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ARTICLES

SERMON

FEATURES

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THE PRESIDENT'S PAGE

A Message from the ATS President

C. Raymond Holmes

The Adventist Theological Society has had four years of life, years characterized by organization, development, and consolidation. The Society's gratitude is due to past-presidents Dr. Jack Blanco, chair of the Religion Department at Southern College of Seventh-day Adventists, who served as president during the founding and organizational phase, and Dr. Gerhard Hasel, Director of the Ph.D. and Th.D. programs at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, who served as president during the consolidation phase. Thanks is due also to many others who served in leadership roles during that time, in particular the editors and referees of publications.

Most prominently, we offer thanks to our Lord for the ways in which He has blessed the formation, growth, and influence of ATS. A brief review is appropriate.

GROWTH

ATS has enjoyed phenomenal membership growth in a short time, starting with a handful of interested parties in 1988. This rapid growth may lead to possible constitutional changes relative to organizational structure in order to implement a wider distribution of responsibility in a volunteer organization.

BROAD-BASED MEMBERSHIP

Some questions have been raised relative to the broad-based membership policy of ATS, which includes professionals in disciplines other than theology, as well as interested laity. It became apparent early in the organizational meetings that in order for an Adventist theological society to be truly *Adventist* it should have a broad base. The responsibility for the theological enterprise in the Seventh-day Adventist Church is not the prerogative of professional theologians alone, but a responsibility of the whole Church. The broad base reflects that Adventist principle.

CHAPTERS

Currently chapters have been organized and are engaged in local activities, and I want to express my greetings to the members and leaders of each chapter. It is the fervent prayer of the general officers of ATS that the Lord will mightily bless the activities of these chapters as they conscientiously represent the ideals of ATS in affirming "our faithfulness to the Seventh-day Adventist Church" (*Constitution and Bylaws*, p. 4). The establishment of local chapters is encouraged, and interested parties may write for information and guidelines governing the organization and structure of such chapters.

PUBLICATIONS

Since its inception ATS has viewed the production and distribution of theological literature as a major endeavor. Here again the Society has been blessed by the Lord with phenomenal growth and development within four short years. The production of theological literature has developed providentially along four lines: the twice yearly publication of the **Journal of the Adventist Theological Society (JATS)**, as well as **ATS Occasional Papers, ATS Monographs**, and the **ATS Dissertation Series.** See the tear-out order form for these publications at the back of this issue of **JATS**.

INVITATION TO DIALOG

The formation of the Adventist Theological Society, and its publications, constitute an invitation to dialog. Volume 1 of **Adventist Theological Society Occasional Papers (ATSOP 1)**, "Issues in Revelation and Inspiration," is a dialogical response to the vital issue of biblical authority for Seventh-day Adventists and other Christians. Furthermore, ATS meetings, with the exception of business sessions, are open to all with opportunity for dialog.

RECENT MEETINGS

The 1992 annual convention convened in Chan Hall, Loma Linda Academy, Loma Linda, California in April with "Salvation" as the theme. Attendance was phenomenal, the spirit of oneness and praise outstanding, and the presentations inspiring. Papers and addresses given at that meeting constitute the major contents of this and the next volume of **JATS**.

The 1992 Scholars Meeting will assemble in the Airport Hilton, San Francisco, California, November 19-20, followed by an ATS rally at the Pleasant Hills Church on Sabbath, November 21. The theme will be "Seventh-day Adventist Lifestyle."

FUTURE

Where does the Adventist Theological Society go from here? The Society and its leadership must aggressively continue the momentum generated during the past four years with respect to: (1) Continued membership growth. It is not outside the realm of possibility for ATS to double its membership in 1993. May I encourage every member to function as a recruiter, inviting friends and acquaintences to attend general and chapter meetings. A nice gift to friends would be copies of **JATS** and other publications. (2) Broadening the international nature of the Society by establishing additional chapters around the world. (3) Continuing to produce and publish high quality, cutting-edge theological literature that will make a positive contribution to the message and mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Pray that the Lord will employ ATS as one instrument in sparking a Spirit-inspired, Spirit-filled, Spirit-empowered revival of Adventist Christianity. Maranatha!

Yours, in the service of the Master,

C. Raymond Holmes

THE PAST PRESIDENT'S PAGE

A Message from the ATS Past President

Gerhard F. Hasel

It was my distinct privilege to serve as elected President of ATS for the last two years. They have flown by with end time rapidity. Our members know that the Constitution and Bylaws of ATS call for a change in President every two years. This is a wise and healthy procedure. Dr. C. Raymond Holmes, one of the co-founders of ATS and a colleague of mine in the teaching ministry at the Theological Seminary of Andrews University, began his two-year term as President on June 1, 1992. Ray, as we all call him, is a knowledgeable and informed person. Before he became a loyal and committed Seventh-day Adventist in the early seventies, he functioned as a pastor in the Lutheran Church. He knows what it means for a church to be drifting and to be reshaped by forces other than those based in Scripture with its Holy Spirit-provided revelation. He had served as Vice President until now and is succeeded in that office by E. Edward Zinke, a person who has served as a pastor and in the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference before taking a leave of absence to further his education in theology. He supports himself now as a successful businessman while remaining active in all phases of theology. I wish both of them the unfailing support of heaven and of the officers, trustees, staff and members of ATS which I had the privilege to experience. Without the warm and close fellowship and the supportive association of fellow members of ATS the unimaginable undertakings of ATS would have been an impossibility. All praise, honor and glory belong to Him who is the inspiration, source and driving force of ATS, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

ATS is now well known around the globe on all levels of the Church and beyond. The Lord has blessed the continuing humble efforts of all officers and trustees, each of whom serve on a fully volunteer basis without any remuneration, the presenters of papers, the counselors and all the others who have been such dedicated supporters of ATS. Highlights of ATS were the international conventions held in Keene, Texas, and in Loma Linda, California, in 1991 and 1992 respectively. Hundreds of people from all ranks of church life, General Conference, union conference, local conference leaders, ordained pastors and interns, educational, medical, and legal professionals, and huge numbers of interested lay members of our Church attended these international conventions. The next one will be held April 15-18, 1993, on the campus of Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan. In the meantime the so-called Scholars' Meeting will be held in San Francisco, California, at the Airport Hilton (in conjunction with other professional meetings) on November 19-20, 1992. Everyone is invited to attend all of these meetings. Time and again it is said that the superb fellowship and the spiritual uplift based on the solidity of the presentations made is second to none, revealing the genuine Adventist spirit at its best.

The readers of this **Journal**, now in its third year with its fifth publication (and the next issue scheduled to be published very shortly), gain some flavor of the quality of material presented since most of the presentations of both annual meetings are published in **JATS.** In the meantime ATS has begun an "Adventist Theological Society Monograph" series, an "Adventist Theological Society Occasional Papers" series, and an "Adventist Theological Society Dissertation" series. The first volumes of the first two series are published already and by the time this issue of **JATS** reaches our readers (see the advertisements on the last pages of this issue) the first volume of the "dissertation" series will have come off the press. These publications are available at moderate cost to anyone who wishes to receive them.

ATS receives numerous letters from readers who express their appreciation for what they see. We are unable to respond to them or to reproduce them. We are told, "How refreshing and satisfying to feel the 'pillars' firm under our feet" (lay member). **JATS** "is without doubt the most thought provoking, encouraging, and faith inspiring material I have read in recent times" (pastor). And we could go on and on. These and many other voluntary comments seem to indicate that the intellect and soul of many readers of **JATS** are fed. We trust that our Father in heaven will continue to attend

ATS with His divine blessings and that whatever is done will be done to the glory of God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Sincerely yours,

Gerhard F. Hasel

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SALVATION AND FORGIVENESS

By Richard M. Davidson
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Introduction

Today is Easter Friday (April 17, 1992). It is also one of those rare occasions when Easter Friday in our Gregorian calendar coincides with the eve of Passover, the 14th day of Nisan in the Hebrew calendar. On this day, almost 2,000 years ago, in fact, at this very time of day (about the 9th hour, 3 p.m.), Jesus, hanging upon Golgotha's cross, cried out, "It is finished! Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." At this time, on this day, in A.D. 31, the antitypical Paschal lamb died.

The evening before, on Maundy Thursday, in the upper room, Jesus explained in advance the meaning of His death. "And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink of it, all of you; for this is my blood of the [new] covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins'" (Matt 26:27).

When the blood flowed from the Saviour's riven side, the new covenant was formally ratified. And the essence of the new covenant promise, according to Jesus (alluding to Jeremiah 31), is the forgiveness of sins.[1] Salvation and forgiveness is at the heart of what happened at the Cross.

English Terminology. When we speak of forgiveness, we could just as well be using any of several virtually synonymous biblical terms: forgiveness, pardon, remission, or justification[2] (or closely related terms: reconciliation, covering, atonement, and propitiation). In an intriguing reference, E. G. White uses the three main terms "pardon," "justification," and "forgiveness" synonymously: "*Pardon* and *justification* are one and the same thing. . . . The sinner receives the *forgiveness* of his sins, because these sins are borne by his Substitute and Surety."[3]

Hebrew Terminology. A variety of Hebrew and Greek terms are employed to portray the concept of forgiveness.[4] In Hebrew, the five main words for "forgive" include: (1) *nāśāʾ* to "lift up, take away"—"forgiveness in terms of guilt being taken away, atoned for, or borne, resulting in divine pardon"[5] (Exod 28:43; 32:32; Lev 5:1, 7; Num 14:19, 34; 18:1; Josh 24:19; Ps 85:3; etc.); (2) *sālaḥ* "forgive, pardon" (and derivatives, *sallāḥ* "ready to forgive," *sᵉlīḥāh* "forgiveness"), always referring to God's forgiveness of man (Num 30:5, 8, 12; 1 Kgs 8:30, 34, 36, 39, 50; 2 Kgs 24:4; Amos 7:2; Ps 86:5; 130:4; Dan 9:9; Neh 12:7, 20; etc.); (3) *māḥah* "wipe away" (Ps 51:1, 7; Isa 43:25; 44:22; etc.); (4) *kāsāh* "cover" (Neh 4:5; Ps 32:1; 85:2; etc.); and (5) *kippēr* "to atone" (Deut 21:8; Ps 78:38; Jer 18:23; etc.).

