

FUTURUM OR ADVENTUS? On Adventist Identity

H. Gutierrez, Florence, Italy

One of the most distinctive characteristics of the Adventist church is its future oriented message. To a concrete and materialistic society¹, busy and obsessed in dealing with the urgencies of the present and immediate situation² and applied to get straightaway satisfaction of things³, our church reminds that no human present endeavour and strategy can bring about what only God's future is able to accomplish; it is hope, meaning and full restoration.⁴

The profiles seem to be rather clear. On the one side, we have the Adventist church as a future-oriented agency, and on the other side, we have our current society as a present-rooted entity. Yet to a deeper analysis and reflection this picture is not sufficiently convincing; actually, it doesn't appear so obvious at all. This is because, on the one side, modern society is at least as concerned with the future⁵ as we are. On the other side, it is not altogether clear what kind of future we Adventists are really speaking about⁶.

¹ From a sociological perspective, our current society more than post-modern and post-materialistic has become hypermodern and hyperconsumeristic. See, Gilles Lipovetsky, *Una felicità paradossale. Sulla società dell'iperconsumo*. (Milano: Raffaello Cortina editori, 2007), XI-XIX. Francesco Giacomantonio, *Il discorso sociologico della tarda modernità. Individui, identità e democrazia*, (Genova: Il melangolo, 2007). 15-35. Ulrich Beck, *Risikogesellschaft. Auf dem Weg in eine andere Moderne*, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986), 9-35. Zygmunt Bauman, *Intimations of Postmodernity*, (London: Routledge, 2004), 10-22. Marramao Giacomo, *Passaggio a Occidente. Filosofia e globalizzazione*, (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2003), 2-45.

² This in reference also to the current worldwide financial and economic crisis. See Paul Krugman, (Nobel Economics Price 2008), "Gli errori di Washington", in, *La Repubblica*, (Italian Newspaper) Anno 33, no. 244, (October 14, 2008), 1, 11. Nouriel Roubini, "Perché la crisi non aspetterà la politica", in, *La Repubblica*, Anno 33, no. 259, (October 31, 2008), 1, 38.

³ Gilles Lipovetsky, "Il favoloso destino di *Homo consumericus*", in, *Una felicità paradossale*, 99-111.

⁴ This represents a very typical Adventists way of thinking. The crisis of the world as fertile soil for the emergence of our virtues. See, Norman Gulley, "Christ in Control of Final Events", in, *Christ is coming. A Christ-centered Approach to Last-Day Events*, (Hagerstown: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1998), 61.

⁵ Our contemporary society is undoubtedly a future oriented society. See, Alvin Toffler, *Future Shock*, (New York. Random House, 1970), 7-12. U. Galimberti, "La tecnica come sintesi ultima di tutti i fini", in, *Psiche e techne. L'uomo nell'età della tecnica*, (Milano: Feltrinelli, 2004), 340, 341.

⁶ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Coming of God. Christian Eschatology*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 138.

Target of this paper is to try to distinguish between two ways of understanding the future and then to describe some socio-theological implications of them for present Adventist identity.

I. THE “FUTURUM” PARADIGM⁷

Western pre-modern societies and current non-western societies, partially still have, in different ways and degrees, a cyclic understanding of time.⁸ In their perspective life is to be taken as it comes. Sometimes it creates fear and confusion, but it also offers regularity and continuity. Time proposes always something that has already happened. It never represents a total break with past events.

Even Greek culture which invented the concept of history⁹ couldn't get rid of this obsession with regularity. History had to be read, for a Greek citizen, as a mirror of the regularity of nature.¹⁰ We consider these societies and cultures as much too static and conformist. But by trying to reproduce the past in the future, they aimed to guarantee trust, security and continuity in persons' lives.¹¹

Today we live in a totally different situation that we will call “Futurum Paradigm”. It represents a radical future-oriented perspective. Here the past is not to be reproduced but rather to be overcome. Tradition is not a resource but an obstacle. In fact in our modern society things very soon and very easily become old and outdated.

