly invite friends or relatives or neighbor?
a) yes b) no
69. In your opinion which is the biggest obstacle undermining the mission of the Adventist Church today?
a) *formalism* b) *hypocrisy* c) *lack of resources* d) *lack of love* e) *lowering of the standards of the church* f) *inactivity*
70. Are you involved in social activities in your environment or community?
a) *occasionally* b) *very rarely* c) *never*

Questionnaire Two

Post Seminar Survey

This questionnaire is a part of the implementation strategy of this paper. It is conducted immediately after the seminar on Revitalization of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Croatia through a deeper understanding of God. The questionnaire contains ten Yes /No questions. The participants were asked to indicate whether or not the seminar helped them in various areas of Christian life.

This questionnaire is anonymous.

The name of the local church where you are a member:

Gender: M F

Age group: a) 15-30, b) 31-50, c) 51 plus

1. The seminar has helped me to make my picture of God deeper and more biblical:
T F
2. The seminar has helped me to better understand the essence of my faith: *T F*
3. The seminar has helped me to better my need for a deeper personal relationship with Christ: *T F*
4. The seminar has helped me to better understand the difference between the essence of my faith and the meaning of forms and rituals: *T F*
5. The seminar has helped me to realize my greater need for personal study of the Bible and prayer: *T F*
6. The seminar has encouraged me to take more time for sharing my faith with others:
T F
7. The seminar has strengthened my assurance of salvation and made me feel happier in my faith: *T F*
8. The seminar has helped me to be more careful and more tolerant in my judgment of other people: *T F*
9. The seminar has helped me better understand diversity within the church: *T F*

10. The seminar has encouraged me to participate more in church activities according to my natural and spiritual gifts: *T F*

APPENDIX B

SEMINAR

Timetable for the seminar

Option A: One full weekend from Friday to Sunday

Friday

18:00 singing and praying
18:15 opening of the seminar
18:30 sermon: *Do we know the God we serve?*
19:00 seminar first session
20:00 seminar second session
21:00 closing

Saturday morning

09:30 singing and praying
09:45 sermon: *God values relationships*
10:15 seminar third session
11:15 seminar session four

Saturday afternoon

16:00 Sermon: *Experiencing God*
16:30 seminar session five
17:25 seminar session six
17:30 closing

Sunday morning

10:00 singing and praying
10:15 sermon: *What is genuine Christianity all about?*
10:45 seminar session seven
11:30 workshops (30 min)
12:00 Question time
12:45 Lunch

Sunday afternoon

13:30 singing
13:45 sermon: *On the waves of the Holy Spirit*
14:15 session eight
15:15 closing

Option B: Two weekends

First weekend**Saturday morning**

09:30 singing and praying

09:45 opening of the seminar
 10:00 sermon: *Do we know God we serve?*
 10:15 seminar first session
 11:00 seminar second session
 12:00 workshops (30 min)
 12:30 closing
 12:45 potluck

Saturday afternoon

14:30 singing and praying
 14:45 sermon: *God values relationships*
 15:15 seminar third session
 16:00 workshops (30 min)
 16:30 seminar session four
 17:15 conclusion

Second weekend

Saturday morning

09:30 singing and praying
 09:45 sermon: *Experiencing God*
 10:15 seminar five
 11:15 workshops (30 min)
 11:45 seminar session six
 12:30 closing
 12:45 potluck

Saturday afternoon

14:30 singing and praying
 14:45 sermon: *What is genuine Christianity all about?*
 15:15 seminar session seven
 16:00 workshops (30 min)
 16:30 seminar session eight
 17:15 conclusion: *On the waves of the Holy Spirit*

Seminar Outlines

1. Introduction of the seminar and local church analysis presented.
2. Human need and search for God.
3. Biblical image of God as foundation for our faith and ministry.
4. Factors that influence the formation of our picture of God.
5. Right picture of God right picture of ourselves – we are created in the image of God.
6. Right picture of God is the basis for genuine Christianity. Our mission, and survey results among the Adventists in Croatia.
7. Implementation strategy presented.
8. Summary and question and answer time.

Seminar 1. Introduction of the seminar and local church analysis presented.

- a) Explain the purpose and the activities of the seminar
- b) Emphasize the importance of attendance at the seminar
- c) Encourage members to face the challenges of the new ideas and approaches
- d) Power point presentation of the local church analysis including; male/female ratio, baptisms in the last ten years, church growth, and survey results from forty questions
- e) Present four major theses of the seminar; everyone has a different understanding of God, our picture of God constantly changes, our picture of God influences our personal life and values, and our picture of God influences our worship style and our mission

Seminar 2. Human need and search for God. Relevance of understanding the role of the image of God. Various religions have diverse pictures of God.

- a) Muslims
- b) Mormons
- c) New Age
- d) Christian Scientists
- e) Hindu
- f) Buddhists
- g) Deists
- h) Ways of knowing God
- i) Reality of knowing God
- j) Sin Has distorted our image of God
- k) Human search for God
- l) Christian understanding of God

Seminar 3. Biblical image of God as foundation for our faith and ministry.

- a) The names of God in the Bible
- b) Names of God in the Old Testament
- c) Names of God in the New Testament
- d) Jesus claims to be of Divine origin
- e) Titles of the Holy Spirit
- f) Images of God in the Bible
- g) Images of God in the Old Testament
- h) Images of God in the New Testament
- i) A personality of God
- j) Anthropomorphist image of God
- k) Jesus the perfect image of God
- l) Forms rituals and meanings
- m) History of Image
- n) Psychology of image

- o) Social implications of image
- p) Spirituality of image
- q) God values relationships the most
- r) Impact of the images of God on spiritual growth

Seminar 4. Factors that influence the formation of the Adventist picture of God.

- a) Filters that influence our understanding of the Bible
- b) Education
- c) Heredity
- d) Political and social environment
- e) Scripture
- f) E. G. White books
- g) Adriatic Union College
- h) Pastors
- i) Survey results of the ten percent of the Adventists in Croatia on the image of God (questionnaire 70 questions, Power Point Presentation) Part one.
- j) Interviews – major points from seven interviews with Adventists

Seminar 5. Right picture of God right picture of ourselves – we are created in the image of God.

- a) We are created in the image Of God
- b) Right image of God right image of ourselves
- c) Survey results among the Adventists in Croatia, Part two
- d) Workshop – Discussion on the question “What have we learned about God from the various images of God?”

Seminar 6. Right picture of God is the basis for genuine Christianity. Our mission, and survey results among the Adventists in Croatia.

- a) Biblical picture of God is diverse; none of the images of God gives us a full picture of God.
- b) Better, fuller and deeper understanding of God leads to genuine Christianity
- c) Survey results Part three – how our understanding of God affects our mission

Seminar 7. Implementation strategy presented

- a) Present the action plan on the screen – Logframe and Gant chart
- b) Present the teams – planning team, evaluation team and the role of the members in the ongoing project

Seminar 8. Summary and question and answer time

- a) “Tree of life” – the seminar summary
- b) Question and answer time about seminar topics
- c) Conclusion – Spiritual thought
- d) Questionnaire – ten T and F questions on how much the seminar helped those who attended

APPENDIX C

SERMONS

Sermon Outlines

1. Do we know the God we serve
2. God values relationships
3. Experiencing God
4. Love God and hate your neighbor or ...
5. On the waves of the Holy Spirit

Sermon One

Title: *Do we know the God we serve?*

Bible text: 1 John 4:7, 8;

“Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love” (John 14: 5-9). “If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him”. Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us”. Jesus answered: “Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?”

John undoubtedly connects the quality of our love towards God with the quality of our knowledge of him. Can we love him if we do not know him? Can we love someone whom we do not know at all? Of course not!

Illustration: I ask people if they love my great-grandpa and great-grandma. Nobody does. Why? It is because nobody knows them so they have not developed either good or bad feelings towards them. When I asked who loved Mother Teresa or Ellen White people responded positively because they have gradually gotten to know them and even developed certain relationships by reading their books and hearing about them. Therefore, the better we know someone the more we will develop a certain relationship with them.

Acts 9:3-5; “As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?’ ‘Who are you, Lord?’ Saul asked, ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,’ he replied.”

When the apostle Paul met Jesus and got to know him he turned from being his enemy to becoming his follower who loved him so much that he surrendered and dedicated his life to him.

Acts 17--For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you. "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands.

The apostle Paul knew, from his personal experience, that it was not possible for the Greeks to love God if they did not know him. This is why he wanted to help them to get to know him.

Do we know the God we serve or is he in reality still unknown to us despite the doctrines we know and religion we belong to?