Greek Terminology. In the LXX Greek terms expressing forgiveness include the verbs *euilateúō* "show mercy" (used for translating both *nāśāʾ* and *sālaḥ*), and *epikalýptō*, *kalýptō*, and *krýptō* "cover, conceal" (used for *kāsāh*). Sometimes *sālaḥ* is translated as *híleōs*, and *māḥah* is rendered by *exaleíphō* "wipe away."

In the New Testament the concept of forgiveness is portrayed by five verbs: *apolýō* (e.g., Luke 6:37), *aphíēmi* (e.g., Matt 6:12ff, 1 John 1:9), *charízomai* (2 Cor 2:7, 10), *kalýptō* (1 Pet 4:8), and *epikalýptō* (Rom 4:7); and by two nouns: *áphesis* (Mark 3:39; Acts 5:31) "putting away, remission, forgiveness" and *páresis* (Rom 3:25) "passing over."

From an examination of the various terms for forgiveness and their usages in the Scriptures, four major facets of forgiveness emerge. Each of these facets is illustrated in the original Passover service, which was the foreshadowing of Jesus' antitypical Paschal sacrifice for the remission of our sins. On this Easter Friday, the eve of Jewish Passover, it is particularly appropriate to refer to this typological illustration of our topic.

This will not be a technical, exegetical study. Rather in this presentation I invite you to rejoice in the great biblical statements on forgiveness. I also will call attention to that profound modern theologian of forgiveness, who gives inspired insights into the

biblical data—Ellen G. White. Time and again I have thought I discovered some new glorious insight in the Greek or Hebrew of Scripture, then going back to E. G. White, only to find that she had the insight already! In this study I cannot resist providing the opportunity to bask in some of the beauty and force of her expressions regarding forgiveness.

The Basis of Forgiveness

The Blood of Christ (Substitutionary Atonement)

The first facet of forgiveness focuses on its foundation. What is the *basis* of forgiveness in Scripture?

Passover Deliverance Typology. When we think back to the first Passover, the time of Israel's deliverance from their bondage in Egypt, and a type of spiritual Israel's deliverance from the bondage to sin, what was the basis of their deliverance? Scripture is clear: the basis was the *blood of the Lamb*! The Lord said to Israel that first Passover eve: "The blood [of the Passover lamb] shall be a sign for you, upon the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall fall upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt" (Exod 12:13).

As E. G. White put it, "When the first-born in Egypt perished, that of Israel, though graciously preserved, had been justly exposed to the same doom but for the atoning sacrifice."[6]

Antitypically, the basis for forgiveness is the blood of the substitutionary sacrifice. Paul writes, "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Cor 5:7, KJV). "The sacrificial lamb represents 'the Lamb of God,' in whom is our only hope of salvation."[7]

Sanctuary: Forgiveness by Substitute Sacrifice. What is implicit in the Passover typology is explicit in the Old Testament sanctuary ritual for forgiveness of sin. In Leviticus 4-6, where specific directions are given for the sin and guilt offerings, the basic pattern is always the same. The sinner brings the sin or guilt offering, lays his hands upon the innocent victim, transferring his sins in figure to the sacrifice; then the animal is slain, and the blood manipulated by the priest to make atonement for the sinner. Eight times this procedure is repeated in these chapters, in connection with various circumstances and parties involved. Each time, right after the blood is applied for atonement, there comes the priestly pronouncement: "He is forgiven."[8] Forgiveness is based upon the blood of the Substitute that dies in the sinner's place.

Hebrews 9:22 states incisively: "Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness [*áphesis*] of sins." Or as Paul writes to the Ephesians: "In him [Jesus] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness [*áphesis*] of our trespasses" (1:7).

As we ponder the meaning of the blood in the Passover and the other sacrifices of the sanctuary services, we perceive that the blood was not presented primarily with the purpose of winning over the hearts of sinners. The sinner no doubt was moved by the ceremony of sacrifice, but in Scripture it was the sinner, already repentant, who presented the sacrifice as a substitute, to typify the Lamb of God who would die in his place. Angel Rodriguez's published dissertation[9] demonstrates the fundamental substitutionary meaning of Passover and the other sanctuary-related sacrifices.

E. G. White describes how "Christ, in counsel with His Father, instituted the system of sacrificial offerings; that death, instead of being immediately visited upon the transgressor, should be transferred to a victim which should prefigure the great and perfect offering of the Son of God."[10]

Retributive Justice: A Scriptural Teaching. The concept of substitution as the basis for forgiveness is not just Christ as Substitute from *our* perspective, but from *God's* perspective.[11] It involves the biblical truth of retributitive justice, that is clearly portrayed throughout Scripture. The law of *lex talionis* (legal, just retribution) is unwaveringly presented in the Torah,[12] Prophets,[13] and Writings[14] of the Old Testament, in the New Testament Gospels,[15] Epistles,[16] and most clearly of all in the Apocalypse.[17] Contrary to the claim of some,[18] it was *not* repudiated on the legal level by Jesus in Matthew 5:38-40. What Christ opposed was private vengeance, in harmony with the Old Testament statements to the same effect: Proverbs 24:29 and 20:22.[19]

E. G. White forcefully indicates the truth of retributive justice at the cross: "The power that inflicted retributive justice upon man's substitute and surety, was the power that sustained and upheld the suffering One under the tremendous weight of wrath that would have fallen upon a sinful world. Christ was suffering

the death that was pronounced upon the transgressors of God's law."[20]

One cannot contrast (and put in opposition) the way of punishment (which is said to be "primitive" and "pagan") and the way of forgiveness (which is said to be "God's way"), as some have done.[21] Rather, in Scripture forgiveness is possible *because* of the punishment of sin in the person of our Substitute. E. G. White boldly states: "Our sins were laid on Christ, punished in Christ, put away by Christ, in order that His righteousness might be imputed to us."[22]

In describing the basis of forgiveness in the blood of Christ, we must be careful to uphold both the mercy and justice of God. We note, e.g., Rom 3:25-26 (NKJV): "[Jesus Christ] whom God set forth to be a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus." Note also Ps 85:10 (NKJV): "Mercy and truth have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other."

E. G. White is so clear:

> God is approached through Jesus Christ, the Mediator, the only way through which He forgives sins. God cannot forgive sins at the expense of His justice, His holiness, and His truth. But He does forgive sins and that fully. There are no sins He will not forgive in and through the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the sinner's only hope, and if he rests here in sincere faith, he is sure of pardon and that full and free.[23]

It is not enough to say that on the cross Jesus simply was experiencing the natural consequences of sin to show man that the wages of sin is death—to win us back to faith.[24] It is not enough to see the moral drawing power of the Cross; we must also see Christ's death as satisfying divine justice. E. G. White writes: "Christ on the cross not only draws men to repentance toward God for the transgression of His law—for whom God pardons He first makes penitent—but Christ has satisfied Justice; He has proffered Himself as an atonement. His gushing blood, His broken body satisfy the claims of the broken law, and thus He bridges the gulf which sin has made."[25]

Again: "The sinner receives the forgiveness of his sins, because these sins are borne by his Substitute and Surety. . . . It is the Father's prerogative to forgive our transgressions and sins, because Christ has taken upon Himself the guilt and reprieved us, imputing to us His own righteousness. His sacrifice satisfies fully the demands of justice."[26] And we cannot omit that potent line in *Desire of Ages*: "He, the sinbearer, endures the wrath of Divine justice, and for thy sake becomes sin itself."[27]

God could not merely declare man forgiven by His free creative power, as some have suggested.[28] This is because both justice and mercy are required, as part of the very character of God.

As E. G. White put it: "Justice demands that sin be not merely pardoned, but the death penalty must be executed. God, in the gift of His only begotten Son, met both these requirements. By dying in man's stead, Christ exhausted the penalty and provided a pardon."[29]

The Nature of Divine Forgiveness. God's forgiveness is not exactly like human forgiveness. Note what E. G. White wrote in a letter to Uriah Smith, in 1886:

> Men may say, 'I forgive all the injuries you have done to me,' but their forgiveness would not blot out one sin. But the Voice sounding from Calvary—'My son, my daughter, thy sins be forgiven thee'—is all-efficacious. . . . Many have expressed wonder that God demanded so many slain victims in sacrificial offerings of the Jews, but it was to rivet in their minds the great and solemn truth that without shedding of blood there was no remission of sins.[30]

Some seem to build their whole structure of forgiveness on the parable of the prodigal son, but R. K. Harrison[31] has insightfully pointed to the inadequacy of this approach:

> The parable of the Prodigal Son was spoken to teach the freedom of God's forgiveness and acceptance of returning sinners, and the duty of men to assume the same attitude toward them. This much it teaches, but it fails to set forth entirely God's attitude toward sin. With reference to the sinner God is love and mercy, but with reference to sin He is righteous, and this element of God's nature is no less essential to Him than His love, and must be considered in any effort to set forth completely the doctrine of God's forgiveness of sinners.

