

CREATING UNITY IN A MULTICULTURAL CHRISTIAN ORGANIZATION: IS THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH EFFECTIVELY MEETING ITS GOAL OF SCRIPTURAL UNITY?

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A core value of the Christian church is unity. Jesus prayed that his followers might have complete unity so that the world might believe and know that he was sent by the Father (John 17:20-23). But is such unity possible in an ethnically and multiculturally diverse organization, such as the Seventh-day Adventist Church? The denomination's official position is that such unity is not only possible, but scripturally commanded.¹ The purpose of this article is to examine, from the perspective of grounded theory, whether the denomination is effectively meeting its goal for unity, by comparing core aspects of biblical unity with the perceived realities of church administrators and field workers in expressly multicultural and multiethnic settings.²

Historical Background: Multicultural and Multiethnic Challenges to Unity

Since its humble beginnings in the mid-nineteenth century, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has grown from small Northeastern and Midwestern American roots to a worldwide organization. As the denomination has sought to create a welcoming environment for its members, it has had to learn new ways of interacting and conducting business within its worldwide network.

For instance, on July 1, 1968, a large group of Western missionaries, most of whom were Americans, went to the Singapore airport to welcome the first Asian expatriate worker to serve in the church's Far Eastern Division. At that time, the Far Eastern Division served as the Adventist headquarters for Southeast Asia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Korea, and Japan. A young Filipino office secretary joined a few other Asians, all of whom were Singaporeans and who included a switchboard operator, a messenger boy, and some janitors and gardeners. The basic social structural process³ of

¹Bettina Krause, "'Quality of Life, Unity, and Growth': Leaders Vote Strategic Plan for the World Church," <www.adventist.org> (April 18, 2001), 1-2. Unity is one of three core values for the corporate Seventh-day Adventist Church. These values, unveiled in April 2001, include unity, growth, and quality of life.

²This article incorporates work from my "Working Together in the Margin: Synergy for Multicultural Christian Organizations" (Ph.D. dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1997).

³Barney G. Glaser defines basic structural processes as social structures, e.g.,

multiculturalization had now entered a twenty-five-year transition stage between missionary stage of 1913 to 1968 (then called the Far Eastern Division, obviously expressing a Western perspective) and the increasingly national- employed stage of 1993 to the present (in which the territory is now called the Asia-Pacific Division).

Beginning in the 1970s with the appointment of A. C. Segovia as the educational department associate, administrative employees of Filipino descent were added to the Far Eastern Division office. Segovia became the first Adventist of Asian descent to hold a divisional office within the Asia-Pacific arena. During the 1980s, Indonesians, Koreans, Japanese, and Chinese denominational employees were appointed to administrative positions. But it was not until January 1, 1993, that the period of transition between the missionary (or Far Eastern Division) and the national (or Asia-Pacific) stages was completed when P. D. Chun, a Korean national, took office as the first Asian division president.

A major consequence of the basic social structural process of multiculturalization within the denomination's Asia-Pacific region was the proliferation of marginal zones⁴ between employees of differing backgrounds. A margin may be thought of as a zone that exists around a given cultural "text," where people of varying backgrounds may meet one another, find points of commonality and departure from one another, and within which they work for the purpose of creatively solving problems that could inhibit the accomplishment of their mutual mission. Communication and interaction between employees of Western and Asian backgrounds took place within these margins, thereby creating a new basic social-structural process, which, therefore, called for new understandings of the scriptural concept of unity. The multicultural organizational margin emerged as the primary structural place where the basic social-psychological process⁵ of synergic unifying, the primary focus of this article, took place.

Two primary causal conditions in the Far Eastern Division led to the transition from a Western-missionary-dominated organization to a truly multicultural organization: the preparation of Asian nationals through education and leadership experience, and the decline of American resource strength. The first cause continues as an ongoing condition, but the second does not; for even

decentralization, in the process of growing or deteriorating (*Theoretical Sensitivity* [Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press, 1978], 102). During this transition period, the multicultural aspect of the Far Eastern Division was growing.

⁴The term "marginal zones" is an *in vivo* term, meaning that it came directly from an informant (File 45, 1993).