Moses, Exodus 3:10-14 "So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt." But Moses said to God, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" And God said, "I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain." Moses said to God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?" God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

In order to present himself to the Israelites God told Moses who he was. In His name is described a part of his character. By doing that God told the Israelites the difference between himself and the Egyptian gods. He promised to deliver them from Egyptian slavery and offer them a better future. With God's mighty hand in a miraculous way he led them out of Egypt. In Egypt they were without identity, freedom, future and hope. By choosing the true God they became his precious treasure for whom he showed such great love.

Isaiah 43:1-14 But now, this is what the LORD says—he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior; I give Egypt for your ransom, Cush and Seba in your stead. Since you are precious and honored in my sight, and because I love you, I will give men in exchange for you, and people in exchange for your life. Do not be afraid, for I am with you."

Here God says that he created us, delivered us from the slavery of sin and he has redeemed us and offered us a bright future and hope in our lives (Jeremiah 29:11).

Those who know him better love him more.

Sermon Two

Title: God values relationships

Text: Romans 5:11

“So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God—all because of what our Lord Jesus Christ has done for us in making us friends of God.”

The main theme of the Bible is the relationship between God and man and a man to another man. If relationships are broken gradually everything in life loses its meaning. This is why God has been doing everything, no matter how much it may cost, to restore relationship with humanity. In fact full restoration of the relationship is actually an act of liberation and salvation.

God searches for Adam and Eve because relationships matter to him.

Bible text: Genesis 3:8-10 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"

Equally before and after sin God would visit Adam and Eve to be in relationship with them. When they hid from him he searched for them. By doing so he showed that relationships really mattered to him though they broke his commandment.

Abraham a friend of God

Genesis 17:1-7 “When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, “I am God Almighty; walk before me and be blameless. I will confirm my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers.” Abram fell facedown, and God said to him, “As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you.”

Abraham's friendship with God had made him grow spiritually, his faith mature and his spiritual journey purposeful.

The Ten Commandments are a protecting relationship.

Exodus 20:2-17 the basic point of the Ten Commandments is to protect relationships between God and men and between people. The most terrible consequence of the sin is the broken relationship first between us and God and then between us and others.

The parables about the lost ones are about the relationships. Son, sheep and coin show how much God is interested in us. These parables show that God is prepared to do everything that is needed in order to find the lost. The Gospel is called Good News because the center of it is full restoration of the broken relationships with men through Jesus Christ. Yes, relationship with us matters to God because he is a God of relationships.

Benefits from our relationship with God:

- a. personal spiritual growth
- b. we are shaped by his power
- c. we are becoming more relationally oriented
- d. our preaching becomes influenced by our relationship with him

Sermon Three

Title: Experiencing God

Often people ask questions about whether we can see God, hear or touch him, and communicate with him or is it something impossible? The Bible tells us that it is possible but only when and in the way God chooses for it to happen. Even then it is very personal and subjective. Yet it is natural for men to search for God.

Bible text: James 4:8 "Draw close to God and God will draw close to you."

We often feel lonely and separated from God. Mostly because we regard him as a distant God who is too busy with doing other more important business rather than wasting time with this insignificant creature called man. The good news is that this is not the case. We matter to God much more than we could imagine.

The prophet Isaiah met God and this encounter influenced his life and his ministry.

Isaiah 6:1-8

It is dangerous to try to live independently from God. It means to try to live in the shadow of death.

Develop close relationships with God.

1 Cor 1: 9 "God will surely do this for you, for he always does just what he says, and he is the one who invited you into this wonderful friendship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." The Greek text uses the word *koinonia* meaning relationship, fellowship, communion, joint participation etc. Our relationship with God and with friends is a two-way street. We are called to participate in this relationship. The quality of our relationship with God will determine the quality of our relationships with other people.

How to develop qualitative relationships with God?

1. Spend time with God on a daily basis.
 - a. personal prayer—talk with God
 - b. meditate on his word—studying the Bible John 5:39
2. Attend corporate worship and praise him through singing, studying the Bible, and sharing personal experiences.
3. Keep in touch with people—socialize with them and share what God has done or you.
4. Remain in touch with nature—enjoy the beauty and wonders of God's creation.

Try to read what is written on every flower, leaf and drop of morning dew.

Psalms 8; Gen 1-2 chapters

Benefits from experiencing God

- a. cleansed
- b. we are changed
- c. we are prepared for his ministry
- d. we are used by God
- e. we become happy people who have discovered the main purpose of life

Sermon Four

What is genuine Christianity all about?

Bible text: Mathew 10:40-42

Illustration: "Do what you want, believe what you wish but leave me alone and I will leave you alone," is a slogan that prevails in the world around us.

We live at a time when people are fed up with the church and its moralizing hypocrisy. It is a time when it seems that Jesus' Gospel is too exclusive—not everyone can do it but only chosen ones, too narrow—in the sense of freedom, and too judgmental which produces in us a sense of guilt because of incompatibility with the absolute Truth.

We live in an age when people doubt everything except personal opinion and experience and when people behave in accordance with the well-known philosophy; "If something gives you pleasure it must be good and if something causes a feeling of guilt then it must not be good for you."

This is the age when the New Age spirituality promises power without God and freedom without responsibility, pleasure without morality and knowledge without truth.

This is the time when it seems everyone is selling something and we as Adventists are doing the same. We try to sell what we believe but the impression is that almost nobody is interested in what we have on offer, but at the same time we think that everyone needs it. Why is it so? What can a pastor as a preacher of the Good News and the members do in this situation? Shall we give up and put our faith on a hook or maybe we need to reexamine and reevaluate how and what we have been offering to the world—to our neighbors and friends. Do we understand the "Present Truth?"

In 1 Pet 3:15 Peter said "be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you." Be ready to give an answer about your faith if someone asks you Peter says. What if no one asks you about your belief as is the case today?

I see here two potential problems. First, that we do not have someone to talk to about our faith because we have lost touch with the world around us. We have been living in our small Adventist ghettos (churches) where we satisfy our own needs expecting people come to us and then we will give them what we think they need.

Second, we have no relevant message for secular people or we do not present our hope, Truth, God and Jesus in a way that people will understand and accept. Preaching is often dry without the power of the Holy Spirit. We are probably too theoretical and argumentative but less practical and genuine.

The apostle James said: Dear brothers and sisters, what's the use of saying you have faith if you don't prove it by your actions? That kind of faith can't save anyone. Suppose you see a brother or sister who needs food or clothing, and you say, "Well, good-bye and God bless you; stay warm and eat well"—but then you don't give that person any food or clothing. What good does that do? So you see, it isn't enough just to have faith. Faith that doesn't show itself by good deeds is no faith at all—it is dead and useless.

Now someone may argue, "Some people have faith; others have good deeds." I say, "I can't see your faith if you don't have good deeds, but I will show you my faith through my good deeds" (James 2:14-17).

James is hitting the heart of the matter. Show genuine Christianity. What he is saying is brethren be Christians by doing Christianity rather than preaching it. Faith without deeds is dead so have a living faith.

What is the difference between a living faith and a dead faith?

Living faith:

- a. sees the needs of the people
- b. hears the cry of those in trouble
- c. feels someone's pain
- d. is ready to share what it has with those who do not have it

Dead faith is legalistic faith that has a structure but has no spirit therefore it has no value before God. Why? Because:

- a. it does not see the needs of the people
- b. it does not hear a cry of those in trouble
- c. it does not feel someone's pain
- d. it can not satisfy people's most important needs

It is becoming clearer that people today do not search directly for truth but for help. Therefore, by satisfying their personal needs we will have an opportunity to offer them the Gospel in its full meaning. Only those who live their faith will have credibility to preach and will be heard by those who are seekers of genuine Christianity. We have to offer the holistic Gospel which includes human, social, material, and spiritual fulfillment. This is exactly what Jesus did. He fed them, healed them, and gave them forgiveness and peace. None will reject that kind of approach in our ministry to the world. The world is hungry for that kind of genuine religion.

Sermon Five

On the waves of the Holy Spirit

Bible text: John 15:5; Acts 1:8

Illustration: Surfing is the art of riding waves. God makes the waves and surfers just ride on them. No surfer tries to create waves. There is no class that teaches how to build waves. But surf schools teach how to recognize the waves, how to catch them and ride on them as long as possible. Therefore we do not have to learn how to make waves but to recognize how God is working in the world and join him in the endeavor (Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 13).

We often pray "Lord, bless what I am doing" instead of saying "Lord, help me to do what you are blessing" (Warren, 15).

This simple illustration teaches us several very important lessons.