We cannot remove the doctrine of the penal substitution of

Christ, the propitiatory work of Christ on the cross which satisfies divine retributive justice. This doctrine is at the heart of the sanctuary message; it is clear throughout Old Testament and New Testament theology. It is the consistent view of Ellen White, throughout her life.[32] The atonement does also draw people to Christ, does also lead to healing, as we will see, but the objective basis for forgiveness must always be Christ's penal, forensic, substitutionary work.

If one does not acknowledge that forgiveness is based upon the penal substitutionary death of Christ, upon His satisfying the penalty of divine retributive justice in our place, *then there is a distortion of the gospel at its very core*. In the very attempt to uphold the gracious character of God, such a view results in emasculating God's justice and holiness. In fact, it also emasculates His mercy as well. E. G. White writes:

> His [Christ's] object was to reconcile the prerogatives of justice and mercy, and let each stand separate in its dignity, yet united. His mercy was not weakness, but a terrible power to punish sin because it is sin; yet a power to draw to it the love of humanity. Through Christ Justice is enabled to forgive without sacrificing one jot of its exalted holiness.[33]

How Is Substitution Possible? But some have raised the question, "How is one person able to take the penalty for another's sins? Is this not confusing the laws of civil and criminal justice?"[34] How was it possible for Christ to become our substitute?

I believe the answer is to be found in at least two crucial biblical concepts. First, Christ is our *Creator*. That means that we are not only His sons, but also his "workmanship" (Eph 2:10), His *property*. We *belong* to Him, and thus it is perfectly appropriate for Him to substitute a payment equivalent to (or in reality far exceeding)[35] the value of His property.

Second, Christ is the representative man, the second Adam. Just as Levi paid tithes to Melchizedek because by corporate solidarity he was in the loins of Abraham (Heb 7:9), so the whole world was corporately in Christ on the Cross. As Paul put it: "We are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died" (2 Cor 5:14). We all died in Christ on Golgotha. Thus the guilt of the whole world was atoned for by the death of that one Representative Man.

So, according to Romans 5:10: "While we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." "The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isa 53:6).

As E. G. White puts it: "The sins of a guilty world, which in figure are represented as 'red as crimson,' were imputed to the divine Surety."[36]

Thus Jesus paid an infinite price sufficient to atone for the guilt of the world. Does that mean that there is nothing left for the sinner to do? In one sense, yes, the whole world has already been reconciled to God. But this leads us to the second facet of forgiveness in Scripture.

The Path of Forgiveness: Man's Part

On this Easter Friday, the eve of Passover, we go back in our minds to the first Passover. The book *Patriarchs and Prophets* paints the Passover scene and focuses the issue sharply:

> It was not enough that the paschal lamb be slain; its blood must be sprinkled upon the doorposts; so the merits of Christ's blood must be applied to the soul. We must believe, not only that he died for the world, but that he died for us individually. *We must appropriate to ourselves the virtue of the atoning sacrifice.*[37]

The typology of the sacrifices for sin at the sanctuary presents the same truth. Before the individual sinner received the priestly declaration, "He is forgiven," he placed his hands upon the head of the innocent animal, and in repentance confessed his sins.[38]

There are some who suggest that since Christ died for the sins of the whole world, and reconciled the world to Himself, we are already forgiven, and there is nothing left to do except to celebrate our forgiveness. But again, Scripture is clear that before the "corporate forgiveness" worked out on the cross can be individually appropriated, the sinner must see his/her sinfulness in the light of the Cross, be broken in heartfelt repentance and contrition, make confession, and by faith claim the benefits of the atonement for herself personally.

All of this, of course, is the gift of Christ through the operation of the Spirit, and not at all a work generated by sinful humans. Repentance and faith are as much a gift as forgiveness.[39] This process is spelled out forcefully in the Penitential Psalms, 32 and

51, and in the chapters in *Steps to Christ* on "Repentance and Confession," and "Faith and Acceptance."[40] A powerful summary is found in *Selected Messages*:

> The first step toward salvation is to respond to the drawing of the love of Christ. God sends message after message to men, entreating them to repentance, that He may forgive, and write pardon against their names. Shall there be no repentance? Shall His appeals be unheeded? Shall His overtures of mercy be ignored, and His love utterly rejected? Oh, then man will cut himself off from the medium through which he may gain life eternal; for God only pardons the penitent! By the manifestation of His love, by the entreating of His Spirit, He woos men to repentance; for repentance is the gift of God, and whom He pardons He first makes penitent. . . .
>
> Christ came to reveal to the sinner the justice and love of God, that He might give repentance to Israel and remission of sins. When the sinner beholds Jesus lifted upon the cross, suffering the guilt of the transgressor, bearing the penalty of sin; when he beholds God's abhorrence of evil in the fearful manifestation of the death of the cross, and His love for fallen man, he is led to repentance toward God because of his transgression of the law which is holy, and just, and good. He exercises faith in Christ, because the divine Saviour has become his substitute, his surety, and advocate, the one in whom his very life is centered. To the repenting sinner God can show His mercy and truth, and bestow upon him His forgiveness and love."[41]

In this passage from inspiration we find an emphasis upon the basis of salvation in the substitutionary work of Christ, satisfying divine justice; and we find the path of forgiveness on the part of man beautifully encapsulated. We also see the eagerness with which God longs to forgive man. In fact the same passage goes on to say:

> Though all heaven has been poured out in one rich gift—for when God gave His Son, He gave the choicest gift of heaven, and the treasures of heaven are at our command—yet to the repenting soul the enemy will seek to represent God as stern and inexorable, unwilling to pardon the transgressor. At different times letters have come to me from persons who were in despair over their sins. One and another have written: 'I fear I am past all help. Is there any hope for me?' To these poor souls the message has been given: 'Hope in God. The Father has bread enough and to spare. Arise, and go to your

Father. He will meet you a great way off. He will give you His love and compassion."[42]

What a precious truth! And this leads us to the third facet of forgiveness:

The Full Assurance of Forgiveness

The apostolic assurance is: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9, KJV). Ellen White elaborates:

> He [Jesus] lived a sinless life. He died for us, and now he offers to take our sins and give us his righteousness. If you give yourself to him, and accept him as your Saviour, then, sinful as your life may have been, for his sake you are accounted righteous. Christ's character stands in place of your character, and you are accepted before God just as if you had not sinned.[43]

What glorious promises! But, as E. G. White reminds us in *Steps to Christ*, the chapter on "Faith and Acceptance,"

> Here is where thousands fail; they do not believe that Jesus pardons them personally, individually. They do not take God at His word. It is the privilege of all who comply with the conditions to know for themselves that pardon is freely extended for every sin. Put away the suspicion that God's promises are not meant for you. They are for every repentant transgressor.[44]

For the next few paragraphs, the rest of the chapter, the pen of inspiration rehearses the precious promises of God regarding forgiveness. Promises such as Isaiah 44:22—"I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins." Like Ephesians 1:7—"We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins." Then she concludes the chapter, "Yes, only believe that God is your helper. . . . As you draw near to him with confession and repentance, he will draw near to you with mercy and forgiveness."[45]

God wants us to know for sure that we have forgiveness of sins. He wants us to hear the same priestly pronouncement as the Old Testament sinner heard who confessed his sins over the sacrifice: "He is forgiven!" (Lev 4-5).

For most of my young life, on into my early ministry as a pastor, I didn't have the assurance of forgiveness and acceptance. I read those statements in E. G. White's writings about not ever saying "I am saved" and thought she meant one could never have assurance of forgiveness and acceptance with God. I didn't realize at that time that she was refuting the notion of "once-saved always saved" and was not at all denying the joy of full assurance of forgiveness and acceptance.[46] Finally God led me to see the beautiful promises of forgiveness, pardon, justification, acceptance. I stepped out by faith upon those promises, and experienced what it was like to know that I was "accepted in the beloved" (Eph 1:6, KJV).

Since then I have found the divine promises of forgiveness leaping out at me from all over Scripture. And I have found E. G. White affirming the joy of forgiveness. This last week I have been looking through the CD ROM recording of all of E. G. White's published writings.[47] I was astounded to find her usage of the term forgiveness and related words. For "forgive" there are 918 entries; for "forgiven," 729; for "forgiveness," 935—a total of 2,582 entries relating to forgiveness, not to speak of the word "pardon" employed 1,590 times and "justification/justify/justified," 1,560 times.

What has especially delighted me was to find so many references to the *joy* of forgiveness—such phrases as "[David felt] the *rapture* of the assurance of forgiveness"[48]; or "the *sweet evidence* of the forgiveness of sin."[49]

Have you experienced that rapture, that sweet evidence? It is only a prayer away!