The origin of this paradigm can be found in Hebrew thinking.¹² With the Old Testament the circle of time becomes a line. Dissimilar to all others, every event is unique. One of the best examples of this is incarnated in Abraham's life and call. He is asked to leave his country and to go forward. His life cannot and must not be a repetition. There is no other direction to follow, no other way to go, but into the future. He faces a starting point to leave and an arrival point to reach. Only by following this line forward can he find meaning and fulfillment.

⁷ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, Ibid., 25, 26.

⁸ The sociologist Scalamonti speaks of classical and present “archaic man” having both this cyclical mind setting. Antonio Cavicchia Scalamonti, “Il tempo arcaico”, in *La morte. Quattro variazioni sul tema*, (Napoli: Ipermedium, 2007), 60-69.

⁹ H. Arendt, *Between past and Future. Eight Exercises in Political Thought*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1993), 41.

¹⁰ K. Löwith, *Significato e fine della storia. I presupposti teologici della filosofia della storia*, (Milano: Net, 2004), 24, 25.

¹¹ “Repetition” is the Ontology of the archaic man. See, Mircea Eliade, *Il mito dell'eterno ritorno*, (Roma: Borla, 1999), 80-90.

¹² André Neher, *Le dialogue dans le temps: l'alliance, berit*, in *Prophètes et prophéties. L'essence du prophétisme*, (Paris: Payot, 2004),

Here, in comparison to Israel's previous life, or some contemporary societies, cultures and religions, the time perspective has drastically changed because future is no longer a mere copy of the past. It always brings something new. The promised future engraves things, persons, groups and events with a tension they can't avoid or cancel. This tension represents the essential of their vocation and of their identity. It is a tension toward the future.¹³

a. A propulsive Faith¹⁴. (A first radicalization)

This understanding was not changed by the arrival of Christianity, but rather suffered a first radicalization. The "time-line-perspective" in fact remained, even though, as O. Culmann writes, a new tension emerged that the Hebrews didn't know before: the tension between the "already" and the "not yet".¹⁵ This new tension binds the Christian community as much to the past as to the future because the central event, Jesus' life and victory over sin and death, is now behind us as something completed.

Hebrew eschatology is a future-oriented eschatology while Christian eschatology is, at least in part, also a realized eschatology. But what happened in fact was the reinforcement of the same, basic paradigm, the "Futurum Paradigm;" If the certainty of future events depends on the certainty of the main event that has already happened--i.e. Jesus' full victory—the announced future is then as certain as what is in the past. Doubt and perplexity about the future are overcome. Certainty and assurance incontrovertibly fill the heart of a victorious and euphoric Christian. The promised future will surely arrive as announced and as planned.

b. A progressive Society¹⁶. (A second radicalization)

Western modern culture and society went a step further. After learning, from Christianity this fundamental truth about future, they introduced a shift. The certainty of the future that Christianity still based on God modernity based exclusively in itself.¹⁷ The "time-line-perspective" therefore suffered so a second radicalization. It became more direct,

¹³ Jacques Doukhan, *Aux portes de l'esperance. Essai biblique sur les prophéties de la fin*, (Dammarié les Lys: Vie e Santé, 1986), 45, 46.

¹⁴ This is one the main features of Christianity after Franz Rosenzweig. See, "Die strahlen oder der ewige weg", in, *Der Stern der Erlösung*, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1988), 373-422.

¹⁵ This has become a classical formulation of the status and perspective of christian eschatology. See, Oscar Culmann, "La division nouvelle du temps a partir du centre de l'histoire du salut", in, *Christ et le temps. Temps et Histoire dans le christianisme primitif*. (Paris: Delachaux & Nestle, 1966), 57-65.

¹⁶ Jacques Ellul, "Technical Anesthesia", in, *The Technological Society*, (New York: Vintage, 1984), 412-415.