First, we have to get involved in God's plan of salvation. Second, we have to realize that we are not alone in that work. We are collaborators with God (1 Cor 3:5-7). "Each of us did the work the Lord gave us. My job was to plant the seed in your hearts, and Apollos watered it, but it was God, not we, who made it grow."

Second, we are collaborators with God and we should never forget it. We are too often concerned about the work we are supposed to do. We rely too much and too often on ourselves instead of on God. Why not give him an opportunity to show his mighty power in our life and in our church. Phil 4:13 "For I can do everything with the help of Christ who gives me the strength I need."

Remember the picture of the “tree of life” we talked about previously. The analogy seems obvious. The roots symbolize our understanding of God as a source of our faith and everything we are. The trunk represents our close relationship with God that comes from the roots of God’s love. This relationship is the most important connection with God the source of everything we need. Then from that relationship grow mighty branches with beautiful leaves and delicious fruit. The branches represent the power that comes into our lives from the relationship with God. The branches can be identified as: our passion for spreading the Gospel; core values; our need for worshiping God; and personal spirituality. The fruits of this tree are genuine Christianity with qualities, love in action, experiential worship, strong faith and assurance of salvation.

Third, we have to learn to work in teams. We have different gifts and talents, strengths and weaknesses. We need each other, people need us, and God needs us. Above all we need God.

Four, we need the power of the Holy Spirit to change us, to move us and to use us (Act 1:8).

Five, God is the one who constantly builds the waves of the Holy Spirit and we have to learn how to recognize them, meet them and let them to carry us on our spiritual journey and our mission to the world. We have to learn that the more we become dependent on the Holy Spirit the less we will rely on ourselves. This will then bear spiritual fruit that God expects from us.

APPENDIX D

WORKSHOPS

How to create meaningful and experiential worship

One of the most important elements of Christian spiritual life is worship of the true God in the way he wants us to worship and which we feel is the best for us to express our gratitude and honor to Him. The way we worship God shows what we believe about Him and how we regard Him in our life. This is why is so important to pay attention to this topic. This seminar of three lectures and two workshops we will cover the following topics: what worship is all about; that God is a God of diversity; and modeling different worship styles.

The **first** lecture examines the concept of worship. We will look at the biblical principles of worship and see how they can be applied today in our culture. The Bible tells us that not any kind of worship is acceptable to God. There must be certain criteria that will measure the quality of it. It can be true or false worship. Abel and Cain are symbols of true and false worship (Gen 4:3-5). Jesus encounter with the women at the well and her question to Him regarding the right place to worship and his answer was that it is not the place or time that makes worship acceptable to God but that the “true worshiper will worship the Father in spirit and truth for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks” (John 4:19-24). Yet another example of true worship is found in the parable of the two worshipers who prayed in a synagogue a Pharisee and a tax collector (Luke 18:10-14).

The personal way of worshipping God is when I worship in the way, time and place I feel is the most appropriate for me. This is my personal moment with God alone.

The corporate way of worshipping God is when we gather together with other people before God to worship Him.

Each of these ways has its own advantages and values therefore it is not a question of either or, but both and. Most important is the state of our heart as Rick Warren stated, “The best style of worship is the one that most authentically represents your love for God.”¹

¹Rick Warren, *Purpose Driven Church*, 102.

The second lecture titled “God is God of Diversity” deals with God’s approach towards us and everything he created. Nature and the whole of creation show God’s design, variety and diversity. In fact, there are no two absolutely identical things in the world. There are no two same persons either. Accordingly it is logical to conclude that this is the same attitude God expects from us in worshipping Him.¹ Many people, especially younger people and some from the middle-aged generation cry for changes in the worship of the Adventist churches in Croatia. Inherited old-fashioned formal traditional worship neither attracts great numbers of people nor makes worship meaningful to them. There is an urgent need for worship renewal. Formalism in worship kills the Spirit and minimizes experience.

Very soon something must be done before we loose significant number of people because they do not see, in obsolete worship, any purpose. Action must be taken to enable meaningful and spirit-filled worship in our churches, rather than perpetuating obsolete forms of worship which do not transform people spiritually.

The third lecture will explore possible models for different worship styles in Croatia taking into account the cultural context, needs of the people and the type of the particular church environment. We will look at the possibility of organizing alternative worship experiences.. This should offer not only variety but new quality in worship. The plan is to reshape and reorganize worship style in each of the four case study churches respecting their sources, needs and cultural context to make their worship vibrant, experiential and more meaningful. This will contribute to creating more spiritual and attractive place to worship God.

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¹See chapter two of this paper section on worship.

APPENDIX E

RAW DATA

Survey Results

Tables 1-7 (pages 182-188) consist of seventy questions and answers given to Adventists in Croatia. Ten percent of the members surveyed responded.

Picture of God Among Adventists in Croatia

Table 1. Questions 1-9

	Questions	Answers	All	P	Y	A	F	M	U	R	EDU		REL BACKG			AGE GROUP		
			%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	EL	H	Adv	Cath	Athe	16-30	31-50	51+
01.	Do you agree with the statement: God is interested in me?	Yes	99.2	100	97.2	100	100	98.2	99.3	98.8	100	98.9	99.2	100	96.6	97.1	100	100
		I do not know	0.4	-	1.4	-	-	0.9	0.7	-	-	0.5	-	-	3.4	1.4	-	-
		Perhaps	0.4	-	1.4	-	-	0.9	-	1.2	-	0.6	0.8	-	-	1.4	-	-
02.	Thinking about God makes me feel:	Comfortable	90.6	100	81.7	94.2	93.4	87.0	88.7	92.9	98.2	88.5	87.4	96.9	86.2	82.6	90.6	99.0
		Uneasy	0.4	-	-	0.6	0.7	-	0.7	-	-	0.5	0.8	-	-	-	-	1.0
		Scared	2.5	-	1.4	2.9	2.2	2.8	3.3	1.2	1.8	2.7	2.5	1.0	6.9	1.4	5.2	-
		Undefined	6.5	-	16.9	2.3	3.7	10.2	7.3	5.9	-	8.3	9.3	2.1	6.9	15.9	4.2	-
03.	God is guiding you in your life:	Yes	95.5	95.8	88.6	98.3	96.3	94.4	95.3	95.3	100	94.5	92.5	99.0	96.4	88.2	96.9	99.0
		I do not know	1.2	4.2	4.3	-	0.7	1.9	1.3	1.2	-	1.1	1.7	1.0	-	4.4	1.0	-
		Perhaps	3.3	-	7.1	1.7	3.0	3.7	3.4	3.5	-	4.4	5.0	-	3.6	7.4	2.1	1.0
04.	Do you agree with the statement: God is in control of world history?	Yes	95.5	95.8	88.9	98.2	97.1	94.4	94.0	97.6	98.2	95.1	95.0	-	93.1	90.0	96.9	99.0
		I do not know	1.2	4.2	2.8	0.6	-	1.9	1.4	1.2	-	1.6	1.7	2.1	-	2.9	2.1	-
		Perhaps	3.3	-	8.3	1.2	2.9	3.7	4.6	1.2	1.8	3.3	3.3	1.0	6.9	7.1	1.0	1.0
05.	Do you agree with the statement that God knows you personally and by name?	Yes	97.2	100	95.8	97.7	99.3	94.5	97.3	96.5	100	96.2	96.7	97.9	100	95.7	97.9	98.0
		I do not know	0.8	-	1.4	0.6	0.7	0.9	0.7	1.2	-	1.1	0.8	1.0	-	1.4	1.0	2.0
		Perhaps	2.0	-	2.8	1.7	-	4.6	2.0	2.3	-	2.7	2.5	1.0	-	2.9	1.0	-
06.	Do you believe that God has forgiven all your sins?	Yes	89.0	95.8	79.2	93.0	90.5	87.9	88.0	89.4	96.4	86.8	89.9	89.7	89.7	80.0	90.6	95.9
		I do not know	5.3	-	8.3	4.1	3.6	6.5	7.3	2.4	1.8	6.0	3.4	6.2	6.9	8.6	4.2	3.1
		Perhaps	5.3	4.2	11.1	2.9	5.2	5.6	4.0	8.2	1.8	6.6	6.7	3.1	3.4	10.0	5.2	1.0
		No	0.4	-	1.4	-	0.7	-	0.7	-	-	0.6	-	1.0	-	1.4	-	-
07.	Our relationship with God is best reflected by:	Regular church attendance	8.5	-	2.9	11.2	6.4	10.9	7.0	8.2	17.8	5.0	5.7	9.6	4.2	1.6	2.4	17.3
		How we treat other people	37.9	13.6	38.2	37.7	41.3	34.7	36.7	41.2	33.3	40.3	29.5	43.4	41.7	39.1	41.0	28.4
		How we behave nobody sees	41.7	72.7	35.3	44.8	40.4	43.6	45.3	37.0	40.0	42.0	47.6	39.8	41.7	39.1	45.8	50.6
		How much we pray	5.7	9.1	7.4	4.9	7.3	4.0	5.5	6.8	6.7	5.7	8.6	2.4	8.3	6.3	7.2	3.7
		None of those	6.2	4.6	16.2	1.4	4.6	6.8	5.5	6.8	2.2	7.0	8.6	4.8	4.2	14.1	3.6	-
08.	According to my understanding, God is:	Energy	4.4	-	2.9	5.1	3.3	5.8	4.4	5.1	3.8	4.2	2.7	5.4	3.7	3.1	2.3	6.5
		Person	68.7	81.8	63.8	70.7	73.8	62.5	71.0	65.8	67.9	69.3	60.9	78.3	77.8	60	73.3	71.7
		Supernatural Being	25.6	13.6	31.9	22.9	22.1	29.8	23.2	27.8	26.4	25.3	35.5	14.1	18.5	35.4	22.1	20.7
		I do not know	1.3	4.6	1.4	1.3	0.8	1.9	1.4	1.3	1.9	1.2	0.9	2.2	-	1.5	2.3	1.1
09.	Of the images of God that we find in the Bible, which relates to your understanding the best?	King	1.8	-	-	2.5	0.8	2.9	2.2	1.3	4.0	1.2	0.9	2.2	-	-	2.2	2.2
		Father and Brother	19.4	13.0	18.2	20.0	22.0	16.3	21.6	16.7	16.0	20.6	18.8	21.1	15.4	17.5	22.2	15.4
		Friend	10.6	17.5	13.6	9.4	13.0	7.7	10.8	11.5	6.0	12.8	14.3	8.9	11.5	15.9	10.0	9.9
		Lord	1.8	4.3	-	2.5	2.4	1.0	0.7	2.6	4.0	1.3	2.7	1.1	3.8	-	3.3	2.2
		All of those	65.5	65.2	66.7	65.0	61.8	70.2	64.7	67.9	68.0	65.1	62.5	65.6	69.2	66.7	62.2	69.2
		None of those	0.9	-	1.5	0.6	-	1.9	-	-	2.0	-	0.9	1.1	-	-	-	1.1