⁵Glaser, 103, cites "becoming," "learning," and "health optimizing" as examples of basic social-psychological processes. The basic social-structural process of the family allows the basic social-psychological process of child development to occur. "The BSSP [basic social-structural process] abets, facilitates or is the social structure within which the BSPP [basic social-psychological] processes" (ibid., 102).

if American resource strength were to increase, it would not necessarily result in a reversal of the multiculturalization process. There is a perception among those of the Asia-Pacific arena that "Asians need to be in charge of the work [of the church] in Asia."⁶

Three consequences of the multiculturalization of the Asia-Pacific Division's workforce are an increase in diversity of culture and ethnicity, an increase in the number and importance of cultural/ethnic margins, and a corresponding need for creating unity within these new and developing conditions. In the headquarters for the Asia-Pacific region, employees were faced with dealing directly with these consequences. As diversity increased within division headquarters, employees struggled with ethnocentrism, evaluating others by the standards of their own culture. During the transition stage, employees reported that the margins separating cultural and ethnic groups seemed distinct and hard, but with the coming of Asians to top administration, there tended to be a "blurring" or "widening" of these marginal areas.⁷

In grounded-theory methodology, a unit or place provides the set conditions for the operation of a basic social process within a particular environment.⁸ Could the multicultural organizational margin provide important conditions for creating unity within the Asia-Pacific Division administration? The margin supplies the primary contextual condition of spirituality since multicultural employees of the church are followers of Jesus, who made himself nothing, became a servant, and obediently went to his death on the cross (Phil 2:7-8). Jesus was triply marginalized at birth (i.e., conceived of an unwed mother, placed in a manger for animals at birth, and dislocated from a secure home environment through threat of death and escape to Egypt). He identified with marginalized people throughout his public ministry. Thus spirituality is by definition an act of voluntary self-marginalization that involves self-emptying and Spirit-filling.⁹ The margin also provides mission definition—another important condition of unity.

The overarching responsibility of gospel workers, then, is the involvement in social service and evangelism for the express purpose of reaching out to those who have been marginalized physically and spiritually. Thus there is a need for creating synergic unity among the various employees and members of the church.

⁶File 78, 1993. By the end of 1992, the Far Eastern Division was the only Seventh-day Adventist world division whose president was not a national worker.

⁷File 45, 1993.

⁸Glaser, 109.

⁹See Jung Young Lee for a stimulating discussion of the hyphenated Jesus-Christ, the marginal man *par excellence*, and the Christian's responsibility to engage in mission to the marginalized. My research findings also suggest that the unifying that precedes mission completion (John 17:20-23) also takes place in the margin (*Marginality: The Key to Multicultural Theology* [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1995]).

*The Application of Grounded Theory to Multicultural Environments
within the Seventh-day Adventist Church*

The purpose of grounded theory is to describe and analyze social processes that groups, organizations, and societies are using to solve social problems.¹⁰ A social problem that this article addresses is that of unity and the core values that drive that effort. Because the Seventh-day Adventist Church views Scripture as normative for life and praxis, and thus seeks to define its understanding of unity according to Scripture, this article will examine how effectively the church is applying its scripturally based definition of unity to multicultural work environments. What is the working definition of unity that emerges from Scripture? What core values arise from this definition that may be qualitatively applied to the subjects of this study in order to evaluate the Adventist Church's

¹⁰The findings of grounded theory are presented as integrated hypotheses that are grounded in data collection and analysis. The goal is a research-based, problem-solving theory of a basic social process rather than empirical verification of the theory. Researchers look for a core category to emerge from the data. Procedures include data collection through participant-observation, interviewing, and studying documents and nonprofessional literature; and data analysis through the constant comparison of incidents, coding for categories and their properties, and theoretical coding, sampling, saturation, and continuous memoing in preparation for the final write-up. For literature about grounded theory see, e.g., Barney G. Glaser, *Examples of Grounded Theory: A Reader* (Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press, 1993). The classic foundation of the enterprise is Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1967). Glaser further developed the methodology in *Theoretical Sensitivity* (Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press, 1978). Later, Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin wrote a handbook on how to do grounded theory, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1990). But Glaser disapproved, calling it "forced conceptual analysis," and countered with *Basics of Grounded Theory Analysis: Emergence vs. Forcing* (Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press, 1992). For an insightful critique of both Strauss and Corbin, and Glaser, that retains the essential concepts of the method, see Scottish sociologist Ian Dey's *Grounding Grounded Theory* (San Diego: Academic Press, 1999). See also Glaser's Grounded Theory Institute Website, <www.groundedtheory.com>.

A grounded theory is validated by its fit to the data, its parsimony (economy of explanation) and scope (a wide view), and the "theoretical sensitivity" of the researcher (Glaser, *Basics of Grounded Theory Analysis*, 18, 105; idem, *Theoretical Sensitivity*). The product of the research is not technically "findings," but an integrated set of conceptual hypotheses about the substantive area of study (idem, *Basics of Grounded Theory Analysis*, 16).