¹⁷ Marcel Gauchet, "La dynamique moderne", in, *Un monde désenchanté*, (Paris: Atelier, 2007), 183-190. Antonio Cavicchia Scalamonti, "La epoca dei lumi", in, *La morte. Quattro variazioni sul tema*, (Napoli: Ipermedium, 2007), 87-91.

more automatic and more predictable.¹⁸ This was, in fact, the spirit of the emerging modernity: the unshakeable certainty of its own bright future.¹⁹

The Enlightenment and Positivism, among others, were the first typical examples of this modern ideology. This movement didn't stop there, however. It enlarged, expanded and refined itself in various experiments and sophisticated updates until it became really democratic, universal and trans-cultural.²⁰ It succeeded in modeling the worldview of common people and single organizations. "The future is sure, you only need to introduce order, discipline, coherence, hard work and accurate planning". This could be life's maxim²¹ for many of us today.²²

On a more general level, the same logic is at work in modern technique and in the correlative technocratic world which are now so diffuse and influential.²³ To this same orientation belongs as well the very typical modern obsession with "continuous growth" whether in states, societies, groups and institutions, which we uncritically share today. Unending growth has become a destiny, a linear destiny.²⁴

c. An efficient Religion.²⁵ (A third radicalization)

The picture still is not complete because, as much as Christianity influenced western culture, in return Western culture greatly influenced Christianity.²⁶ The optimistic and

¹⁸ K. Löwith, *Significato e fine della storia. I presupposti teologici della filosofia della storia*, (Milano: Net, 2004), 22.

¹⁹ Hans Jonas, "Utopie und Fortschrittsgedanke", in, *Das Prinzip Verantwortung. Versuch einer Ethik für die technologische Zivilisation*, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1984), 287-296.

²⁰ Max Weber, *Considerazioni intermedie. Il destino dell'Occidente*, (Roma: Armando editori, 1995), 43-45.

²¹ Aldo Schiavone, "Una vita di successo", in, *Storia e Destino*, (Torino: Giulio Einaudi, 2007), 22-38.

²² H. Arendt, "Instrumentality and Homo Faber", in, *The human Condition*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 153-166. J. Moltmann, *Die erste Freigelassenen der Schöpfung. Versuche über die Freude an der Freiheit und das Wohlgefallen am Spiel*, (München: Kaiser Verlag, 1971), 76-80. P.J. Crutzen, *Benvenuti nell'Antropocene. L'uomo ha cambiato il clima. La Terra entra in una nuova era*, (Milano: Mondadori, 2005), 15-17.

²³ Neil Postman, "From Technocracy to Technopoly", in, *Technopoly. The Surrender of Culture to Technology*, (News York: Vintage Books, 1993), 65-70.

²⁴ Eugen Drewermann, *Wozu Religion? Sinnfindung in Zeiten der Gier nach Macht und Geld*. (Im Gespräch mit Jürgen Hoeren), (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2001), 15-17. Serge Latouche, *Le pari de la décroissance*, (Paris: Arthème Fayard, 2006), 8-11.

²⁵ Giovanni Filoramo, *La chiesa e le sfide della modernità*, (Roma: Laterza, 2007).

²⁶ Salvatore Natoli, *La salvezza senza fede*, (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2008), 14.

future-oriented spirit of modernity became the spirit of true Christianity.²⁷ The Christian God became a modern God, a coherent and efficient God, and today all of this god's worshippers, across the whole spectrum of life and thought, look very much like him.

Christianity in modern times is thoroughly modern.²⁸ This represents a third radicalization of the "Futurum Paradigm". It is the religious endorsement of the modern cultural paradigm whether it openly accepts modernity or resists modernity on its own terms, as it is mainly the case in Adventism.