All-All members; P-Pastors; Y-Youth; Ad-Adults; M-Male; F-Female; U-Urban; R-Rural; Edu-Education; EL-Elementary; H-High; REL BACKG-Religious Background; ADV-Adventists; CATH-Catholics; ATHE-Atheists

Picture of God Among Adventists in Croatia

Table 2. Questions 10-19

	Questions	Answers	All	P	Y	A	F	M	U	R	EDU		REL BACKG			AGE GROUP		
			%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	EL	H	Adv	Cath	Athe	16-30	31-50	51+
10	In your opinion which image best reflects God's nature?	Husband	1.7		1.4	1.8	0.8	2.8	2.0	1.2	3.8	1.1	1.7	1.0		1.5		3.2
		Wife	0.4			0.6	0.8		0.7			0.6	0.9				1.1	
		Parent	62.8	39.1	66.2	61.7	68.4	56.5	64.2	61.0	49.1	67.6	56.5	64.6	70.4	66.2	66.7	52.6
11	God is present in us and in all around us.	All of those	35.1	60.9	32.4	35.9	30.0	40.7	33.1	37.8	47.1	31.7	40.9	34.4	29.6	32.4	32.3	44.2
		Yes	89.0	66.7	83.1	91.5	91.6	86.8	89.8	87.5	98.1	87.4	79.6	91.6	96.3	79.4	86.4	92.7
		No opinion	1.7	9.5	5.6	-	1.5	0.9	1.4	2.5	-	2.3	2.7	2.1	-	7.4	1.1	-
12	Salvation is attained	No	9.3	23.8	11.3	8.5	6.9	12.3	8.8	10.0	1.9	10.3	17.7	6.3	3.7	13.2	12.5	7.3
		Gift of God	93.7	100	87.5	96.4	95.4	92.4	95.2	92.7	94.3	93.3	92.3	94.7	96.3	88.4	96.7	96.8
		God-Man effort	2.1		2.8	1.8	0.8	3.8	1.4	2.4	3.8	1.7	1.7	2.1	3.7	2.9	1.1	2.1
13	God loves me no matter what I do.	Personal merit	4.2		9.7	1.8	3.8	3.8	3.4	4.9	1.9	5.0	6.0	3.2		8.7	2.2	1.1
		Yes	97.6	100	98.6	97.1	97.8	97.3	98.0	97.6	98.2	98.3	97.5	98.0	100	98.6	98.9	96.0
		No	0.8	-	-	1.2	0.7	0.9	0.7	1.2	-	0.6	1.7	2.0	-	1.4	-	2.0
14	Do you agree with the statement: There is nothing I can do to earn salvation	I do not know	1.6	-	1.4	1.7	1.5	1.8	1.3	1.2	1.8	1.1	0.8	-	-	-	1.1	2.0
		I agree	76.7	91.3	59.1	84.0	76.5	77.6	77.7	75.9	83.3	76.0	78.8	74.7	88.5	61.8	86.0	83.5
		I disagree	18.7	8.7	31.0	13.6	19.7	16.8	17.6	20.5	13.0	19.6	16.9	21.1	7.7	29.4	10.8	15.5
15	I am witnessing evidence of God's work in the world on a daily basis.	I do not know	4.6		9.9	2.4	3.8	5.6	4.7	3.6	3.7	4.4	4.2	4.2	3.8	8.8	3.2	10.7
		Yes	92.1	87.0	81.9	96.4	93.2	90.6	92.0	91.4	96.2	91.2	89.8	95.8	88.9	84.1	92.5	97.9
		No	3.3	4.3	8.3	1.2	4.5	1.9	4.0	2.4	3.8	3.3	5.1	2.1	3.7	5.8	3.2	-
16	Do you agree with the statement: The older I get my understanding of God changes?	I agree	66.7	95.7	74.6	63.4	68.4	64.2	66.6	67.5	52.7	71.1	67.5	70.8	70.4	76.5	76.6	57.6
		I disagree	27.2	4.3	16.9	31.4	25.6	29.4	24.7	30.1	43.6	21.7	26.7	26.0	22.2	16.2	18.1	38.4
		I do not know	6.1		8.5	5.2	6.0	6.4	8.7	2.4	3.7	7.2	5.8	3.1	7.4	7.4	5.3	4.0
17	What type of the worship style do you most prefer?	I do not know	3.3	-	7.1	1.8	2.3	3.7	4.1	1.2	1.9	2.8	3.4	3.2	3.7	7.5	1.1	2.1
		Always the same	10.5	-	2.9	13.1	7.8	13.8	10.8	11.1	16.7	8.5	6.8	13.7	11.1	1.5	11.0	12.4
		Slight changes	66.1	100.0	70.0	64.9	73.6	57.8	68.2	63.0	57.3	70.1	72.6	65.3	63.0	70.1	78.0	59.8
18	The music that is played in church is acceptable if	Always different	20.1	-	20.0	20.2	16.3	24.7	16.9	24.7	24.1	18.6	17.1	17.9	22.2	20.9	9.9	25.8
		It makes me feel good	84.9	76.2	83.1	85.6	91.6	76.6	83.6	86.7	88.5	83.8	85.3	86.2	85.2	85.1	87.9	81.3
		It is slow in rhythm	1.3			1.8		2.8	1.4	1.3		1.7		2.1				3.1
19	The Bible is clear about the kind of music that is most acceptable to God?	It is traditional	9.2	19.0	4.2	11.4	7.6	11.2	10.2	8.4	11.5	8.9	7.8	10.6	11.1	4.5	9.9	14.6
		It is contemporary	4.6	4.8	12.7	1.2	0.8	9.4	4.8	3.6		5.6	6.9	1.1	3.7	10.4	2.2	1.0
		Yes	61.6	43.5	45.1	69.1	58.1	66.3	65.3	56.8	72.2	60.2	52.6	67.4	66.7	47.1	64.8	66.3
19	The Bible is clear about the kind of music that is most acceptable to God?	I do not know	25.3	30.4	28.2	23.6	31.8	17.8	23.1	27.2	22.2	25.0	21.9	27.4	25.9	26.5	24.2	25.3
		It is not clear	13.1	26.1	26.7	7.3	10.1	15.9	11.6	16.0	5.6	14.8	25.4	5.3	7.4	26.5	11.0	8.4