The Fruit of Forgiveness: A Life of Obedience and Holiness

Now we come to the final facet of forgiveness that we consider this eve of Passover (1992). The fruit of forgiveness. Again, we find this facet illustrated in the first Passover. Once more, we draw from the description in *Patriarchs and Prophets*. After depicting the symbolism of the lamb prepared whole—not a bone of the Lamb of God was to be broken, and the completeness of Christ's sacrifice—E. G. White writes: "The flesh was to be eaten. It is not enough even that we believe on Christ for the forgiveness of sin; we must by faith be constantly receiving spiritual strength and nourishment from him through his word."[50] Then in concluding remarks on the Passover service, we find this:

By obedience the people were to give evidence of their faith. So all who hope to be saved by the merits of the blood of Christ should realize that they themselves have something to do in securing their salvation. While it is Christ only that can redeem us from the penalty of transgression, we are to turn from sin to obedience. Man is saved by faith, not by works; yet his faith must be shown by his works. God has given His Son to die as a propitiation for sin, he has manifested the light of truth, the way of life, he has given facilities, ordinances, and privileges; and now man must cooperate with these saving agencies; he must appreciate and use the helps that God has provided—believe and obey all the divine requirements.[51]

The emphasis upon the fruit of forgiveness in a forgiving spirit is apparent in Jesus' discussion in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 6:12-15) and again in the parable of the unforgiving servant (Matt 18:21-35).[52] John presents this balance between root and fruit: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to *forgive* us our sins and to *cleanse* us from all unrighteousness"(1 John 1:9, KJV).

Once again, Ellen White is right on target in pointing out that forgiveness is not merely a detached legal pronouncement of pardon without any connection to our ethical behavior, as some have claimed. "Forgiveness has a broader meaning than many suppose. . . . God's forgiveness is not merely a judicial act by which He sets us free from condemnation. It is not only forgiveness *for* sin, but reclaiming *from* sin. It is the outflow of redeeming love that transforms the heart."[53]

Conclusion

This afternoon we have explored four facets of forgiveness. If you like rhyme, we could call them: (1) the *foundation* of forgiveness; (2) the *appropriation* of forgiveness; (3) the *jubilation* of forgiveness; and (4) the *attestation* of forgiveness.

We have seen how each facet at times has been distorted within Christendom (and within Adventism) by emphasizing one point to the exclusion of the others.

Just now, I invite you to renew your dedication to *tota Scriptura*—to all that Scripture affirms about forgiveness. This Passover eve/Easter Friday—let us grasp the balanced, wholistic picture of salvation and forgiveness:

1. Let us embrace the *foundation* of forgiveness in our Substitute, Jesus Christ, who by His propitiatory death satisfied retributive justice in our behalf.
2. Let us reach out by faith in *appropriation* of this wonderful gift of forgiveness, pardon, justification.
3. Let us daily, hourly, know the *jubilation*, the rapture of the assurance of forgiveness.
4. And let us give *attestation* to the reality of our forgiveness by allowing the Savior not only judicially to pardon our guilt, but also to reclaim us from sin.

Endnotes

1 See Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 372.

2 In Ps 85:2 "forgive" (*nāśā'*) and "pardon" (*kāsāh*) are used in parallel: "Thou didst forgive the iniquity of thy people; thou didst pardon all their sin." In Rom 4:6-7 (citing Ps 32:1-2), Paul virtually equates "forgive" and "justify." Quotations from RSV unless otherwise noted.

3 *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 6:1070 (MS 21, 1891). Italics supplied.

4 The basic lexical information is largely adapted from R. K. Harrison, "Forgiveness," *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 2:340. Hereafter cited as *ISBE*.

5 Ibid. See also the forthcoming Andrews University Ph.D. dissertation on *nāśā'* by Gudmundur Olafsson.

6 White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 274.

7 Ibid., p. 277.

8 Lev 4:20, 26, 31, 35; 5:10, 13, 16; 6:7.

9 Angel Rodriquez, *Substitution in the Old Testament Cultus*, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series, vol. 3 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1982).

10 Ellen G. White, *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Assoc., 1957), p. 678 (= *ST*, March 14, 1878). Hereafter cited as *QD*.

11 Jack Provonsha, *You Can Go Home Again* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Assoc., 1982), p. 104. "He [Christ] is a substitute, then, from our perspective, not from God's."

12 E.g., Exod 21:22-25; Lev 24:19, 20; Deut 19:15-21.

13 E.g., Isa 3:11; 40:2; Jer 16:18; 50:15; Ezek 7:27; Obad 15.

14 E.g., Ps 137:8.

15 E.g., Matt 7:1-2.

16 E.g., Rom 2:1-2; 14:10; 2 Thess 1:6-9; Col 3:25; Heb 2:2-3.

17 E.g., Rev 6:9-11; 16:5-7; 18:6-8, 20. Meredith Kline, "Double Trouble," *JETS* 32 (1989): 171-179, has shown that the words translated as "double" in Rev 18:6; Jer 16:18; Isa 40:2; etc., actually mean "equivalent."

18 E.g., Provonsha, p. 58: "Jesus Himself repudiated the principle [of *lex talionis*]."

19 See, e.g., J. H. Gerstner, "Law in the New Testament," *ISBE*, 3:87; John R. W. Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7): Christian Counter-Culture* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1978), pp. 103-105.

20 *QD*, p. 667 = MS 35, 1895. *Pace* Provonsha, pp. 36, 55-58.

21 See, e.g., Provonsha, pp. 86-87.

22 *QD*, p. 672 = *ST*, May 30, 1895.

23 *SDABC*, 7:912-913; cf. *QD*, p. 683-684 = MS 29, 1906.

24 A. Graham Maxwell, *Can God Be Trusted?* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Assoc., 1977), pp. 87-88.

25 *QD*, p. 679 = MS 50, 1900.

26 *SDABC*, 6:1070 = MS 21, 1891.

27 Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages*, p. 756.

28 E.g., Provonsha, pp. 87-88.

29 *QD*, p. 674 = MS 50, 1900. See also *QD*, pp. 673-674, for other similar statements.

30 Ellen G. White, *The Upward Look*, p. 219 = Letter 85, July 24, 1886.

31 In his article on "Forgiveness" in the *ISBE*, 2:343.

32 See the paper by Jo Ann Davidson on "Atonement and the Writings of Ellen White," forthcoming in *JATS*. Ellen White never "matures" to a different view.

33 *QD*, p. 674 = *General Conference Bulletin*, 4th Quarter, 1899, vol. 3, p. 102.

34 See Provonsha, p. 36.

35 White, *The Upward Look*, p. 219: "Justice asked for the sufferings of a man. Christ, equal with God, gave the sufferings of a God. It was for man—all for man . . ."

36 *QD*, p. 666 = MS 84a, 1897.

37 White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 277. Italics supplied.

38 See Lev 4:15, 24, 29, for the reference to laying on of hands; and Lev 5:5 refers to confession; Lev 16 and 23 emphasize the aspect of repentance—affliction of soul in connection with the Day of Atonement; see also Ezek 18:30; and especially note 1 Kgs 8:47, 50—"If they repent . . . then . . . forgive."

39 See Acts 5:31; Rom 12:3.

40 See especially Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, pp. 26, 55. See also 2 Cor 7:10; Luke 3:3.

41 Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, 1:323-324.

42 Ibid., 1:324-325. The forthcoming Andrews University Ph.D. dissertation by Gudmundur Olafsson, examines a key Old Testament word for forgiveness (*nāśāʾ*), and shows how *nāśāʾ* in the context of forgiveness also implies the supportive relationship, the personal care and loving concern of God, His willingness to take on Himself the consequences of sin, to suffer, even die (pp. 301-303 in present draft).

43 White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 62.

44 Ibid., pp. 52-53.

45 Ibid., p. 55.

46 For further discussion of the Ellen White statements and my own experience, see "The Good News of Yom Kippur," *JATS* 2 (1991):8-9.

47 Ellen G. White, *The Published Ellen G. White Writings on Compact Disc* (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, Inc., 1990).

48 *SDABC*, 3:1146.

49 Ellen G. White, *Faith and Works*, p. 16. Italics supplied.

50 Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 277.

51 Ibid., p. 279.

52 E. G. White comments: "We are not forgiven *because* we forgive, but *as* we forgive. The ground of all forgiveness is found in the unmerited love of God, but by our attitude toward others we show whether we have made that love our own," *Christ's Objects Lessons*, p. 251. Italics hers.

53 Ellen G. White, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 114. Italics hers.

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SALVATION AND THE ATONEMENT: A BIBLICAL-EXEGETICAL APPROACH

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Introduction

The theme of salvation and the atonement is generally considered as the central truth of the Christian gospel. The way we understand Christ's work of atonement expresses our view of God's character and His divine nature as well as of the essence of sin. No other topic of the Bible has received more vehement debate in the last 1000 years of the Christian church, especially since the rise of Protestant liberal theology in the last 100 years. Even within the SDA Church basically conflicting theories on salvation and the atonement have emerged and are presently being promoted, even by some of our denominational publications.

In order to lift this controversial theme above the level of a crusade of one school of theological opinion over against another, I propose to approach the topic from a biblical-exegetical point of view, that is, to sharpen the focus on the original meaning of the apostolic gospel proclamation. Aware of the fact that our theological systems do affect our interpretation, I am confident, however, that an unprejudiced exegetical approach of the total biblical witness can help us to overcome our incorrect alternatives or one-sided views. The authoritative teaching of Holy Scripture alone can persuade us to enlarge our vision of the atonement, until we become

excited by the wonder of it all. In *The Great Controversy*, p. 651 we read: "The cross of Christ will be the science and the song of the redeemed through all eternity. In Christ glorified they will behold Christ crucified."

An inventory of the basic data in the Bible shows us that we need to establish the biblical theology of the atoning rituals in Israel's sanctuary and specifically of the atoning suffering and death of the Servant of Yahweh in Isa 53. In the NT we need to ask for Jesus' own understanding of His messianic mission to be sent by the Father as a "ransom for many"[1] (Mark 10:45) and what meaning He attached to His sacrificial blood at His last Supper (Matt 26:28) and to His unique mental anguish on the cross. Then serious attention must be given to the relevant passages of the apostles Paul, John, Peter, and especially to those in the important Epistle to the Hebrews. Central in all biblical study of the atonement stands the solemn phrase "the wrath of God," the theological meaning of which is hotly disputed outside and inside our denomination.