In fact, though most of the time we Adventist have not been very friendly to modernity, paradoxically we have managed to assimilate its genes and incarnate its more distinctive features. Today Adventism represents a very modern religion despite itself. Its ethics is a very typical modern ethics based on order, discipline and coherence. Its Dogmatic is a very modern Dogmatic, based on the presumed completeness, clarity and efficiency of the belief-system. On a more sociological level liberal Adventism²⁹ and conservative Adventism³⁰ often share the same modern cultural presupposition: the certainty of a linear model.

Even more generally in contemporary Adventism this linear paradigm has two versions. We have a southern version which is dynamic and mission-oriented and obsessed with baptizing and with numbers. We also have a northern version which is often paralyzed and hypnotized with the compulsive thought of institutional and administrative efficiency and reliability. They are suspicious of each other, overlooking and removing the original fact of their common belonging in modernity. In fact they are twin brothers, legitimate children of the same voluntaristic, linear and modern "Futurum Paradigm".

²⁷ Gabriel Vahanian, "Ecclesial Revolution and Technological Society", in, *God and Utopia. The Church in a Technological Civilization*, (New York: Seabury Press, 1977), 93.

²⁸ Talal Asad, "Secularism, Nation-State, Religion", in, *Formations of the Secular. Christianity, islam, Modernity*, (Stanford: University Press, 2003), 189-193; See also, *Genealogies of Religion. Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 19-20.

²⁹ See, "The best approach to thinking theologically about same-sex love and its accompanying physical intimacy is to consider this kind of relationship in the broader context of romantic love and sexuality in general. Only in this way can a sound theological understanding of same-sex love be developed". Fritz Guy, "Same-sex Love: Theological Considerations", in, David Ferguson, Fritz guy, David Larson (eds), *Christianity and Homosexuality. Some Seventh-day Adventist Perspectives*, (Roseville: Adventist Forum, 2008), Part 4-43.

³⁰ F. Canale, "From Vision to System: Finishing the Task of Adventist Theology. Part I: Historical Review", in, *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 15/2 (Autumn 2004): 5-39.

II. THE “ADVENTUS” PARADIGM³¹

The “Adventus Paradigm” of the future opposes the “Futurum Paradigm”.³² While “Futurum” is the future as an extension of the present, “Adventus” is the coming of the future to the present.³³

Whenever based on present conditions we conclude or forecast what the situation will be tomorrow we are in the “Futurum Paradigm”. Whenever we are surprised and enriched by the spontaneous visit of somebody who comes to us, or whenever we rejoice and welcome a freely happening event, we are in the “Adventus Paradigm”.

“Futurum” is the deep satisfaction with the arrival of what have been planned and scheduled; however, at the same time it fears the unknown and what is different. “Adventus” is the vulnerability and openness that gets in touch with the unscheduled and the joyful and trusting hope welcoming the unknown and what is different.

In this logic the god who was, is and will be is a “Futurum” god; this god *becomes* does not *come*. He will be what he has always been i.e. the same. This is how the ancient god Zeus was and behaved; this is also how the modern gods of our technological and efficient society are and behave. Modern society in fact is interested only in a future that brings more of the same present well-being and growth. It is instead afraid of a future that runs different than the statistically planned best projections.

The “Adventus” God is a different God. He is a God who was, is and will come. He creates a break, an interruption in the sequence of line-time. He is a free God because he will be in the future something new he has never been before. He is not imprisoned in his prophecies but faithful to them. This God doesn’t *become* but *comes*. He is also a trusting God in that he doesn’t feel endangered or threatened in face of what is new and unscheduled or towards what is different.

We therefore have two different conceptions of future. Let’s focus now on three implications of the “Adventus paradigm” for the understanding of time itself.

a. A broken time.³⁴

³¹ In order to describe this different way of understanding time and particularly what is ahead of us Moltmann refers to Latin and European languages and their use of “Futurum” and “Adventus”. Jürgen Moltmann, “The Eschatology of the Coming God”, in, *The Coming of God. Christian Eschatology*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 22-24.