Grounded theory is unlike verificational studies, where the aim is usually to generalize to a population. I studied the basic social process of unifying, not the entire Far Eastern Division as an organizational unity. If I had done a unit study, my aim would have been to generalize to other multicultural organizations, a difficult task because other units are different. But in a process study generalizability is far greater than in a unit study (ibid., 109-117). The process of creating unity may be generalizable to the same process in any multicultural Christian unity, e.g., denominational world headquarters, regional synods or dioceses, mission agencies, church-planting team, hospitals, schools, local churches, and other organizations within the church (e.g., cell groups, women's groups, children's clubs).

effectiveness in creating worldwide organizational unity? Finally, how effective is the church in achieving its goal for unity? Has the church been able to create an atmosphere of synergy, in which the actions and effects of its diverse parts work together to form a whole that is greater than or different from the sum of the parts?

In order to answer this question, this article will examine the results of my qualitative research, which was accomplished in several stages and among several multiethnic and multicultural settings. The data on unity presented in this article was collected primarily from organizational workers in Singapore.

Participants were observed working together in selected activities, such as committees and other types of organizational meetings. When I conducted my research at the Asia-Pacific Division headquarters in 1993, the division president, executive secretary, treasurer, and associate secretary were respectively Korean, Filipino, Australian, and American. The three associate treasurers were respectively American, Indonesian, and Korean. Departmental directors and their associates included one Thai, two Chinese-Malaysians, four Singaporeans, five Filipinos, two Koreans, three Japanese, four Indonesians, nine Americans, and five Australians. These employees were confidentially interviewed. In the first stage of questioning, employees were asked about their general impressions of working in a multicultural setting. As data was gathered, basic conceptional categories emerged, which resulted in more specific questions concerning the question of unity within the multicultural and multiethnic workplace.

As a result of observation and interviewing, a grounded theory developed that was centered around the core category for my study, which I called "synergic unifying."¹¹

Creating a Core Category of Synergic Unity

The term "creating" is used in this article in the sense of creating more unity or amplifying unity rather than creating it out of nothing. Revelation 14:7 (NIV) states: "Fear God and give him glory, for the hour of his judgment has come; and worship him who *made* heaven and earth" (emphasis supplied). A powerful way to proclaim the Creator God is to demonstrate to the world that he is still at work creating unity in churches and multicultural organizations. In Christ, "all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him" (Col 1:16, NRSV). Christ, therefore, creates leadership—and organizations with their structures and corporate-culture value systems. He invites the members of his body to participate with him in the mighty act of creating unity "so that the world may believe" (John 17:21, NIV).

"Synergy" may be defined as the effects of the joint efforts of diverse parts working together for mutual advantage and forming a whole that has

¹¹Strauss and Corbin, 116-142, call this choice "selective coding," which they define as the process of selecting the core category and relating it to the other categories.

combinatorial properties that cannot be produced by the parts acting alone.¹² The meaning of *συνεργέω*, the Greek source of synergy, is “to engage in an activity together with someone else—‘to work together with, to be active together with.’”¹³ Synergy also works well with unity because it includes the idea of “working together with.”¹⁴ Unity by itself cannot be a direct causal condition of mission accomplishment because it does not include the idea of working for humanity in social service and evangelism. Synergic unity is thus a causal condition of “finishing the work,” jargon for completing Christ’s world-mission mandate. The two basic social processes of “creating unity” and “working together” are simultaneous and overlapping. The foundational concept of “creating unity” describes what God is doing with our help, while “working together” describes what we, as human participants, are doing with God’s help.

*Scriptural Definition of Unity: A Grounded
Theory Reading of Genesis 1–2*

As I sought to discover a Scripture-based multicultural organizational model for creating unity in the margins between cultures and ethnic groups, I turned to the core of synergic unity, the process of creation. As I compared the Gen 1–2 data with my field research, I concluded that the God who began creating unity in Gen 1–2 is still creating unity in multicultural organizations today. My following analysis of the Gen 1–2 data is not an attempt to analyze metaphysical, cosmological, or historical implications of the biblical creation story. Rather, my intent is to focus on the text as it reads in order to seek its help in developing a grounded theory for creating unity. Five conditions for creating unity and working together emerged from my combined study of Scripture and the multicultural/multiethnic work environments at the Asia-Pacific Division headquarters: spirituality, communication, identifying, appreciating, and defining our mission.