All-All members; P-Pastors; Y-Youth; Ad-Adults; M-Male; F-Female; U-Urban; R-Rural; Edu-Education; EL-Elementary; H-High; REL BACKG-Religious Background; ADV-Adventists; CATH-Catholics; ATHE-Atheists

Picture of God Among Adventists in Croatia

Table 3. Questions 20-28

	Questions	Answers	All	P	Y	A	F	M	U	R	EDU		REL BACKG			AGE GROUP		
			%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	EL	H	Adv	Cath	Athe	16-30	31-50	51+
20	In your opinion which instruments are acceptable to be played in church?	Any	74.3	86.4	75.7	73.4	76.5	71.4	74.1	73.7	72.9	74.6	84.5	73.0	48.0	78.8	78.2	71.6
		Organ only	12.4	4.5	5.7	15.6	11.8	13.3	10.8	17.1	16.7	11.2	6.4	19.1	12.0	16.1	11.5	17.0
		Piano only	4.4	-	2.9	5.2	4.2	4.8	3.6	15.3	6.3	4.1	2.7	2.2	12.0	-	1.1	8.0
		I do not know	8.9	9.1	15.7	5.8	7.5	10.5	11.5	3.9	4.1	10.1	6.4	5.6	28.0	15.2	9.2	3.4
21	The most important element in worship is:	Good sermon	7.6	-	4.2	9.1	8.3	6.7	8.8	5.0	5.8	8.4	2.7	10.3	4.2	4.5	6.9	9.4
		Good music	0.4	-	1.4	-	-	1.0	0.7	-	-	0.6	-	-	4.2	1.5	-	-
		When people participate	8.8	-	7.1	9.7	8.3	9.6	8.8	8.7	9.6	9.0	7.1	6.9	16.7	7.5	12.6	4.7
		When hearts are filled with joy	83.2	100.0	87.3	81.2	83.4	82.7	81.7	86.3	84.6	82.0	90.2	82.8	75.0	86.6	80.5	85.9
22	What form of worship would be biblically correct?	Depends on culture	7.5	-	8.3	7.2	6.1	9.4	9.6	3.7	7.4	7.4	5.1	9.4	7.1	8.6	8.7	4.2
		As it is in the Bible	25.5	12.5	25.0	25.9	25.8	25.5	22.4	32.9	35.2	22.0	22.0	26.0	25.0	27.1	19.6	27.4
		When God is in centre	64.9	87.5	62.5	65.7	65.9	63.2	65.3	62.2	57.4	67.8	71.2	62.5	64.3	60.0	69.6	68.4
		I do not know	2.1	-	4.2	1.2	2.2	1.9	2.7	1.2	-	2.8	1.7	2.1	3.4	4.3	2.2	-
23	When it comes to sermons, which topics is your favorite?	About God's law	3.9	-	4.4	3.8	2.4	5.7	2.2	6.3	9.6	2.3	3.5	2.2	4.0	3.0	3.4	3.3
		Christian standards	2.2	4.2	-	3.2	1.6	2.9	2.2	2.5	-	3.0	2.7	3.3	-	-	5.7	1.1
		About prophecies	6.6	-	7.2	6.3	4.9	8.7	6.4	6.3	3.8	7.7	6.2	5.5	12.0	7.5	6.9	4.3
		About relationships	87.3	95.8	88.4	86.7	91.1	82.7	89.2	84.9	86.5	87.0	87.6	89.0	84.0	89.6	83.9	91.3
24	In church, the most important thing for me is:	Order	16.1	-	7.6	20.0	12.8	20.1	10.6	22.7	40.4	8.0	13.9	21.2	-	6.3	4.8	30.2
		Program	11.1	-	12.1	10.7	10.3	12.1	12.9	9.3	12.8	9.9	8.3	7.1	20.0	10.9	9.5	9.3
		Relationships	58.5	91.3	65.1	55.3	61.5	55.6	56.8	61.3	38.3	66.0	61.1	62.4	68.0	68.8	69.0	50.0
		Doctrines	9.7	8.7	7.6	10.7	12.0	7.1	13.6	4.0	8.5	9.9	11.1	5.9	12.0	7.8	13.1	8.1
		I do not know	4.6	-	7.6	3.3	3.4	5.1	6.1	2.7	-	6.2	5.6	3.5	-	6.3	3.6	2.3
25	Do you agree with the statement: all forms of chat in Church should be disallowed?	I do not know	6.7	4.3	13.9	3.6	9.1	4.7	6.2	7.1	3.6	8.5	7.8	5.3	6.9	11.4	5.4	2.1
		I agree	19.2	-	12.5	22.2	17.4	21.5	21.4	16.5	29.1	16.9	12.1	26.6	13.8	12.9	15.2	24.2
		Except spiritual matters	31.3	4.3	13.9	38.3	30.3	32.7	25.5	38.8	45.5	26.0	23.3	36.2	24.1	14.3	27.2	41.1
		I disagree	42.8	91.4	59.7	35.9	43.2	41.1	46.9	37.6	21.8	48.6	56.0	31.9	55.2	61.4	51.1	32.6
26	In your opinion is it acceptable for ladies to take part in church service wearing trousers?	Yes	35.7	78.3	51.4	29.3	35.1	35.8	38.9	31.8	12.7	42.0	39.5	37.5	44.8	53.6	48.4	20.6
		I do not know	11.9	4.3	15.3	9.9	13.4	10.1	11.4	11.8	18.2	10.5	10.9	12.5	13.8	14.5	8.4	10.3
		No	52.4	17.4	33.3	60.8	51.5	54.1	49.7	56.4	69.1	47.5	49.6	50.0	41.4	31.9	43.2	69.1
27	Do you agree with the statement: it is not acceptable to preach in church without a suit and a tie?	Yes	55.6	69.6	62.5	52.9	54.9	56.0	55.7	56.0	47.2	58.8	67.2	44.3	55.2	62.9	67.0	42.7
		No opinion	9.0	-	11.1	7.6	10.5	7.3	7.4	10.7	11.3	7.1	6.9	11.3	6.9	10.0	5.3	8.3
		No	35.4	30.4	26.4	39.5	34.6	36.7	36.9	33.3	41.5	34.1	25.9	44.3	37.9	27.1	27.7	49.0
28	God may be worshiped in a number of different ways	Yes	81.5	95.2	72.9	84.9	81.3	82.4	83.3	80.7	83.0	82.4	83.1	81.1	79.3	77.6	86.5	85.3
		I do not know	6.6	-	15.7	2.9	7.5	4.6	6.7	6.0	1.9	7.2	5.9	6.3	10.3	13.4	3.1	2.1
		No	11.9	4.8	11.4	12.2	11.2	13.0	10.0	13.3	15.1	10.4	11.0	12.6	10.3	9.0	10.4	12.6

All-All members; P-Pastors; Y-Youth; Ad-Adults; M-Male; F-Female; U-Urban; R-Rural; Edu-Education; EL-Elementary; H-High; REL BACKG-Religious Background; ADV-Adventists; CATH-Catholics; ATHE-Atheists