³² Wolfhart Pannenberg, “The kingdom of God and the End of Time”, in, *Systematic Theology, Volume 3*, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark Ltd., 1998), 580-595.

³³ Jürgen Moltmann, “The Eschatology of the Coming God”, in, *The Coming of God. Christian Eschatology*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 25, 26.

³⁴ J. Moltmann speaks of “Discontinuity of Time”. See, “Experiences of Time in the history of God”, in, *God in Creation. A new theology of Creation and the Spirit of God*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 118-124. He also speaks of “interruption or

The first and more immediate result of the application of the “Adventus paradigm” is a radical critic of the automatism and self-sufficiency of linear time. Time is never homogeneous and future is not the addition of events. True time is necessarily a broken time, a time full of interruptions.³⁵ This brokenness of time represents a direct effect of the “prophetic-apocalyptic”³⁶ dimension of the “Adventus Paradigm”. “Adventus” judges time and puts clear limits to its pretension to be eternal, linear and homogeneous.

b. A heterogeneous time.³⁷

A second important effect of the “Adventus Paradigm” is the creation of true historical differences and alternative times. Not only is the line broken, but in addition to this, while brokenness is its result, at the same time the “Adventus Paradigm” allows the emergence of other different time-lines that run parallel, contrast, oppose, and resist to the sufficiency and dictatorship of the first time-line.

True time is never monolinear, monolayer, monolithic; neither it is a tedious and solipsistic monologue. True time is plural. There is not a time but many times. This represents the “kairological”³⁸ side of “Adventus”. This diversity is not merely

conversion of time”. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Coming of God. Christian Eschatology*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 22. See also, Heinz Zahrnt, “Die Wiederentdeckung des historischen Jesus”, in *Die Sache mit Gott. Die protestantische Theologie im 20. Jahrhundert*, (München: Piper, 1988), 279-288.

³⁵ H. Arendt, *Between past and Future. Eight Exercises in Political Thought*, 43. See also, K. Löwith, *Significato e fine della storia. I presupposti teologici della filosofia della storia*, 219. On a more cultural and secular basis there are some contemporary Hebrew thinkers who have heavily reacted against this modern-linear understanding of history and culture: E. Bloch, G. Scholem, W. Benjamin, , F. Rosenzweig, J. Taubes. K. Löwith etc. Cf. Jürgen Moltmann, “The Rebirth of Messianic Thinking in Judaism”, in *The Coming of God. Christian Eschatology*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 29-44.

Moltmann is very critical also towards the theological and religious version of this linear perspective. He sees in O. Cullmann a representative of this linear model that he calls a very typical modern model leaned from modern physics not from the bible. *Ibid.*, 10-13.

³⁶ J. Moltmann writes: “But what sets them apart from the historical writings (i. e. the prophetic writings) is their experience of the rupture of this salvation history through the destruction of Jerusalem and the enslavement of the people. For them, this meant experiencing the discontinuity of history.” in *God in Creation. A new theology of Creation and the Spirit of God*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 120.

³⁷ Cornelius Castoriadis, “Zeit und Schöpfung”, in *Gesellschaft als imaginäre Institution. Entwürfe einer politischen Philosophie*, (Frankfurt an Main: Suhrkamp, 1984), 331-342. Pierre Gisel, “L’historicisme”, in *Vérité et Histoire. La théologie dans la modernité. Ernst Käsemann*, (Genève: Labor et Fides, 1977), 62-76.

³⁸ J. Moltmann writes: “That is why Israel talked about ‘times’ in the plural. She was not conscious of time as a unity, because she did not see world events as homogeneous.” In *God in Creation. A new theology of Creation and the Spirit of God*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 118.

quantitative; it is qualitative as well. Each diverse time is particular, specific, irreplaceable and unique, i.e. it is kairós.

c. A relational time.³⁹

The diversity of times the “Adventus Paradigm” creates is not destined to be the story of an eternal contraposition of times. Beyond its iconoclastic vocation, “Adventus” is dialoguing and relational time. It doesn’t oppose to the arrogance of past and present time its own. History is not destined to be a clash of self-sufficient times. All the arrogances are sinful and finally equivalent, that of humans, that of God, that of the Past, that of “Adventus”.