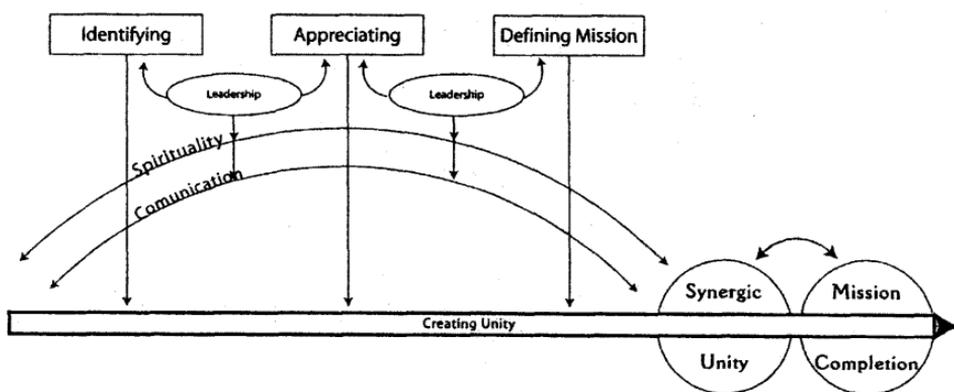
The following model (see below) for creating unity in the multicultural-organizational margin emerged from my examination and analysis of the

¹²See, e.g., Buckminster Fuller, *Synergetics: Explorations in the Geometry of Thinking* (New York: MacMillan, 1975); and Hermann Haken, *The Science of Structure: Synergetics* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1984). For application to leadership and organizational studies, see Stephen R. Covey, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), 261–284; Nancy J. Adler, *International Dimensions of Organizational Behavior*, 3d ed. (Boston: Kent, 1996), 96–223; and Philip R. Harris and Robert T. Moran, *Managing Cultural Differences*, 5th ed. (Houston: Gulf, 2000).

¹³See, e.g., 2 Cor 6:1, where Paul uses the word in the context of God’s ambassadors going out in a ministry of reconciliation. “As we *work together* [Gk. *συνεργέω*] with him, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain” (NRSV).

¹⁴See Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, eds., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, 2d ed. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1989), 1:512.

various components of synergic unifying.¹⁵ The task of leadership is to identify those elements that will lead toward unity and define its organization's mission for creating and maintaining unity. This task is filtered through the process of growing spirituality and direct communication between the various members of the organization in order to fulfill and complete the mission, in this case, of completing the work given to the church by Christ, i.e., the gospel commission. We will now turn to a more complete description of the contextual conditions that make up this model.



Contextual Conditions: Spirituality and Communication

Beyond place and time,¹⁶ spirituality and communication are the two major contextual conditions¹⁷ of creating unity in the model.

Spirituality. Before God created diversity and united wholes, the context of his activity was set in Gen 1:2 (NIV): "Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters." God went into the margin, which was empty except for the

¹⁵Other important case studies that illustrate synergic unifying include Abraham and Ephron (Gen 23) and the Gadites and Reubenites (Num 32; Deut 3:12-20; and Josh 22).

¹⁶The model assumes "the margin" as the place where synergic unity is being created. It also assumes the need to allow more time for decision-making in cross-cultural contexts. My informants (see File 74, 1993) suggested that taking more time to reach consensus in the short term helps to insure less disagreement over the long term. The Bible indicates that instant miraculous synergy may be available, as when Jesus fed more than five thousand people with five loaves and two fish!

¹⁷Dey, 164, states: "We think of contextual conditions as 'setting the scene' for a (causal) sequence of events and therefore contextual conditions must precede that sequence or at least be coincident with it."

presence of his Spirit. The spiritual condition for creating unity was thus established. Every created thing has a spiritual dimension that comes from God. The spiritual condition for unity has often been epitomized in Christian circles by the principle "the closer we come to Christ, the closer we get to one another."

Application. Two prominent properties of spirituality came to the front in my research: the distinction between "disinterested" and "utilitarian" spirituality, and the dual nature of the church as both spiritual body of Christ and business organization. On the first point, an informant stated: "God should be first priority, and unity [should be] a result of that. Unity should be secondary to our relationship with God."¹⁸ Another said: "Our goal is a healthy spirituality [what I am calling "disinterested spirituality"] that moves beyond pragmatic reasons [or "utilitarian spirituality"] and enjoys God for who he is."¹⁹ Comments like these prompted me to ask: "How can spirituality be nurtured for its own sake without giving the impression that it is merely a driver for unity and mission achievement?" Suggestions included appointing a chaplain to care for the spiritual needs of the workers and for the institution of daily prayer bands.

The second important aspect of spirituality to emerge from my interviewing was the dual nature of the church as the spiritual body of Christ and as a business organization. Informants were divided as to which quality should be the primary paradigm the Church should follow. For example, one day when a personnel problem was exposed, a leader said: "If this were a secular organization, heads might roll, but it is not; it is a church."²⁰ Some felt the organization was depending too much on modern business methods instead of stepping out in faith. But other informants, though not belittling the importance of spirituality, felt that professional expertise was also needed to solve problems. "We may question the idea that by kneeling down and praying we can solve everything," I was told.²¹ Another said: "It is a sad situation when mediocrity is perpetuated in the name of spirituality."²² One person tried to combine the two ideas: "We need to ask how we can apply spiritual principles to actual business matters in a way that is not perceived as being naive. Economic matter should also be considered theologically."²³

Employees were clearly struggling with coming to terms with this dual nature of the church. An informant saw the relationship between low worker spirituality and perceived mistreatment by the church as business employer: "People have a hard time distinguishing between church as agency of God and church as employer. Church as employer can be dry, harsh, and impersonal.