A thorough treatment of all the biblical data would require a sizeable book. Such a treatise, made by exegetically and theologically qualified Bible scholars, would be a great service and blessing for our church membership. For our purpose, I must limit my inquiry to some representative Scripture passages.

The Self-testimony of Jesus

Jesus' own testimony concerning the meaning of His suffering, rejection, and violent death is of paramount importance for the NT gospel message. Immediately after Peter had confessed that Jesus indeed was the Messiah of Israel, Jesus began to announce that (as the Messiah) He had to "suffer much" (Mark 9:12) and *had to* die a violent death (Matt 16:21). Three times Jesus declared explicitly that He must [*dei*] be killed by Jerusalem's leaders (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33). The fact that Jesus viewed His death as necessary ought not to be interpreted as meaning that He submitted to a natural law or to some inescapable fate, but rather that Christ saw His death as the intention and fulfillment of God's plan of redemption as it was revealed in the sacred Scriptures.

Jesus explained the necessity of His impending death by pointing to the predicted suffering of the Servant of Yahweh (Isa 53), saying: "and I tell you that this must be fulfilled in me" (Luke 22:37). Jesus' appeal to Isaiah's prophecy makes it clear that He understood His whole messianic mission in the light of Isaiah 53. Christ's prediction of His ultimate rejection and His death and resurrection in Mark 8:31 and 9:12 forms an exact summary of what was prophesied about the Servant of God in Isa 53. Isaiah had used the term "many" four times to indicate that others would benefit from the vicarious death of the sinless Servant (Isa 52:14, 15; 53:11, 12). Jesus' explanation of the divine ordination of His death is directly derived from Isaiah 53. Christ attached to His voluntary death, therefore, a redemptive significance that will benefit "many." We will now consider the four most decisive sayings of Christ concerning His own death:

Ransom for Many (Mark 10:45).

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many.

According to one NT scholar (Joachim Jeremias, *NT Theol I*, 1971, 277, 278) almost every word of this saying goes back to Isaiah 53. Jesus explains His mission to serve His fellow men not simply in terms of serving as a prophet to teach Israel, but as being sent by God with an unprecedented mission, to surrender His innocent life into a vicarious death. He explains His divine mission with the OT concept of "a ransom for many."

Jesus' use of the word "ransom" directs our attention to a specific statue of OT law, according to which a sum of money was to be paid to redeem one's life from death. Exodus 21:30 states that a man condemned to death for unintentional manslaughter "may *redeem* his life by paying whatever is demanded." Numbers 35:31 states, however: "Do not accept a *ransom* for the life of a murderer, who deserves to die." And Psalm 49 declares with regard to God: "*No man can redeem the life of another, or give to God a ransom for him*" (49:7).

In these passages the verbs "to redeem" and "to ransom" are used as synonyms. To redeem is identical with "to pay a ransom price." When Jesus calls His self-surrender into death a "ransom for man," he declares that His death has redemptive significance for many others. It will redeem many from the bondage to sin and

death for eternal life, because He alone can stand before God in the place of many. As Messiah, He alone can offer His sinless life for their sinful lives and thus redeem them. The in-depth meaning of Jesus' death as a ransom ought to be explained not only in the light of Isaiah 53, but also in the light of Israel's sacrificial cultus.

In Isaiah's messianic prophecy, the Servant is sent by Yahweh with the unique mission to die as "a guilt offering" [*'asham*] for the justification of many (Isa 53:10, 11). Isaiah explains the substitutionary nature of the death of this Servant by saying that Yahweh will transfer the guilt and punishment of many to this Innocent One.

> But he was pierced for our transgressions,
> he was crushed for our iniquities;
> the punishment that brought us peace was upon him,
> and by his wounds we are healed. . . .
> and the LORD has laid on him
> the iniquity of us all. . . .
> Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer,
> and though *the LORD makes his life a guilt offering*,
> he will see his offspring and prolong his days. . . .
> (Isa 53:5, 6b, 10a)

Isaiah announced the stunning message that God Himself is directly involved in the death of His Messiah. The Messiah must bear the punishment of the sins of many by the divine design of substitution and in this way to change man's alienation from God.

The fact that Christ explained His mission to be "a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45) points to His divine initiative to redeem many sinners from eternal death by becoming their substitute. The redemptive significance of Jesus' death is not primarily that He wants to shock others into repentance, but rather that He places Himself as the sinless Son of God voluntarily in the place of sinners and accepts upon Himself what they deserved in God's judgment. His sinless life was valid as an acceptable ransom before God and satisfying to God's will as an atoning guilt offering (Isa 53:10) to redeem many from divine condemnation. That was Jesus' understanding of His messianic mission.

The Blood of the Covenant (Matt 26:28).

This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

These sacred words of Jesus, by which He instituted the sacrament of the Lord's Supper in His church, should be understood in their historical setting, against the background of the Jewish Passover sacrifice and meal that celebrated Israel's redemption from Egypt. When Jesus on this occasion calls the Passover bread "His body" and the Passover wine "His blood of the new covenant," then He replaces Israel's sacrificial lamb and its blood by His own sacrificial blood as the source of redemption for "the many."

As Messiah, Jesus established thereby His voluntary death as the foundational act of God's New Covenant. By eating and drinking of the Lord's Supper, the Christian believer by faith accepts the redemption from his sin and death in Christ's atoning death. The fruit or benefit of Christ's sacrificial death is divine forgiveness for our sins, or justification by faith in Christ. Jesus solemnly declared this in Matthew 26:28: "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sin." (See further Luke 22:20; Mark 14:23-24). The Lord's Supper should not be misinterpreted. It proclaims on each occasion: Without Jesus' sacrificial death our forgiveness of sins is not possible with the God of Israel. This is the real offense of the Lord's Supper. Without the shedding of His blood we have no forgiveness with God.

During His last supper Christ promised that His shed blood would restore God's covenant fellowship with His people. Nowhere else did Jesus declare in such unmistakable terms that His death was the atoning sacrifice that would bring reconciliation between God and man. The Lord's Supper is, therefore, not a sacrament that commemorates our wickedness and our condemnation, as if it were a sacrament of doom, but is the celebration of our redemption through the ransom of Christ's atoning death. This sacrament thus dramatically represents the essence of the gospel of salvation and atonement. It immortalizes the blood of Christ as the source for our freedom to live at peace with God and with one another and with ourselves.

The best cure against all speculation about Jesus' death would be to be silent at the foot of the cross of Christ and to ponder what it meant to Him when Jesus cried out in utter despair.

The Cry of Dereliction (Matt 27:46).

"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Was this mental agony of Jesus caused by man's sin of forsaking Christ? Or was it caused by God's act of forsaking Christ? To whom did Jesus address His words? Not to His enemies, not to the Jews, and not to the Gentiles. The cross of Christ is thus more than a demonstration of human wickedness. The piercing cry to His God, "Why have you forsaken me?" must be taken very seriously at face value.

Christ's cry is evidence, not of God's noninvolvement in His excruciating death, but rather of God's active involvement! Christ experienced not simply a passive hiding of God's face, but the reality of His Father's wrath against the sins of the world, the Father's delivering His Son up to the powers of darkness and death. Jesus experienced on the cross God's hidden but real "exchange," the divine transference of the sin of the world to the Lamb of God.

That is the dramatic depth-dimension of the cross of Christ! To remain silent on this divine involvement is to ignore and deny the essence of God's grace. Hebrews 2:9 explains that Christ "by the grace of God" was allowed to "taste death for everyone." It was that ultimate or "second death" as the curse of God that Christ tasted for the benefit of every one. He died our eternal death. This death should not be explained as man's natural death or as a mere quantity of time but as the unique quality of real separation from God. Christ drank the cup of the unmixed wrath of God. He had come for this very purpose: "Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?" (John 18:11; cf Job 21:20; Ps 75:8; Ezek 23:32-34; Jer 25:15-29).

We should not limit our view of Christ's atonement by thinking that Christ suffered only a small portion of the penalty of the law of God or of God's wrath. Jesus did not merely feel God-forsaken. He actually experienced in His soul the unprecedented dreadful separation from His Father. Jesus expressed this horror of God-forsakenness as the greatest pain of His heart by exclaiming the words of Psalm 22:1. To fully realize the value of our salvation, we need to understand what it costs, what the price was to the Holy Trinity. In the words of E. G. White:

> The wrath that would have fallen upon man was now falling upon Christ. It was here that the mysterious cup trembled in His hand . . . The sins of the world were upon Him. He was suffering in man's stead as a transgressor of His Father's law (*2T* 207).
>
> The sword of justice was now to awake against His dear Son [see Zech 13:7] (*2T* 207).

When Christ committed Himself into the Father's hands, He exclaimed with His departing breath: "It is finished."

The Cry of Victory (John 19:30).
"It is finished."

That final cry of triumph does not suggest that His enemies had finished their brutal deed, but that Christ had completed what His Father had sent Him to accomplish as Heaven's Passover Lamb: to endure the judgment of sin in our place and to establish a new covenant between God and mankind. The chief covenant blessing for us is that God forgives our sins in His saving righteousness.