“Adventus” knows how to be kind time. As such it builds on what past time and present time have initiated and introduced. Past and present as much as memory and projections are not target enemies of the apocalyptic, destructive power of “Adventus”. This is why “Adventus” is also a forgiving time that humbly completes what other times have left uncompleted.⁴⁰ True time is necessarily a dialoguing time, a time full of connections and interactions. This is the “Messianic”⁴¹ side of “Adventus”.

³⁹ Ibid., 123. This relational characteristic of eschatological time is described by Moltmann as a “unifying perspective of messianic time”. See, “Becoming Alive in the Spirit of the Resurrection: the Uniting of what has been Separated”, in, *The Way of Jesus Christ. Christology in Messianic Dimensions*, (New York: HarperCollins, 1990), 263-273. For a relational understanding of time see also Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, 3 vols., (Chicago: The university of Chicago Press, 1984, 1985, 1988). See also Jacques Le Goff, *Histoire et mémoire*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1988).

⁴⁰ Paul Ricoeur, “Le pardon difficile”, in, *La mémoire, l’histoire, l’oubli*, (Paris: Seuil, 2000), 593-656.

⁴¹ Moltmann writes: “So what is new about the messianic time is not entirely new...the messianic gospel takes up the promises and the experiences of Israel’s hope and spreads them through the world. With faith in Jesus the Messiah it therefore evokes among the Gentiles hope for the messianic kingdom of the God of Israel.”, in, *God in Creation. A new theology of Creation and the Spirit of God*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 122, 123.

III. SOME SOCIO-THEOLOGICAL ⁴² CONSEQUENCES FOR THE ADVENTIST⁴³ IDENTITY⁴⁴

a. A broken identity.⁴⁵

If we are to be really Adventist, our theological identity can't be definitive or linear but rather broken. In this sense an identity excessively certain of its virtues, obsessed in being coherent, and at any time and anywhere uniquely worried in affirming itself is already pathological.

Adventist theological identity should be in movement, not institutionalized. Its necessary institutionalization should be taken for what it is: a circumstantial administrative strategy not a theological fact. Incompleteness is not a sign of sickness, just as ignoring something is not synonym of disengagement or indifference. On the contrary theological holism and obsession with theological synthesis must always be looked with suspicion.

A fixed thought with theological coherence gives often place to a monolithic, unilateral and reductive theological identity. This often appears to be a strong and clear identity but in the end it is very fragile because it is unable to cope with surprises, tragedies, mysteries or with theological paradoxes and ambivalences.

To have a “weak identity”⁴⁶ may be a sign of maturity.⁴⁷ True Adventism is not necessarily the sum of triumphs and certainties. Interruptions, ruptures, changes, “dislocations”⁴⁸ may be symptoms of health. To have a “traveling”⁴⁹ or a “diasporic

⁴² Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990). Alain Touraine, Farhad Khosrokhavar, *La recherche de soi. Dialogue sur le sujet*, (Paris: Arthème Fayard, 2000). Debora Spini, *La società civile postnazionale*, (Roma: Meltemi, 2006).

⁴³ Our perspective is different to that of G. Knight because is more sociological. George R. Knight, *A Search for Identity. The development of Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs*. (Hagerstown: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2000).

⁴⁴ Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991). Francesco Giacomantonio, *Il discorso sociologico della tarda modernità. Individui, identità e democrazia*, (Genova: Il melangolo, 2007). Gianfranco Pecchinenda, *Dell'identità. Analisi sociologiche*, (Napoli: Ipermedium, 2005).