¹⁸File 106, 1993.

¹⁹File 108, 1995.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹See, e.g., File 62, 1993.

²²File 101, 1993.

²³File 62, 1993.

Yet church as agency of God on earth is warm and caring. Some people have a difficulty reconciling the two.”²⁴

Weak spirituality is evidently one consequence of failing to understand and explain the dual nature of the church to incoming employees and new church members. Charles Van Engen, following the example of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, concludes: “Only as we join the human and the divine aspects of the Church’s nature in a unified perspective can we possibly arrive at a true understanding of the Church’s mission.”²⁵

Communication. The model’s second major contextual condition for creating synergic unity is communication. The spoken word of God in Gen 1 is powerful and speedy: “And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light” (Gen 1:3, NIV).²⁶ When God speaks diversity into existence, he also provides for the diverse parts to come together in unity. Thus God created light, atmospherically diverse waters, dry land, two kinds of great lights, different kinds of fish, birds, mammals, and creeping things, and two distinct human genders—all by speaking. Diverse parts, such as day and night, male and female, and days for work and rest, all share commonalities that enable them to relate to one another in unity. None are totally different from their corresponding counterparts. By speaking commonalities as well as diversities into existence, God insured that the diverse parts would be able to relate and/or communicate together.

Application. But can multicultural organizational leaders participate with God in the act of speaking diverse parts and united wholes into existence? While the text of the creation account speaks to the miraculous effects of God’s speaking, my informants were unanimous in extolling the effects of open communication for creating unity in multicultural organizations. Their comments suggest that God is still creating diversity and unity through the communication efforts of organization members. My research suggests a cause-and-effect relationship between organizational love, trust, and open communication. When members feel they are loved by leaders and other members and that they have a basis for trustworthy communication, they, in turn, trust one another and are willing to communicate openly with them. Thus there is a close relationship between communication and spirituality because

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Charles Van Engen credits Dietrich Bonhoeffer for the idea that the church is both a sociological entity within world society and a fellowship of the followers of Jesus (*God’s Missionary People* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991], 40; cf. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *A Dogmatic Inquiry into the Sociology of the Church* [New York: Harper, 1963]). David Bosch calls the church—as both a theological and a sociological entity—“an inseparable union of the divine and the dusty” (*Transforming Mission* [Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991], 385).

²⁶See also Ps 33:6, 8-9, where world mission is mentioned in the context of God’s speaking: “By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth. Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the people of the world revere him. For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm.”

human beings rely on communication with God for spirituality and communication with one another for creating unity within the organization.

Some informants spoke about the difficulty of trusting others in their experience of working for the church. One person remembered a committee member blurting out: "You just don't trust me! You just don't trust me! You treat me like a three-year-old kid!"²⁷ Low trust inhibits open communication, creativity, meeting diverse others in the margin, creating synergic unity, and, ultimately, mission accomplishment. An informant spoke frankly: "In an environment of little or no trust, all my energy is channeled towards practicing protective management rather than creative management. My relationships are influenced by my desire to cover [or protect] myself."²⁸

Others spoke about the lack of openness within the organization. One person contrasted organizational "cover-ups" with a statement made by pioneer Adventist visionary Ellen White: "Everything that Christians do should be as transparent as the sunlight."²⁹ Another person suggested that in an organization where problems can be freely discussed in the open, leaders have more control than in a closed organization, where closed communication lines may prevent top leaders from even finding out what the problems are. He concluded: "Our corporate culture doesn't encourage people to address issues openly, so they do it in the corridors."³⁰ Jan Paulsen, then serving as a General Conference Vice President, spoke on openness in a commencement address at Andrews University, where he defined openness as the ability to be "transparent, genuine, and nonthreatening."³¹ Openness enables those working within multicultural organizations to meet each other in the margin and creatively work together to solve problems of internal cohesiveness and external mission completion. Trust-based, open communication provides the power for creating synergic unity.

Conjunctional Conditions: Identifying, Appreciating, and Defining Mission

The three conjunctional conditions of identifying, appreciating, and defining mission intersect with the two contextual conditions of spirituality and communication. They form fuzzy stages³² in the process of creating synergic

²⁷File 83, 1993.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ellen G. White, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1965), 68.

³⁰File 48, 1993.