The Father's acceptance of His Son's accomplished mission was demonstrated in two dramatic acts: The curtain of the temple, which symbolized the alienation of sinners from God, was suddenly torn in two from top to bottom (Matt 27:51). The way into God's presence is now open to man. The greatest proof, however, that God accepted Christ's death as the atoning sacrifice for all men was the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. The Father was satisfied with the ransom price (See *The Great Controversy,* p. 652).

The Essence of Paul's Gospel

Paul claimed that he preached no different gospel than what he had received from the original apostles. He summarizes his gospel message as follows: "For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor 15:3). Paul thus identified the death and the resurrection of Christ with the gospel.

We now ask, Why did the apostles attach redemptive significance to the death of Jesus Christ? It was certainly not assumed by them immediately after the crucifixion (see Luke 24:31-32). The answer is implied in the emphatic words that Christ died for our sins and rose again from the dead "according to the Scriptures," referring to the OT. The risen Lord had already pointed the perplexed disciples back to the Hebrew Scriptures with His question: *"Did not the Christ [Messiah] have to suffer these things, and then enter his glory?"* (Luke 24:26). This preordained necessity of the Messiah's suffering and death was revealed in both types and prophecies.

Paul adopted Jesus' self-understanding when he writes to Timothy that Christ's death was a *"ransom for all men"* (1 Tim 2:6). He developed this gospel of the atoning death of Christ in his letters to the Corinthians, to the Romans, and to the Colossians.

"For Our Sins" (Rom 4:25). The central expression of Paul's gospel message is the phrase that Christ died *"for our sins."* Paul elaborates on the redemptive meaning of Christ's death several times. We consider Rom 4:25; 2 Cor 5:14 and 21: *He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.*

Our first observation must be that Paul indirectly sees God Himself as the acting Person of delivering and raising up Christ. Paul states directly in Romans 8:32, that God did not spare His own Son, "but delivered Him up for us all" (NKJV). In other passages he states that Jesus "gave himself up for us" (Gal 2:20 and Eph 5:2). In Paul's message it was primarily God who had delivered over Jesus for our sins. The preposition *"dia"* (Rom 4:25) can be translated also as *"because of"* our sins (NKJV, NASB). It may not be weakened to say "as a consequence" or "by" our sins, as if Paul would point to the misdeed of human hands. Such an interpretation would twist the meaning of Paul's words, because he insists on God as the acting Person in both Jesus' dying and rising again in Romans 4:25 (twice *"dia"*). The same divine activity is taught in Isaiah 53. The many spectators of the Servant's suffering were appalled when they were told that it was *Yahweh* who had crushed the Servant and had made His life a guilt offering (Isa 53:10). They then confessed: *"The LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all"* (Isa 53:6).

To sum up, both Paul and Isaiah teach the same theological truth: it was God Himself Who gave up the Messiah to suffer and to be crushed for our sins, so that by His punishment for our sins we could be healed or justified. Our text teaches that God acted both times in the delivering of Christ over to death for our sins and in the *justification* of us by raising up Christ. Paul's gospel in this passage is thus in essence God's act of judicial imputation and not simply one of moral renewal.

Both parallel lines of Romans 4:25 contain the judicial concept of imputation or reckoning. As God imputed our sins to Christ in His death, so He reckons Christ's resurrection to us as our justification or acquittal from sin. This is the Hebrew idea of the priestly exchange of righteousness for sin. For this covenantal concept Paul appeals to God's acts of justifying Abraham and David. He argues, "What does the Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness'" (Rom 4:3). This was a divine act of judicial imputation. Paul continues: "David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works" (Rom 4:6). Here Paul interprets the forgiveness of David's sins (Ps 32) to be more than a mere pardon or amnesty. Paul interprets forgiveness in the sense of a divine act of justification, in which God credits righteousness to the repentant sinner. Paul then applies this covenant motif of divine imputation to every present believer in the crucified and risen Messiah. He concludes:

> The words "it was credited to him" were written not for him [Abraham] alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead (Rom 4:23, 24).

Paul distinguishes sharply between our own moral righteousness and God's imputed or judicial righteousness. Paul even goes so far as to state the morally scandalous idea that *"God justifies the wicked"* (Rom 4:5). Paul definitely believes in the necessity of our act of faith in Christ and in our moral renewal. But in Romans 3-5 his central focus is not on our faith and morality but on the proclamation that God has reconciled to Himself all His wicked enemies through the death of His Son (Rom 5:6, 8, 10). How can they be reconciled to God when they are still His enemies? Paul answers: By not imputing their sins to them but instead to His own Son (2 Cor 5:19). This gospel of Paul is still foolishness to human

wisdom and a rock of offense to Jews. But this is not Paul's peculiar legalistic construction. It is rooted in both Isaiah 53 and in Jesus' own teaching.

Substitution and Imputation (2 Cor 5:14, 21). In 2 Corinthians 5 Paul further develops the gospel as the fulfillment of Isaiah 53. We consider first verse 14, *"We are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died."* Paul's statement that Christ "died for all" could by itself be interpreted as meaning a martyr's death for the general benefit of all. But his emphasis on the fact that "one" died "for all" points to the pregnant sense of a *representative substitution*. This implication is made explicitly by Paul's subsequent declaration: "therefore all died." This statement can mean only that One represented all men in His death before God. Or, stated simply, One died the eternal death of all.

Paul explains this also in Romans 5:18, 19, where he contrasts Christ with Adam. He contrasts Adam's sin and the resulting condemnation of all men with Christ's obedience and the resulting justification of many. Paul adopted the Hebrew concept that One can represent inclusively many people before God. In 2 Corinthians 5:14 Paul proclaims that Christ is the One to whom God judicially imputed our sin and death, so that He died our death, and when He died, "all died."

Paul bases our moral renewal and motivation to live for Christ on this judicial, redemptive act of God. He explains the divine reconciliation in judicial terms, saying that God did not count or impute men's sins against them (2 Cor 5:19). He summarizes the heart of his gospel with this clear allusion to Isaiah 53 in verse 21: *God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

By general consent of NT exegetes, Paul alludes here to Isaiah's prediction that "Yahweh has laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isa 53:6). Paul's central gospel focus is, therefore, on God's judicial exchange: Christ's righteousness for our guilt. Paul's point is not that God gave His Son up to die under the power of human wickedness. His specific point is that God Himself made the sinless One "to be sin," that the innocent One is made the guilty One judicially, that God placed Him under His judgment for our sins.

Paul is not speaking here in ethical, but in specific judicial categories.

The essential core of Paul's doctrine of justification in 2 Corinthians 5 is not that God tries to change us by some shock therapy in confronting us with our own wickedness. When Judas realized the evil he did, he came to despair and committed suicide. The gospel of the cross is rather that God acquits us from our trespasses and guilt by imputing them to Christ and by crediting to us Christ's righteousness. The apostle, himself, cites directly from Isaiah 53 to confirm the sinlessness of Christ and His vicarious death. "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed" (1 Pet 2:22, 24). Peter's mention of the "tree" instead of the cross suggests that he referred to one under the curse (Deut 21:23). Peter thereby implies that Jesus endured God's curse when He suffered and died on the cross. Yet, for Peter the gospel of substitution was not an abstract legal transaction which did not affect us. "By His wounds you are healed," that is, forgiven and restored with God.

On the basis of God's atoning act in Christ, the apostle Paul now urges all people: "Be reconciled to God!" (2 Cor 5:20). Our response can be positive or negative. Our reconciliation with God, however, is effective in us only through faith in Christ's ransom death and in His intercession.

The Wrath of God

The question we should ask is, Is man's alienation from the Creator due exclusively to his own sinning, or is God's reaction to and condemnation of sin a barrier that also must be removed before fellowship can be restored? Paul writes about the wrath of God both as a present and as a future reality. He declares that "the wrath of God" is still to come on all whose lives are not hidden with Christ in God (Col 3:3-6). He says to the Ephesians: "Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath," that is "God's wrath" (Eph 2:3; 5:6).

The phrase "the wrath of God" is apparently not just an abstract metaphor but symbolizes God's hostility and curse on all that is evil. This reality was expressed by Jesus when He announced that in the final judgment the King will say to the wicked, "Depart

from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt 25:41). For Christ, His Father's reaction to wickedness was a terrible reality which He described as "hell" (see Matt 5:29, 30). The Apocalypse associates wrath even with the risen Christ, when it threatens the coming *"wrath of the Lamb"* (Rev 6:16) on the rejecters of His mercy. Paul likewise warns the impenitent ones: "You are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed" (Rom 2:5).

The wrath of God was the OT standard phrase for God's judgment on sin, for His indignation against wickedness. The wrath of God is no less real than the love of God! God is present both in His love for the sinner and in His anger against sin. They are not mutually exclusive in Holy Scripture; they coexist in the Holy One. The relationship between God and man in this larger God concept includes, therefore, both God's love and His wrath. These attributes of God are not simply identical with the impersonal laws of nature, but are expressions of God's action toward man.

We should refrain from projecting any human capricious, irrational anger into the wrath of God. God's wrath is holy wrath, holy indignation against injustice and perversion. We create a false philosophical dilemma if we assume that in Scripture divine wrath and divine love are mutually exclusive. God's love is holy love by the fact that it does react in the strongest terms against every form of sin. One could say, therefore, that God's wrath is identical with the consuming fire of divine love in relation to our sins (see Heb 10:27).

This divine hostility to evil on God's side needs also to be dealt with if sinful man is ever to be restored to fellowship with the Holy One. It is the dynamic fusion of God's love for the sinner and God's wrath against sin that motivated God to send His eternal Son as a propitiation for our sin. This provides a forgiveness without condoning sin. The NT declares that Christ, as the divine propitiation, was a gift prompted by God's love. We read in 1 John 4:10:

> This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. (*hilasmos* = propitiation, NKJV, NASB).