⁴⁵ Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects. Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

⁴⁶ Homi K. Bhabha, “Interrogating Identity”, in *Location of Culture*, (London: Routledge, 1994), 57-93. Zygmunt Bauman, *Intervista sull'identità. A cura di Benedetto Vecchi*, (Roma: Laterza, 2005), 58-63. Giacomo Marramao, “Identità. Questioni teoriche”, in *Passione per il presente. Breve lessico della modernità-mondo*, (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2008), 57-86. Amartya K. Sen, *Reason Before Identity*, (Oxford: University Press, 1999), 7.

⁴⁷ Julia Kristeva, *Etrangers a nous-memes*, (Paris, Flammarion, 1988).

⁴⁸ A. Appadurai, *Modernity at large. Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996). P. Harvey, *Hybrids of modernity*,

identity”⁵⁰ means that the synthesis of what we are, is still not given. What we are is only part of us.⁵¹ What we could be, on one side, or what we are not, on the other, belong to us, as orientation and as limit of ourselves. They are as much of what we are or what we have been.

b. A heterogeneous identity.⁵²

If we are to be really Adventist, our theological identity can't be homogeneous or monolithic. Unity and universalism are modern obsessions we must not necessarily copy. If the future can't be deduced from present, and if it introduces its own historical specificity, historical and theological differences then are not deviations or diseases that need to be overcome but rather visible signs of true historical time and a result of a future-oriented eschatology.

There is no single theological identity in Adventism but many. Although this number is not infinite, there are various types of Adventism and all of them are legitimate children of the very same Adventist heritage and perspective. This heterogeneity is no sign of pathology; it is a historical sign of health and dynamism.

South American Adventism is different from North American Adventism as much as European Adventism is different from both of them. One is not better than the other. They are different in age, dimension and in cultural perspective. In order to become healthy, Adventism needs to create and pay attention to its own internal alternatives and diversity.⁵³ Just as a “multiple self”⁵⁴ is not synonymous of psychological pathology, multiple Adventism is not a sign of denominational illness.

Anthropology, the Nations-State and the Universal Exhibition, (London: Routledge, 1996).

⁴⁹ James Clifford speaks of “traveling cultures”. See, *Roots. Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*, (Cambridge (Mass): Harvard University Press, 1997), 39. Marc Augé, *Non-lieux: introduction a une anthropologie de la surmodernité*, (Paris: Seuil, 1992). Ulf Hannerz, *Cultural Complexity*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992).

⁵⁰ Paul Gilroy, *There Ain't no Black in the Union Jack*, (London: Routledge, 1987); *The Black Atlantic. Modernity and Double Consciousness*, (London: Routledge, 1993). Stuart Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora”, in, J. Rutherford (ed), *Identity, Community, Culture, Difference*, (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990). “La formazione dell'intellettuale diasporico”, in, *Politiche del quotidiano. Culture, identità e senso comune*, (Giovanni Leghissa editor), (Milano: Saggiatore, 2006), 263-284.

⁵¹ Richard Sennett, *The Corrosion of Character. The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism*, (New York: Norton & Company, 1999).

⁵² Paul Ricoeur, *Soi-meme comme un autre*, (Paris: Seuil, 1990), 11-37.

⁵³ Rosi Braidotti, “Becoming-ethical: an eco-philosophy of multiple belongings”, in, *Transpositions. On Nomadic Ethics*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006), 123-128.