³¹Jan Paulsen, "Open Border, Open Minds," *Adventist Review*, November 9, 1995, 1,400-1,402.

³²See Dey's, 90-92, discussion of "fuzzy logic." Also see Paul Hiebert's application of Lofti Asker Zadeh's concept of fuzzy sets to mission thinking in *Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 107-136.

unity, meaning that these conditions do not have neat beginnings and endings, but overlap one another. Once underway, they tend to continue as long as the process of unifying continues and do not always occur in the order presented even though that order may seem to be the most natural.

Identifying. God continues the process of creating unity by identifying the diverse parts he has spoken into existence and by establishing their distinguishing characteristics through the process of separation and naming. "God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night" (Gen 14b-5a, NRSV). He "sanctified" (KJV) or "hallowed" (NRSV) the seventh day, terms that mean "separation" or "setting apart for a special purpose." Diverse parts evidently need a time of separation to establish and maintain their identities so that they can make a unique contribution to the united whole. Biblical case studies of separation include the Tower of Babel (Gen 11:1-9), Abraham and Lot (Gen 13), and Paul and Barnabas over the issue of John Mark (Acts 15:36-41).

Naming also further distinguishes the parts, permitting them to relate together in the whole. God includes Adam in the process of creating unity by allowing him to name the animals and the birds. The name precisely fits the characteristics of the diverse part. It is difficult to relate meaningfully with someone whose name one does not know. In the Bible, it is significant that Abram, Sarai, and Jacob are renamed. Solomon's name means "peace"; he was called Jedidiah, meaning "Beloved of the Lord" (2 Sam 12:25, NRSV, margin).

The importance of identification as a condition for the process of creating unity is confirmed by Paul's analogy of the church as a human body in 1 Cor 12-13. In these chapters, Paul refers to two kinds of diversity: spiritual gifts (12:1-11) and ethnicity (12:12-13). He emphasizes the importance of identification (12:14-26), making it clear, e.g., that the body needs separate parts with unique functions. Then he concludes his argument by pointing his readers to the supremacy of love. Diverse parties working together in Christian groups can come together in love for each other (chap. 13). Later the point is rephrased:

But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love (Eph 4:15-16, NRSV).

Application. While I was conducting field research in Singapore, the Far Eastern Division Officers and Departmental Council met to discuss changing the name of the division. The president began by questioning the logic of a "far East" when the globe is round. To the European, the division's territory might be considered to be far East, but to a Californian it would appear to be in the far West. Council members responded favorably. One member said that the name "Far Eastern" reflected an old colonialist idea that now needed to be replaced. An officer stated: "We need to give ourselves a name that identifies this region. People have no idea what we are or what we do." The name change to Asia-Pacific Division communicated the message that "we are no longer to

be defined in terms of the West, but in terms of who we really are.”

Appreciating. From the first day of creation, God valued the diverse parts he created. “God saw that the light was good” (Gen 1:4a, NIV), even before the separating, naming, and coming together took place. On the third and fourth days, however, appreciating was the last activity mentioned. On the sixth day, God valued the animals first, then everything that he made.

God values the diverse part for itself; then, he values the unified whole when the parts come together—in fact, he may value the whole even more than the part alone, for “it was not good for the man to be alone” (Gen 2:18, NIV). A close reading reveals that God insured that diverse parts would share commonalities as well as differences. For example, the night is equipped with a lesser light; male and female are “bone of each other’s bone and flesh of each other’s flesh” (Gen 2:23a).

Application. In my field research, “appreciation” of both diversities and commonalities emerged as the term that best includes the valuing that God does in Gen 1–2 and the ideal attitude toward diversity and commonality in the multicultural organizations I studied.

The term “appreciate” means to place a value on a particular thing or things, to be fully aware of, to be grateful for, and to increase the intrinsic value thereof.³³ Multicultural organizational members learn to appreciate individual, cultural, economic, work-related, and biological diversities. Although I found a mix of positive, neutral, and negative attitudes toward diversity in the multicultural organizations I studied, it must be remembered that all human beings are simultaneously like no others, like some others, and like all others. Balanced views are needed not only for appreciating diversities, but in recognizing and valuing those shared commonalities that are vital for synergic unifying. Appreciating diversity and commonality means to know both of them well enough to place a value on them, to be thankful for them, and to see their value increase.

Defining Mission. The third conjunctive condition of creating unity is mission definition. After creating the birds and the fish on the fifth day, “God blessed them and said, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth’” (Gen 1:22, NIV). In Gen 1–2, God defined a mission statement for the parties he created. The expanse or dome was separated from the waters; the sun and moon govern the day and night, thereby separating light from darkness and serving as signs. God blessed the man and the woman, giving them a mission to “be fruitful and increase in number; [to] fill the earth and subdue it” (Gen 1:28, NIV), and to rule over the living creatures. Thus the diverse parts, brought together in united wholes, have a mission.