Picture of God Among Adventists in Croatia

Table 4. Questions 29-39

	Questions	Answers	All	P	Y	A	F	M	U	R	EDU		REL BACKG			AGE GROUP		
			%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	EL	H	Adv	Cath	Athe	16-30	31-50	51+
29	Should taxes and all payments the state requires be paid without exception?	Yes	63.3	40.9	52.1	68.5	63.9	63.2	66.0	58.3	75.9	61.5	54.8	69.1	62.1	52.9	59.1	70.5
		I do not know	17.1	31.8	28.2	11.9	18.8	14.2	16.3	19.0	13.0	17.3	17.4	19.1	20.7	26.5	20.4	8.4
		No	19.6	27.3	19.7	19.6	17.3	22.6	17.7	22.7	11.1	21.2	27.8	11.7	17.2	20.6	20.4	21.1
30	Do you generally like people?	Yes	88.2	91.3	80.5	91.3	88.3	88.1	84.2	95.2	94.6	86.8	89.2	89.7	75.9	80.0	87.4	94.9
		Depends on	11.0	8.7	18.1	8.1	11.0	11.0	14.5	4.8	5.4	12.1	10.0	9.3	24.1	18.6	11.6	5.1
		No	0.8	-	1.4	0.6	0.7	0.9	1.3	-	-	1.1	0.8	1.0	-	1.4	1.1	-
31	Do you believe that God answers your prayers?	I do not know	0.4	-	-	0.6	-	0.9	-	-	-	0.5	0.8	-	-	-	-	1.0
		Yes	80.6	95.8	75.0	83.3	84.6	76.4	77.6	84.7	89.5	77.5	81.8	84.5	75.9	75.7	80.2	88.9
		Sometimes	17.8	4.2	23.6	14.9	14.7	20.9	21.1	14.1	10.5	20.4	14.9	15.5	24.1	22.9	18.8	9.1
		Never	1.2	-	1.4	1.2	0.7	1.8	1.3	1.2	-	1.6	2.5	-	-	1.4	1.0	1.0
32	Do you consider it unacceptable and unspiritual to wear jewelry, color, your hair etc.?	Yes	35.8	18.2	22.2	41.8	31.1	41.8	34.9	39.3	46.4	33.0	31.4	38.3	33.3	24.3	31.2	46.9
		I do not know	13.6	13.6	26.4	7.6	10.6	17.3	13.4	10.7	12.5	12.8	13.2	14.9	18.5	25.7	4.3	12.5
		No	50.6	68.2	51.4	50.6	58.3	40.9	51.7	50.0	41.1	54.2	55.4	46.8	48.1	50.0	64.5	40.6
33	If you happened to come across a large sum of money, would you look for the owner and return the money?	Yes	83.7	87.5	71.9	88.6	87.5	79.8	80.1	88.2	89.3	81.9	81.8	84.4	88.7	71.0	80.2	96.0
		I do not know	13.8	12.5	22.5	10.3	11.0	16.5	17.3	9.4	10.7	14.8	13.2	15.6	10.3	23.2	17.7	4.0
		No	2.5	-	5.6	1.1	1.5	3.7	2.6	2.4	-	3.3	5.0	-	-	5.8	2.1	-
34	Would you report illegal workers to the authorities?	Yes	6.2	8.3	4.2	7.1	4.5	8.4	6.0	6.2	9.3	5.0	2.5	10.6	10.3	2.9	4.2	10.6
		I do not know	30.3	16.7	34.7	28.0	31.1	29.6	30.0	29.6	40.7	27.6	23.5	36.2	31.0	37.1	30.5	22.3
		No	63.5	75.0	61.1	64.9	64.4	62.0	64.0	64.2	50.0	67.4	73.9	53.2	58.6	60.0	65.3	67.0
35	Do you consider vegetarian nutrition to be related to the spirituality of an individual?	Yes	25.9	22.7	18.3	29.3	22.4	30.6	24.8	27.1	29.1	25.0	16.7	32.6	23.1	17.4	20.4	37.1
		I do not know	8.6	-	12.7	6.4	7.5	9.3	9.4	7.1	7.3	8.9	4.2	12.6	11.5	13.0	2.2	9.3
		No	65.5	77.3	69.0	64.3	70.1	60.1	65.8	65.8	63.6	66.1	79.2	54.7	65.4	69.6	77.4	53.6
36	Do you consider yourself to be a happy and satisfied person?	Yes	47.8	50.0	40.8	50.3	42.5	54.5	47.3	50.6	57.4	44.3	52.1	50.0	25.0	42.0	40.6	59.2
		More yes than no	38.4	41.6	39.4	38.2	43.3	31.8	35.3	41.2	29.6	41.5	37.2	38.5	39.3	37.7	49.0	29.6
		More no than yes	9.4	4.2	12.8	8.1	11.2	7.3	12.0	4.7	11.1	8.7	4.1	10.4	28.6	13.0	7.3	7.1
		No	4.4	4.2	7.0	3.4	3.0	6.4	5.4	3.5	1.9	5.5	6.6	1.0	7.6	7.2	2.1	4.1
37	Would you be willing to donate your organs after your death?	Yes	64.0	75.0	75.0	59.1	61.5	67.6	65.8	61.3	62.7	64.0	71.6	59.8	62.1	72.9	60.6	61.5
		I do not know	23.7	8.3	12.5	28.7	26.2	20.0	19.1	32.4	23.6	24.2	13.8	27.2	31.0	12.9	30.9	22.0
		No	12.3	16.7	12.5	12.2	12.3	12.4	15.1	6.3	13.7	11.8	14.7	13.0	6.9	14.3	8.5	16.5
38	Do you consider abortion to be acceptable in certain cases?	Yes	60.7	95.8	56.9	62.4	61.7	59.3	64.0	54.9	66.0	60.4	65.8	57.0	65.5	58.6	66.3	65.6
		I do not know	18.2	4.2	16.7	18.8	18.0	18.5	16.7	19.5	13.2	18.2	11.7	21.5	31.0	15.7	18.9	15.6
		No	21.1	-	26.4	18.8	20.3	22.2	19.3	25.6	20.8	21.4	22.5	21.5	3.4	25.7	14.7	18.8
39	Do you consider homosexual relations and marriage to be biblically acceptable?	Yes	1.6	4.2	1.4	1.7	1.5	1.9	1.3	2.4	1.8	1.6	1.7	1.0	3.4	1.4	2.1	2.0
		I do not know	0.8	-	2.8	-	0.7	0.9	1.3	-	-	1.1	1.7	-	-	2.9	-	-
		No	97.6	95.8	95.8	98.3	97.8	97.2	97.4	97.6	98.2	97.3	96.7	99.0	96.6	95.7	97.9	98.0

All-All members; P-Pastors; Y-Youth; Ad-Adults; M-Male; F-Female; U-Urban; R-Rural; Edu-Education; EL-Elementary; H-High; REL BACKG-Religious Background; ADV-Adventists; CATH-Catholics; ATHE-Atheists

Picture of God Among Adventists in Croatia

Table 5. Questions 40-47

	Questions	Answers	All	P	Y	A	F	M	U	R	EDU		REL BACKG			AGE GROUP		
			%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	EL	H	Adv	Cath	Athe	16-30	31-50	51 +
40	If your life were to end today, would you be sure of your salvation?	Yes	47.1	73.9	34.7	52.3	47.0	47.7	52.7	37.8	44.4	48.1	41.2	52.6	60.7	35.7	48.4	61.1
		I do not know	37.2	21.7	37.5	37.1	35.8	38.3	30.0	48.8	48.2	33.1	37.8	38.9	17.9	38.6	36.8	33.7
		No	15.7	4.4	27.8	10.6	17.2	14.0	17.3	13.4	7.4	18.8	21.0	8.4	21.4	25.7	14.7	5.3
41	When it comes to nutrition, I am:	Vegetarian	21.4	27.3	18.1	22.8	20.1	23.1	22.7	20.5	18.9	22.0	22.7	19.1	14.3	17.3	26.6	19.8
		Vegan	4.9	-	4.1	5.3	3.7	6.5	6.0	3.6	5.7	4.9	1.7	8.5	-	2.9	-	9.4
		None of those	73.7	72.7	77.8	71.9	76.2	70.4	71.3	75.9	75.4	73.1	75.6	72.3	85.7	80.0	73.4	70.8
42	Do you consider being a true follower of Christ to be a difficult task?	Yes	31.0	31.8	27.1	32.5	32.8	29.0	32.4	30.5	24.1	32.0	28.2	30.4	35.7	29.9	34.4	29.2
		I do not know	4.1	4.6	8.6	2.4	3.8	3.7	4.8	3.6	-	5.6	5.1	2.2	3.6	9.0	4.3	1.0
		No	64.9	63.6	64.3	65.1	63.4	67.3	62.8	65.9	75.9	62.4	66.7	67.4	60.7	61.2	61.3	69.8
43	Do you consider your life to be filled with purpose and meaning?	I do not know	4.1	-	6.9	3.0	4.5	3.7	2.7	7.2	5.7	3.9	1.7	7.5	-	5.7	1.1	4.2
		Explicitly yes	56.0	87.0	52.8	57.3	56.1	55.6	55.0	59.0	67.9	53.0	57.6	62.4	41.4	55.7	53.2	67.4
		Partially yes	38.2	8.7	36.1	39.1	37.9	38.9	39.6	33.8	26.4	40.9	38.1	30.1	51.7	35.7	44.7	27.4
		No	1.7	4.3	4.2	0.6	1.5	1.8	2.7	-	-	2.2	2.5	-	6.9	2.9	1.1	1.1
44	How satisfied are you with relations among church members? (from 1 to 5, one is lowest and 5 is highest.)	1	6.2	4.2	4.2	7.1	5.3	7.5	6.1	7.2	3.8	6.7	6.7	6.5	6.9	5.8	7.4	5.2
		2	17.0	29.2	22.6	14.7	18.0	15.9	19.6	13.3	9.4	19.4	20.8	15.1	17.2	20.3	21.1	12.5
		3	48.1	62.4	43.7	50.0	48.1	48.6	46.6	54.2	47.2	48.9	50.0	43.0	65.5	44.9	48.4	54.2
		4	21.2	4.2	23.9	20.0	21.1	20.5	20.9	18.1	26.4	20.0	18.3	24.7	10.3	23.2	23.2	13.5
		5	7.5	-	5.6	8.2	7.5	7.5	6.8	7.2	13.2	5.0	4.2	10.8	-	5.8	-	14.6
45	Do Adventist show enough tolerance and understanding towards other people and their opinions?	Yes	26.3	14.3	17.1	30.2	20.6	33.6	27.4	25.3	32.7	25.0	22.7	30.3	28.6	16.2	26.9	30.9
		I do not know	24.7	9.5	32.9	21.3	29.8	18.7	21.9	27.7	25.0	23.9	21.8	27.0	25.0	30.9	16.1	23.4
		No	49.0	76.2	50.0	48.5	49.6	47.7	50.7	47.0	42.3	51.1	55.5	42.7	46.4	52.9	57.0	45.7
46	In your opinion, do Adventists live according to their beliefs and doctrine?	1	3.8	-	1.4	4.8	3.8	3.8	4.2	3.6	2.0	3.9	1.5	5.5	3.4	1.5	4.3	4.2
		2	17.3	25.0	21.4	15.6	15.3	20.0	19.4	14.5	7.8	20.2	20.2	14.3	13.8	23.5	19.4	13.7
		3	46.8	58.3	58.6	41.9	55.0	36.2	46.5	47.0	45.1	47.2	49.6	45.1	58.6	57.4	43.0	44.2
		4	24.9	16.7	18.6	27.5	20.6	30.5	21.5	28.9	39.2	20.8	26.1	25.3	13.8	17.6	26.9	26.3
		5	7.2	-	-	10.2	5.3	9.5	8.4	6.0	5.9	7.9	2.5	9.9	10.3	-	6.5	11.6
47	Do you live in accordance with the doctrine of the Adventist Church?	1	1.7	-	-	2.4	2.3	1.0	2.8	-	-	2.3	2.5	1.1	-	-	2.2	2.1
		2	5.1	-	13.0	1.8	3.9	6.7	6.4	3.6	1.9	6.3	6.8	1.1	11.1	11.9	3.4	-
		3	29.1	16.7	36.3	26.1	27.9	29.8	31.3	24.2	22.6	30.1	22.0	32.6	40.7	35.8	27.0	22.7
		4	48.3	75.0	42.0	50.9	51.9	44.2	41.8	61.4	50.9	48.6	56.8	45.7	29.6	44.8	56.2	51.5
		5	15.8	8.3	8.7	18.8	14.0	18.3	17.7	10.8	24.6	12.7	11.9	19.6	18.5	7.5	11.2	23.7