⁵⁴ Giacomo Marramao, “Multiple Self: identità multiple e comportamenti oscillanti”, in, *Passione per il presente. Breve lessico della modernità-mondo*, (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2008), 64-67. Albert O. Hirschman, *The passions and the Interests. Political Arguments for Capitalism Before its Triumphs*, (Princeton: University Press, 1977), 25-

But there is also an external heterogeneity.⁵⁵ Just as there is not one Adventism but many, so Adventism doesn't represent the unique possible Christian religion and theology. Adventism is one type of biblical reading, not the only one. We believe that it is best one; but this is our noble hypothesis which we need to demonstrate to society today in theory and in practice and surely not by decree.

c. A relational identity.⁵⁶

If we are to be really Adventist, we are destined to be relational. Theological relationship is the overcoming of theological isolation from others as well as the overcoming of the despotism of one Adventism over the others. The idolatry of one Adventism and the depreciation of the alternatives go hand by hand. It is the double face of the same coin. Diversity is not to be feared or to be canceled. It's an invitation to dialogue⁵⁷ and confrontation. It reminds us to face and to accept the suffered experience of true conflict because diversity is not always the result of a misunderstanding. As much as, Diversity is not only complementary to my needs and lacks. Theological diversity sometimes resists integration and synthesis but in this it doesn't represent an obstacle to theological communion and theological dialogue. Relationship is communion⁵⁸ not symbiosis. It doesn't see others and diversity as deviations or as diseases to be overcome but as the very essence of true communion.⁵⁹

In order to realize this, is necessary that male made Adventist theology urgently pays attention and accept to be corrected and balanced by Adventist women made theology.⁶⁰

26. Elster John, *The Multiple Self in Rationality and Social Change*, (Cambridge: University Press, 1986). Derek Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984). Bernard A. O. Williams, *Problems of the Self. Philosophical Papers 1956-1972*, (Cambridge: University Press, 1973).

⁵⁵ G. Ch. Spivak, "Culture", in, *A Critic of Postcolonial Reason. Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*, (Cambridge (Mass): Harvard University Press, 1999), 313-421. Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 2000).

⁵⁶ Giacomo Marramao, "Universalismo della differenza", in, *Passione per il presente. Breve lessico della modernità-mondo*, (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2008), 84, 85.

⁵⁷ Carol Gilligan, "Concepts of Self and Morality", in, *In a Different Voice. Psychological Theory and Women's Development*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), 64-105. Luisa Muraro, "Il cerchio di carne", in, *L'ordine simbolico della madre*, (Roma: Riuniti, 2006), 76. Luce Irigaray, *Je, tu, nous. Pour une culture de la difference*, (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1990). 55-62.

⁵⁸ Johnson Elizabeth A., "Divine Nature: A Communion", in, *She Who is. The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse*, (New York: Crossroad, 1994), 227-233.

⁵⁹ Johnson Elizabeth A., "Triune God: Mystery of Relation", in, *She Who is. The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse*, (New York: Crossroad, 1994), 191-223.

⁶⁰ Pulcini Elena, *L'uomo senza passioni. L'individualismo moderno e perdita del legame sociale*. (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2001), 12-35.

In order to become really relational Western and north Adventist theology needs to identify, recognize and confront itself with non-western and southern Adventist theology.⁶¹

But there is also an external relation to take care of. We Adventists are not alone⁶² in the religious world panorama or in society. We need others, the world, society and other Christians, and we need to take care of them in order to grow up healthy⁶³, balanced⁶⁴ and noble.

Pulcini Elena, *Il potere di unire. Femminile, desiderio, cura*, (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2003), 1-19.

⁶¹ Samuel Escobar, "A New Way of Looking to the World", in, *The New Global Mission. The Gospel from Everywhere to Everyone*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 155-170. Philip Jenkins, "The Christian Revolution", in, *The Next Christendom. The Coming of Global Christianity*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 1-14. Lamin Sanneh, "Christianity Uncovered: The Discovery of the Gospel beyond the West", 1-12, *Whose Religion is Christianity. The Gospel beyond the West*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 2-23.

⁶² Stuart Hall, "La questione multi-culturale", in, *Il soggetto e la differenza. Per un'archeologia degli studi culturali e postcoloniali*, (Roma. Meltemi, 2006), 279-323.

⁶³ Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*, (London: Free Association Books, 1990), 188.

⁶⁴ Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Minority Histories, Subaltern Pasts", in, *Provincializing Europe, postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 97-113.