After announcing their missions, God immediately gave both humans and animals provision for sustaining and maintaining life (Gen 1:29–30). There is a sequence that God follows: blessing, defining mission, and providing for the accomplishment of the mission. This blessing occurs at the conjunction of

³³*Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 1985), s.v. “appreciate.”

spirituality and mission definition in the model.

Application. In 1992, the Asia-Pacific Division voted a mission statement to “present Jesus Christ, in His fullness, to every person within its territory, and to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”³⁴ The statement was similar to the mission statement of the General Conference, voted in 1993, which stated that the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is to “proclaim to all people the everlasting gospel in the context of the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14:6-12, leading them to accept Jesus as personal Savior and to unite with His church, and nurturing them in preparation for His soon return.”³⁵ Both statements define the mission of the whole denomination without saying anything in particular about the mission of the part. We still do not officially know what the specific mission of either organization is. Therefore, workers at the Singapore headquarters seemed confused at times about the precise definition of their mission. One informant questioned: “What is our mission here? To spread the gospel, right? People staying here all by themselves on this compound—can they spread the gospel? If they live outside in a flat with people and smell what the people are cooking, they are spreading the gospel better.”³⁶

While in Singapore, I found a document that gave the following explanation of what the division was supposed to be doing: “The Division works with other church entities as partners with whom it cooperates in a learning relationship. *While retaining centralized control in essential areas*, the division organization emphasizes decentralization, encouraging decision making and control to be done at the lowest level possible” (emphasis supplied).³⁷ When I asked the meaning of the expression “control in essential areas,” I was told that church constituencies around the world have told the divisions to preserve the doctrinal purity of the church and the competence and integrity of those elected to govern the work at the union level (one level below the division).³⁸ While this is important for maintaining unity of the whole organization, it was not helpful in understanding how the part was to accomplish these tasks within the whole. I only discovered the precise mission of the Asia-Pacific Division as an organizational unit among others through the interviewing process.³⁹

³⁴Far Eastern Division Committee minutes (1992), 76.

³⁵“Our Mission,” *Adventist Review*, April 22, 1993, 399.

³⁶See File 46, 1993.

³⁷*Far Eastern Division Manual*, n.d., 1-15-15, emphasis supplied.

³⁸See File 98, 1993.

³⁹By contrast, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Canada (the Canadian Union Conference) has now published vision and mission statements that clearly define its own unique mission: “Vision: Proclaiming Christ, Nurturing Believers, Serving Humanity. Mission: Our mission is providing strategic leadership, support, and resources to our conferences and national entities to achieve our shared vision. In our leadership role we will: Innovate, Influence, Impact, [and] Foster unity.” I conclude that a published statement which defines the specific missions of the General Conference and its

Unity and Mission Completion

The process of creating unity results in the product of synergic unity, which, in turn, is the causal condition of mission accomplishment. This unity is clearly pluriform oneness rather than mere uniformity. The twenty-four-hour day, the plants in their soil, the married couple, and the seven-day week are united wholes composed of diverse parts. When the parts become united with each other, the whole enhances the identity of each part as salt flavors food. The meaning of "darkness" and "light" is their diversity; the meaning of "night" and "day" is their identity; and the meaning of "evening" and "morning" (Gen 1:5b) is their coming together in partnership within the twenty-four-hour day. Indeed, the time of meeting, at dusk and dawn, may be described as the most beautiful time of the day. Similarly, the man and woman are destined to open up to each other in forming a united married oneness (Gen 2:24). The purpose of these unities is the accomplishment of the missions of the wholes.

The relationship between unity and mission accomplishment is a reciprocal, never-ending cycle of interactive effects.⁴⁰ Synergic unity is a causal condition that leads directly to mission accomplishment as consequence. But the ultimate goal of the ultimate mission accomplishment is eternal kingdom unity, with all creation uniting in worship of God and allegiance to Jesus Christ as King of kings. So the time will come when unity will continue even though mission as we know it has ceased. Yet who is to say that eternal kingdom unity will not become the causal condition for the accomplishment of still to be determined missions X, Y, or Z?

Creating Synergic Unity: Leadership Today and the Church of Tomorrow

What are the practical applications of the synergic unity model for Christian leaders today and the church of tomorrow? The model shows that leadership is an intervening condition that works to strengthen all of the other conditions that work together to process synergic unifying.⁴¹ The Genesis account indicates that diverse parts need leadership to help them secure their identities and to nudge them together in unity. God provides leaders and partners who complement each other as they govern. Two great lights "govern the day and the night" (Gen 1:18, NIV), while male and female are given joint dominion over the animals (Gen 1:26). God as matchmaker puts the man and the woman together. God can create synergic unity through the

divisions is needed in order to expedite the process of creating synergic unity throughout the world field.