All-All members; P-Pastors; Y-Youth; Ad-Adults; M-Male; F-Female; U-Urban; R-Rural; Edu-Education; EL-Elementary; H-High; REL BACKG-Religious Background; ADV-Adventists; CATH-Catholics; ATHE-Atheists

Picture of God Among Adventists in Croatia

Table 6. Questions 48-59

	Questions	Answers	All	P	Y	A	F	M	U	R	EDU		REL BACKG			AGE GROUP		
			%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	EL	H	Adv	Cath	Athe	16-30	31-50	51+
48	Are you able to forgive those who have hurt you deeply and caused you grief?	Yes	84.5	95.8	73.6	89.0	82.4	87.9	81.5	88.1	91.1	83.0	83.2	88.5	86.2	75.7	84.2	94.9
		Difficult	13.9	4.2	23.6	9.9	17.6	8.4	15.9	11.9	8.9	15.4	15.1	9.4	13.8	24.4	13.7	5.1
		No	1.6	-	12.8	1.1	7.3	3.7	2.6	-	-	1.6	-	2.1	-	2.9	2.1	-
49	Do you give to the poor and beggars in the street?	Always	37.1	50.0	19.4	44.5	37.5	37.0	37.7	38.1	44.6	35.9	30.8	36.5	51.7	22.9	41.1	47.5
		Sometimes	54.7	50.0	65.3	50.3	55.1	53.7	53.6	54.8	53.6	53.6	56.7	60.4	48.3	62.9	57.9	44.4
		Never	8.2	-	15.3	5.2	7.4	9.3	8.7	7.1	1.8	10.5	12.5	3.1	-	14.3	39.7	8.1
50	Do you help persons who are physically or mentally handicapped?	Always	38.7	50.0	26.3	44.0	39.4	38.1	37.6	40.0	35.2	39.1	36.4	38.0	48.3	28.6	42.1	47.8
		Sometimes	50.4	45.8	55.6	48.2	48.5	52.4	49.0	52.5	53.7	49.7	52.5	50.0	44.8	54.3	50.5	44.6
		Never	10.9	4.2	18.1	7.8	12.1	9.5	13.4	7.5	11.1	11.2	11.0	12.0	6.9	17.1	7.4	7.6
51	If you have the opportunity do you partake in humanitarian activities?	Always	32.5	70.8	12.5	40.9	29.9	36.1	32.0	33.7	48.1	28.8	35.5	32.3	34.5	14.3	41.4	48.5
		Sometimes	57.6	29.2	66.7	53.8	56.7	58.3	58.0	56.6	42.6	61.3	54.5	57.0	62.1	67.1	55.8	45.4
		Never	9.9	-	20.8	5.3	13.4	5.6	10.0	9.7	9.3	9.9	9.9	10.8	3.4	18.6	3.2	6.2
52	Do you lend money to others?	Yes	38.4	41.7	43.7	36.3	37.6	39.8	33.6	49.4	38.9	38.9	36.7	49.1	24.1	46.4	32.6	39.2
		Sometimes	48.8	45.8	47.9	49.1	48.1	49.1	50.3	44.6	51.9	47.2	49.2	47.3	55.2	44.9	54.7	44.3
		Never	12.8	12.5	8.4	14.6	14.3	11.1	16.1	6.0	9.2	13.9	14.2	10.8	20.7	8.7	12.6	16.5
53	Women should be allowed to carry out church duties just as men do.	I agree	72.2	78.3	73.6	71.6	69.9	74.8	68.9	77.1	73.6	71.1	75.4	74.2	69.0	74.3	69.1	74.7
		I do not know	17.0	13.0	18.1	16.6	19.5	14.0	18.9	14.5	17.0	17.2	16.9	12.9	13.8	17.1	18.1	14.7
		I disagree	10.8	8.7	8.3	11.8	10.6	11.2	12.2	8.4	9.4	11.7	7.6	12.9	17.2	8.6	12.8	10.5
54	Do you find time for your friends?	Yes	71.1	75.0	71.9	70.8	72.9	68.6	70.1	69.9	68.6	72.9	75.6	66.3	57.1	71.0	63.2	78.7
		Seldom	27.2	25.0	23.9	28.6	26.3	28.5	27.2	30.1	31.4	25.4	23.5	31.5	39.3	24.6	36.8	20.2
		Never	1.7	-	4.2	0.6	0.8	2.9	2.7	-	-	1.7	0.8	2.2	3.6	4.3	-	1.1
55	Do you trust people, and do you give them a second chance?	Yes	88.7	95.7	90.1	88.1	87.7	89.8	88.4	90.2	88.5	89.4	90.8	87.8	85.7	91.3	87.2	90.4
		No	11.3	4.3	9.9	11.9	12.3	10.2	11.6	9.8	11.5	10.6	9.2	12.2	14.3	8.7	12.8	9.6
56	I feel God's presence in my relationships with other people.	Yes	78.0	91.7	60.6	85.3	81.5	73.3	76.7	79.3	85.5	75.6	72.0	88.3	75.9	62.3	82.3	89.5
		I do not know	19.5	8.3	33.8	13.5	17.8	21.9	20.0	19.5	14.5	21.6	25.4	8.5	24.1	31.9	16.7	9.5
		No	2.5	-	5.6	1.2	0.7	4.8	3.3	1.2	-	2.8	2.5	3.2	-	5.8	1.0	1.1
57	Do you take the opportunity to share your faith with those around you?	Yes	51.8	75.0	31.9	60.1	53.7	50.0	49.3	55.3	60.7	49.2	47.1	58.9	44.8	32.9	59.4	64.3
		Sometimes	47.5	25.0	66.7	39.3	44.9	50.0	49.3	44.7	35.7	50.8	52.1	40.0	55.2	65.7	40.6	34.7
		Never	0.7	-	1.4	0.6	1.4	-	1.4	-	3.6	-	0.8	1.1	-	1.4	-	1.0
58	Should we have good relations and cooperate with members of other religious groups?	Yes	92.2	100.0	86.1	94.7	91.1	93.5	91.3	94.0	94.4	91.8	91.6	93.7	93.1	85.7	94.8	95.8
		I do not know	4.9	-	11.1	2.4	6.7	2.8	6.0	3.6	1.9	5.5	4.2	4.2	6.9	11.4	2.1	2.1
		No	2.9	-	2.8	2.9	2.2	3.7	2.7	2.4	3.7	2.7	4.2	2.1	-	2.9	3.1	2.1
59	Do you agree with the statement: only Adventists will be saved?	Yes	4.1	-	1.4	5.2	3.7	4.6	2.7	7.1	7.4	2.7	3.3	5.3	-	1.4	2.1	7.3
		I do not know	5.7	-	4.2	6.4	7.4	3.7	5.3	4.8	7.4	4.4	3.3	5.3	10.3	4.3	1.0	10.4
		No	90.2	100.0	94.4	88.4	88.9	91.7	92.0	88.1	85.2	92.9	93.3	89.4	89.7	94.3	96.9	82.3