The term "propitiation" should not be loaded with the false, pagan idea that man's effort can change the mind of the deity in his favor. The unique feature of propitiation in the Bible is the fact that *God provides the propitiation for us*. Propitiation is God's own act to avert His wrath from sinful mankind. The gospel declares that the Son of God offered Himself without blemish through the Holy Spirit to the Eternal Father, while the Father in His love gave His Son up for us (Heb 9:14; Rom 8:32). The RSV translates *hilasmos* in 1 John 2:2; 4:10 by "expiation," suggesting that the sin problem is exclusively man's need for purging or cleansing of his heart and mind.

The question must be raised however, Why must sin be expiated from us? The answer in Scripture concentrates not just on man. If man dies in his sin, then he has to face God's final judgment, which is another way of stating that "God's wrath remains upon him" (John 3:36). Consequently, expiation of sin from man is necessary in order to avert the wrath of God! Expiation thus implies a Godward dimension and is not solely an impersonal purging process in man. The concept of expiation requires that God will avert His wrath from us.

Propitiation includes expiation, but denotes primarily the removal of God's condemnation of the sinner. The idea that God can never become angry at man is neither Hebrew nor Christian, but an abstract idea that is borrowed from Greek philosophy. The biblical portrayal of God's holiness is superior to all our philosophical constructs of God. Holiness explains God's wrath as the terrifying opposition to all that is opposed to holiness.

If the wrath of God is no reality in God, then the need for any atonement or ransom price is abolished. That is the essential hallmark or argument of Protestant liberal theology. On the other hand, the apostle Paul teaches that the second coming of Christ will rescue us "from the coming wrath" of God (1 Thess 1:10; cf. Rev 14:10; 15:1). But such confidence is based on the acceptance of Christ as our all-sufficient righteousness. Paul expresses this assurance of hope in Romans 5:9:

Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we all be saved from God's wrath through him?

Divine Judgment and Curse (Gal 3:13). Paul expresses his judicial understanding of the cross of Christ in different ways. In Romans 8:3 he declares that God sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful man "to be a sin offering," and thus God "condemned sin in the flesh" (KJV). In other words, God judged and condemned our fallen human nature in Christ. Christ was the object of God's condemnation, of God's righteous judgment.

Christ's death for our sins meant to Paul that Christ paid the wages of our sin (Rom 6:23). The "wages of sin" is another expression for the penalty or punishment of sin. Paul teaches that God condemned our sin in Christ not only by His judicial sentence but also by His execution. Paul believed, therefore, that in Christ's death the full weight of God's wrath against sin had been executed. He expressed this in a stunning statement that stands unique in the NT. In Galatians 3:13 the apostle declares solemnly:

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree' [Deut 21:23].

No other apostle has written in this vein—that Christ became a curse. Paul's statement may be better understood if we remember that in his former Pharisaic hatred against the Christians he had viewed Jesus' crucifixion as the very proof that Jesus was a cursed pseudo-Messiah. For Jews, the idea of a crucified Messiah was scandalous (1 Cor 1:23). But in his Damascus vision Paul had come to see the "cursed" One as the true Messiah. Therefore, the Messiah's death on a tree could only be a substitutionary atoning death. He believed that Christ loved him and gave Himself for him (see Gal 2:20). That is, Christ received the curse in his stead.

In Paul's Hebrew thinking the death of One who knew no sin (2 Cor 5:21), was uniquely meritorious. The Messiah's death on the cross was, therefore, as he writes, a curse "for us" (Gal 3:13). Christ thus suffered an exchange curse! As Luther explains this text (Gal 3:13): Jesus "clothed Himself in our person, laid our sins upon His own shoulders and said: 'I have committed the sins that all men have committed'. . . Thus Christ became a curse for us, that is, a sinner worthy of the wrath of God. By this fortunate exchange with us He took upon Himself our sinful person and granted us His innocent and victorious Person." (*Lectures on Galatians*, LW 26, 283, 284).

Ellen G. White's interpretation of the cross stands unsurpassed in Christian theology: "Christ was treated as we deserve, that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no share. He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His" (*Desire of Ages*, p. 25).

The sinless Christ received the curse of God only for the purpose that God might bestow on us His blessing of divine acceptance (Gal 3:14). Galatians 3:13 is not a slip of Paul's pen; it constitutes the very essence of his doctrine of law and grace. It explains on what basis man is accepted by God. Paul is not referring to some human curse in Jesus' crucifixion, but to the curse of divine law. God's law brings "wrath" on the transgressor (Rom 2:5; 4:25).

To be "under law" is for Paul the opposite of being "under grace" (Rom 6:14, 15). He explains in Galatians 4 that "God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights as sons" (Gal 4:4, 5). Paul clarifies here what he meant in Gal 3:13. He points to the purpose of the incarnation of the Son of God, not merely that the Son may be exposed to human sinfulness but to place Himself in a substitutionary position under the curse and judgment of God! Paul's message in Galatians 3:13 and 2 Corinthians 5:21 can be identified as the gospel of penal substitution. This view of the cross of Christ is what Paul calls "the offense [or stumbling block] of the cross" (*skandalon,* Gal 5:11; 1 Cor 1:23). But this offense to man's reason and moral sensibility belongs, according to Paul, to the essence of the Gospel. Without this *"skandalon"* our faith in God is not the NT faith.

By bearing the curse, Christ has redeemed those under the curse of God. This exchange curse is the offense of Paul's gospel of the cross, the stumbling block of God's redeeming grace. For the apostle, the grace of God comes, not instead of, but through judgment.

A Revelation of Holy Love (Rom 3:25-26). According to Paul, the cross of Christ reveals the fullness of God's love (Rom 5:8; Gal 2:20), and this love includes God's righteousness or justice. He develops this aspect of God's love in Rom 3:25, 26 as the center and heart of his whole epistle to the Romans.

It has become the popular trend in liberal Protestant theology since Schleiermacher and Ritschl in the 19th century to liberate theology from the metaphysical dimension . The result was to flatly deny in God's character the reality of any wrath against sin or sinner. That left a God who could only love with endless patience. But if we start from a human, sentimental concept of divine love, we are led inevitably to belittle God's justice. The biblical revelation of God's character is reflected more accurately in these words, found in *Desire of Ages*, p. 762:

> God's love has been expressed in His justice no less than in His mercy. Justice is the foundation of His throne, and the fruit of His love.

In other words, the love of God is not at war with the justice of God. We simply do not know the depths of God's love if we accept only one preferred aspect of the biblical revelation of God. We must reject any reduced concept of God's love if we want to know its unsearchable riches and, "to comprehend with all the saints. . .the breadth, and length, and depth, and height" (KJV) of the love of God that "surpasses knowledge" (cf. Eph 3:18, 19).

The apostolic gospel nowhere else focuses as sharply on God's costly forgiveness as in Romans 3:25, 26.

> God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies the man who has faith in Jesus.

In Romans 3 Paul offers the church a sufficiently clear interpretation of the death of Christ that should prevent us from speculating onesidedly about the love of God. It forbids us to operate with the incorrect dilemma that opposes God's love to His justice, and contrasts God's wrath to His grace. Romans 3:25 declares that God by His design presented Christ as a *hilastērion*, which is a "propitiation" (NKJV, NASB) or "propitiatory sacrifice" (Cranfield, *Romans, ICC,* Vol 1:216), in order to demonstrate God's righteousness.

We face the question, Why does Paul in his theology of reconciliation concentrate on the death of Christ as a divinely-provided blood sacrifice? In 1 Corinthians 5:7 Paul specifies that "Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed." This cultus symbol of Israel spoke eloquently of how God had passed His judgment over each house that had the blood of a lamb on the doorposts. This OT background clarifies Paul's use of the cultic term *hilastērion* in his doctrine of divine atonement (Rom 3:25, 26). He explains that the blood sacrifice of Christ was by God's own design a demonstration of His righteousness, because He had left the sins committed by mankind beforehand unpunished! We read Rom 3:25 in the NASB:

> Whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed.

The apostle explains that God had not adequately punished human sin in the 4,000 years before Christ died. In His divine forbearance He had passed over the sins of human rebellion. He had patiently held back His wrath. But God did not pass over sins indefinitely. That would have meant to condone evil, to deny His holy nature, and to annihilate man's dignity as a morally accountable creature. Now, in the historic suffering and death of Christ on the cross, God finally did punish our sins to establish His righteousness. In His eternal purpose of grace, God Himself has "set forth" (Rom 3:25 NKJV) Christ's sacrifice as the sufficient *hilastērion*, as the divinely provided propitiation and expiation of sin. Paul thereby proclaims that God's judgment on sin has been finally realized in the shedding of Christ's blood. This was the fulfillment of Israel's sacrificial cultus, the theology of which was presented in Leviticus 17:11.

> For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to *make* atonement *(exilaskomai)* for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that *makes atonement (exilaskomai)* for one's life.