⁴⁰See Glaser's discussion of the "interactive family" of theoretical codes (*Theoretical Sensitivity*, 76).

⁴¹Leadership, of course, cannot enforce spirituality. It can, however, introduce people to God, set up an environment conducive to spirituality, and encourage people either singly or in groups to strengthen their own spirituality by maintaining a close relationship with God through the indwelling Spirit.

variety of hierarchical, democratic, or consensus leadership styles that we find in the world today. When leaders apply the grounded theory of creating unity—found in Gen 1–2 and supported by multicultural organizational research—to the problems of creating unity today, they need to keep in mind the events of Gen 3–4 (the Fall) and 10–12 (the creation of diverse nations and the mission of Abram). We live in a world where when things fall apart, the center cannot hold.

If leadership is essentially “the management of corporate culture,”⁴² Christian servant-leaders and followers, working together, will focus on those basic assumptions, beliefs, and values that insure internal unity for external mission accomplishment. They will search for synergies and create unity through the power of vertical and horizontal communication. And they will simultaneously be unifying the diverse components of their corporate culture.

The results of my grounded-theory research reveal a desire on the part of the diverse parts of the church to follow the scriptural commandment for unity; however, as the following summary demonstrates, there is still room for growth:

Condition	Grounded Theory of Creation: Gen 1–2	Application
Contextual	<p><i>Spirituality</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - God stepped into the margin to create the universe 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - need for making clear distinctions between disinterested and utilitarian spirituality - need for developing spirituality that is nurtured for its own sake and not simply employing it as a driver for unity and mission achievement - need for finding and maintaining a healthy balance between church as the spiritual body of Christ and church as a business organization
	<p><i>Communication</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - God not only created diversity; he created the ability of diverse parts to come together in unity and with the potential for communication to take place among these parts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - need for trust between the diverse parts of the organization for the development of synergic unity - need for openness within the organization so that problems may be discovered and corrected, which will provide conditions for individuals to meet in the margins

⁴²See Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 2d ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1992), 374.

Conjunctural	<p><i>Identifying</i></p> <p>- God identified and established the distinguishing characteristics of the diverse parts of creation by separating them from one another and by naming each part</p> <p><i>Appreciating</i></p> <p>- God valued each aspect of his creation, saying that each part was good. He not only valued the diverse parts for themselves, but also the unified whole</p> <p><i>Mission Definition</i></p> <p>- God defined a mission statement for everything he created, blessed his creation, and provided for the accomplishment of the missions of the diverse parts within the unified whole</p>	<p>- need for identifying and accurately naming the diverse parts so that the individual parts may be seen in their uniqueness and as parts of the whole</p> <p>- need for appreciation of both diversities and commonalities by learning to value individual, work-related, biological, cultural, and ethnic diversities</p> <p>- need for appreciating diversity and commonality by learning to know others well enough to place a value on them, to be thankful for them, and to see their value increase.</p> <p>- need for defining a mission statement that not only addresses the unified whole, but also the mission of the diverse parts within the whole</p>
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*A Possible Mission for the
Church of the Future*

If the church of the future were to apply my model for creating unity in the margins, gleaned from a search of Scripture and the data compiled from the multicultural-organizational study presented above, I suggest it might look like the following:

1. We are amplifying and creating synergic unity internally within our church as a whole and in each unit of which we are a part. Further, we are creating unity externally between ourselves and other Christian organizations without compromising our beliefs.
2. We are completing a corporate culture audit of the General Conference and other structural units of the church.
3. We are redesigning our corporate structure in order to better serve our goal of working together with God and with each other to complete the mission of God.

4. We are continuing to refine, integrate, and develop our corporate culture based on three core values of unity, growth, and quality of life. We are open to changing our corporate culture if it will help us to better complete the mission of God.
5. We understand that the contextualization of our missionary message, strategy, and methods is a consequence of our commitment to the mission of God to the peoples of the world. We are embracing contextualization as a necessary consequence of appreciating diversity and commonality in our corporate culture values system. We recognize that contextualization is the work of the Holy Spirit in our midst; it is being practiced by all our units as we seek to “finish the work.”
6. We as members—both leaders and followers—are nurturing and strengthening the following five conditions for creating unity: spirituality, communication, identification, appreciation, and mission definition.
7. We are creating unity and accomplishing our mission because of our love for God, our humble thankfulness for Christ’s work of atonement and mediation, and our reliance on the power of the Holy Spirit.