All-All members; P-Pastors; Y-Youth; Ad-Adults; M-Male; F-Female; U-Urban; R-Rural; Edu-Education; EL-Elementary; H-High; REL BACKG-Religious Background; ADV-Adventists; CATH-Catholics; ATHE-Atheists

Picture of God Among Adventists in Croatia

Table 7. Questions 60-70

	Questions	Answers	All	P	Y	A	F	M	U	R	EDU		REL BACKG			AGE GROUP		
			%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	EL	H	Adv	Cath	Athe	16-30	31-50	51+
60	Would you go into a cafe bar with a friend or acquaintance in order to socialize or to negotiate business?	Yes	72.8	87.5	81.9	69.0	71.3	74.5	74.5	71.8	53.6	79.3	73.3	74.5	79.3	64.3	78.1	63.5
		I do not know	10.7		11.2	10.5	10.3	11.3	10.7	8.2	14.3	18.9	10.0	8.5	13.8	10.0	8.3	10.4
		No	16.5	12.5	6.9	20.5	18.4	14.2	14.8	20.0	32.1	11.8	16.7	17.0	6.9	5.7	13.5	26.0
61	The thought of witnessing about my faith:	Fills me with joy	80.8	91.7	61.4	88.8	81.8	80.2	79.2	82.5	92.8	76.7	76.3	88.2	79.3	61.8	85.1	93.8
		Neutral	13.8	8.3	27.2	8.2	12.9	15.1	14.8	12.5	3.6	17.0	17.8	8.6	13.8	27.9	10.6	5.2
		Worries me	5.4	-	11.4	3.0	5.3	4.7	6.0	5.0	3.6	6.3	5.9	3.2	6.9	10.3	4.3	1.0
62	In my everyday life I spontaneously witness to others about my faith:	Always	36.9	66.7	19.4	44.2	37.5	36.4	34.7	39.3	57.4	31.3	30.0	48.4	37.9	20.0	34.7	58.2
		Sometimes	60.6	33.3	76.4	54.1	59.6	61.7	61.3	60.7	38.9	67.0	66.7	49.5	62.1	75.7	63.2	40.8
		Never	2.5		4.2	1.7	2.9	1.9	4.0		3.7	1.7	3.3	2.1		4.3	2.1	1.0
63	Do you think Adventists are open enough when it comes to changes within the Church?	Yes	10.1	8.7	5.6	12.0	8.4	12.2	8.2	13.4	15.1	8.4	9.2	9.9	7.1	4.3	13.7	9.9
		I do not know	29.0	8.7	33.3	27.2	30.5	27.4	28.1	28.0	41.5	24.9	26.1	28.6	39.3	31.4	23.2	27.5
		No	60.9	82.6	61.1	60.8	61.1	60.4	63.7	58.6	43.4	66.7	64.7	61.5	53.6	64.3	63.2	62.6
64	Do you have close friends you regularly socialize with outside Church?	Yes	66.3	79.2	77.5	61.5	70.1	61.9	65.8	65.9	62.3	68.3	68.6	64.9	55.2	76.8	62.1	64.2
		No	33.7	20.8	22.5	38.5	29.9	38.1	34.2	34.1	37.7	31.7	31.4	35.1	44.8	23.2	37.9	35.8
65	Is Adventist preaching to this generation?	Yes	68.9	62.5	66.7	69.8	69.4	68.8	67.2	72.0	83.3	64.8	69.4	72.6	55.2	64.3	62.5	75.3
		I do not know	16.0	12.5	22.2	13.3	15.7	15.6	16.4	13.4	9.3	18.2	16.5	14.7	17.2	22.9	13.5	13.4
		No	15.1	25.0	11.1	16.9	14.9	15.6	16.4	14.6	7.4	17.0	14.0	12.6	27.6	12.9	24.0	11.3
66	Should the church use contemporary methods, style, and themes in preaching?	Yes	68.9	91.6	69.0	68.8	71.4	66.4	66.7	72.6	64.2	71.1	71.7	63.8	86.2	73.9	77.7	64.9
		I do not know	10.8	4.2	21.1	6.5	8.3	13.0	10.9	8.3	7.5	10.6	11.7	10.6	10.3	18.8	4.3	8.2
		No	20.3	4.2	9.9	24.7	20.3	20.6	22.4	19.1	28.3	18.3	16.7	25.5	3.4	7.2	18.1	26.8
67	Has your Christian witness ever resulted in someone being baptized?	Yes	43.2	91.7	20.8	52.7	43.6	43.0	43.0	42.7	47.3	42.8	53.0	42.1	37.9	22.9	51.6	63.2
		No	56.8	8.3	79.2	47.3	56.4	57.0	57.0	57.3	52.7	57.2	47.0	57.9	62.1	77.1	48.4	36.8
68	Is your local church a place to which you would gladly invite friends or relatives?	Yes	78.0	63.6	62.0	85.0	79.2	77.4	78.4	76.3	89.6	75.7	72.8	87.0	74.1	63.2	75.3	90.8
		No	22.0	36.4	38.0	15.0	20.8	22.6	21.6	23.7	10.4	24.3	27.2	13.0	25.9	36.8	24.7	9.2
69	In your opinion which is the biggest obstacle which is undermining the mission of the Adventist Church?	Formalism	10.7	10.5	7.4	12.2	8.8	13.3	12.3	9.2	9.8	9.2	12.5	6.7	16.7	8.0	12.9	11.3
		Hypocrisy	16.9	10.5	20.4	15.4	12.7	21.3	17.9	16.9	9.8	20.0	20.5	13.3	16.5	22.0	18.6	11.3
		Resources	12.9	10.5	14.8	12.2	12.7	13.3	13.2	13.8	7.3	15.4	14.8	9.3	5.6	16.0	5.9	11.3
		Lack of love	27.5	21.1	22.2	30.1	34.3	18.7	28.3	24.6	34.1	25.4	18.2	40.0	27.4	18.0	25.7	32.4
		Lowering of standards	6.7	15.8	3.7	8.1	6.9	6.7	7.5	4.7	12.2	5.4	10.2	4.0	16.7	4.0	11.4	7.0
70	Are you involved in social activities in your environment or community?	Inactivity	25.3	31.6	31.5	22.0	24.6	26.7	20.8	30.8	26.8	24.6	23.9	26.7	16.7	32.0	18.6	26.8
		Occasionally	58.9	68.2	63.9	56.5	56.2	61.8	60.7	56.1	58.8	58.8	58.0	59.8	58.6	64.3	60.4	53.8
		Very rarely	16.6	13.6	23.6	13.7	20.0	12.7	12.7	24.4	13.7	17.6	19.3	15.2	17.2	22.9	17.7	9.9
		No	24.5	18.2	12.5	29.8	23.8	25.5	26.6	19.5	27.5	23.6	22.7	25.0	24.1	12.9	21.9	36.3

All-All members; P-Pastors; Y-Youth; Ad-Adults; M-Male; F-Female; U-Urban; R-Rural; Edu-Education; EL-Elementary; H-High; REL BACKG-Religious Background; ADV-Adventists; CATH-Catholics; ATHE-Atheists

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VITA

Personal

Name: Miroslav Đidara

Country of Origin: Croatia

Academics:

2005 D.Min. (Global Mission Leadership)
Andrews University, USA

1992 M.A. (Systematic Theology)
Andrews University, USA

1991 B.A. (Theology)
Andrews University, USA

1974 Secondary school
Rakovica, Belgrade, Yugoslavia

Experience:

2003- Personal Ministries Director, Croatian Conference, Croatia

1994-2003 Youth Director, Adriatic Union

1974-1987 Pastor, Croatian Conference, Croatia