Twice in this text a compound of the verb *hilaskesthai*, the cognate of *hilastērion*, is used in the Septuagint. Paul employs the latter term in Romans 3:25. There can be no doubt that for Paul the blood of Christ was sacrificial blood, provided by God for the forgiveness of our sins. Divine forgiveness was costly, because God willed to forgive our sins in a manner consonant with His righteousness, that is, without condoning sin and denying man's accountability. Such a forgiveness is not cheap, but one worthy of God. God is thus not righteous only in Himself, in splendid isolation from His creation. Paul proclaims that God has chosen to show or demonstrate His righteousness dramatically in the death of Christ. That is essential to Paul's theology of God. But Paul's further specific point is that God is righteous, therefore, in justifying the repentant sinner. We read in verse 26:

> For the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. (NASB)

Paul unfolds that the manifestation of God's righteousness in Christ's death was simultaneously condemnatory and redemptive. God demonstrated His holy love in both aspects: in His righteous wrath and in His merciful love. God willed to forgive sinful men in His holy love, that is, not by condoning sin, but by atoning sin. He directed His full righteous wrath against sin, no longer against sinful man, but "against His own very Self in the person of His Son" (Cranfield). In this way holiness atoned for our sins (cf. 1 *Selected Messages*, p. 368). The believer in Christ's substitutionary sacrifice is pardoned and justified by faith alone (Rom 3:26, 28). Here the cultic motif of atonement and the legal concept of justification unite in Paul's gospel of reconciliation. For Paul, the atoning self-sacrifice of Christ was God's means to achieve an eternal reconciliation. Christ thus vindicated both God's punitive and redemptive righteousness. That was, to Paul, the triumph of God's love.

The Cosmic Scope of Reconciliation

The divine plan of reconciliation has cosmic dimensions. Paul states:

> For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him [Christ], and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross (Col 1:19-20).

Paul establishes first the preexistence and the cosmic significance of Christ by designating Christ as the co-Creator of all things: "All things were created by him and for him" (Col 1:16). Christ is the supreme Lord and sustainer of the universe (Col 1:17). He is also the supreme head of the church (Col 1:18). All believers depend on Christ for life and growth (Col 2:19), "for in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form" (Col 2:9). Christ is the dwelling place of the very essence of God.

Because a disruption or breach has occurred in heaven and on earth, the need of reconciling "all things" in heaven and on earth has risen. Christ alone is God's appointed Mediator, or agent of the atonement, to restore cosmic peace, because Christ alone is Lord of creation and Lord of His Church. Thus, God will ultimately "bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ" (Eph 1:10).

Paul states that God was pleased through Christ to reconcile heaven and earth "by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross" (Col 1:20). This means that the cosmos has been reconciled to God in the sacrificial death of Christ; that the universe has been restored under its rightful head and that cosmic peace is established when Christ accepted the curse which was due to us. For Paul, the cross was the place of one under a curse (Gal 3:13). In Colossians 1:20, Paul does not simply use the verb *katallassein*, (to reconcile, carrying the basic meaning "to change"). Rather he uses here the compound form *apokatallassein*, which suggests an intensive force: to change completely, to change so as to remove all enmity. Paul unfolds that God's act of reconciliation was not intended for men only, but for "all things" in heaven and on earth (Col 1:20; Eph 1:10). This has the wider implication of a cosmic pacification.

God has placed the whole created reality again under the lordship of Christ. According to Colossians 2:15, Christ at the cross "disarmed the [spiritual] powers and authorities," . . . "triumphing over them by the cross," leading them in his triumphal procession to the throne of God. This indicates that the powers that were hostile to God and Christ were not surrendering willingly to God's lordship. They will be pacified unwillingly, even when they continue to exist inimical to man. In Romans 8:38, 39 Paul declares that now no hostile power "will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Their ultimate overthrow is guaranteed. Christ "must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet" (1 Cor 15:25). Consequently, divine reconciliation includes the subjugation of the hostile spiritual powers. Similarly, all people will not accept the peace effected by the death of Christ, although they have been reconciled now to God from God's side. Ultimately, however, all men will bow their knees to Christ and acknowledge him as the supreme Lord (Phil 2:10, 11), some willingly, others unwillingly.

In Colossians 2:14 Paul further explains that because of Christ God "canceled the written code . . . that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross." This is a vivid way of saying that when Christ was nailed to the cross, all our sins were truly forgiven. God nailed His own accusation against us to the cross of Jesus! In this act God removed His curse on us at the cross. Therefore, all the hostile demonic powers and authorities in the cosmos were disarmed. They no longer have any accusation or authority over mankind. Between God and man a state of objective or cosmic peace has been restored by means of the atoning death of Christ. The apocalyptic dimension of this objective state of reconciliation implies the ultimate destruction of the evil one. Paul declares in Romans 16:20, "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet."

The aim of divine reconciliation is certainly to change the hostility against God in the human mind, but the center of Paul's focus is God's own reaction to sin and His divine work of reconciliation in Christ on behalf of the whole created reality. Those who respond by faith in Christ are redeemed from accusation and restored to fellowship with the Holy One (Col 1:21-23).

Salvation and Atonement in Hebrews

The main burden of Hebrews is to proclaim that the self-sacrifice of Christ and His ongoing intercession fulfill Israel's prophetic sanctuary rituals. After the author has said that faith in God, repentance, and belief in the future resurrection and judgment belong to the more elementary or foundational teachings (Heb 6:1), on which Judaism and Christianity could agree, he explains that the more mature knowledge of Christ has to do with understanding the meaning of Christ's death and His present ministry. This is the theme of the highly important central section of the Hebrews' letter, chapters 7-10. He explains Christ's Person and work as being superior to the priesthood of Aaron and Melchizedek, because

Christ offers the perfect and final and all-inclusive sacrifice of Himself. Hebrews 7 concludes of the Son of God:

> Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once and for all when he offered himself (verse 27).

This text teaches that Christ was both sin offering and priest who offered Himself on the cross: "Himself the priest, Himself the victim" (*Desire of Ages*, p. 25). Christ not only suffered death, but He "[tasted] death for everyone" (Heb 2:9).

In chapters 9 and 10 the author acknowledges that the blood of bulls and goats only reminded the worshiper of his sins, but could never take them away (10:4), or clear his guilty conscience (9:9). But Christ, the Son of God, has now appeared as the reality of all the types and shadows of Israel's covenant. And His blood has obtained or realized an "eternal redemption" (9:12). This eternal redemption was that Christ's self-offering has taken away our sins. This is said explicitly in 9:26 and 27:

> But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. . . Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people.

In a majestic statement the purpose of Christ's accomplished mission is explained:

> How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit *offered himself unblemished to God*, cleanse our conscience from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God (9:14; cf 10:22)!

This sacred text does not say that Christ's death was God's offering to man. It states directly that Christ offered Himself unblemished to God! Thus God is both the Provider and the Recipient of Christ's sacrifice. What then motivated the Holy Trinity to initiate such a solemn sacrifice? Hebrews 9 reverts to Israel's cultus for the answer: "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (9:22). If this applied to the old covenant, how much the more to the blood of the new covenant. If Yahweh provided the sacrificial blood on Israel's altar (Lev 17:11), how much the more did He

provide the blood of His Son to take away our sins and to make us holy (10:10).

In this manner Hebrews proclaims the uniqueness of Christ's redemptive work. In other words, Christ's death was an absolute necessity! Without the shedding of His blood there is no forgiveness of sins. This is the timeless message of Hebrews that we still need to hear in order to find divine peace for our accusing conscience, real release from the burden of guilt and cleansing from the defiling power of our selfish nature. As our High Priest in heaven, Christ has immortalized Calvary by His resurrection from the dead.

Hebrews teaches emphatically that salvation is also a continuing process which ends with a dramatic vision of our future salvation (12:12-29). We read in Hebrews 7:25 that Christ is a permanent heavenly Priest:

> Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.

This present tense is important and announces that Christ saves us now by His work of intercession before God, a mediatorial work as priest and advocate that effectively sends support from Christ to us at each moment of trial. This priestly mediation of Christ is described in Hebrews 2:17 as a work of priestly atonement:

> . . . that he might make atonement for the sins of the people (*hilaskesthai*, "to make propitiation for").

The NIV gives the alternative translation as: "that he might turn aside God's wrath, taking away the sins of the people." Propitiation is not only accomplished by Christ on His cross, He also applies the benefits of His propitiatory sacrifice to us as a present High Priest. It is the present working out of salvation in the believers (cf 1 Cor 15:2). He pleads our cause with the Father (cf 1 John 2:1), gives us assurance of salvation (Rom 8), and brings our prayers before God (examples in Luke 22:32 and John 17).

In the Levitical ritual this mediation was foreshadowed in the breastplate with the names of Israel's sons which Aaron as High Priest bore upon his heart when he entered the holy place (Exod 28:29, 43). Hebrews 2:17 states that Christ's intercession is "in service to God" [*pros ton theon*] that is, "on the Godward side" (cf Heb 5:1). Here Christ's work directed toward God is made a specific point of importance. We can come to God only if our sins have been dealt with. Christ did not appoint Himself High Priest. God gave Him this appointment to the priesthood (Heb 5:5). Christ alone is able to enter the Presence of God on His own account and also on our account. The ones He purchased with His blood He can keep also by His priestly mediation. He is able to keep them from falling, from transgressing. He does what the OT priest could do only symbolically. He actually removed the barrier of sin between man and God, and provides constant and immediate access to God every day.

That teaching is found also in Paul (Rom 8:33, 34) and in John (1 John 2:1). Christ removes from us every sin acknowledged before God with a contrite heart (cf *Testimonies to Workers,* p. 93). "Centuries, ages, can never diminish the efficacy of this atoning sacrifice" (*Ibid.,* p. 92). Hebrews teaches that Christ is both our Redeemer and Mediator. He is now the one Mediator between God and man. Christ Himself is our great, sinless Propitiation. We must reject the popular idea that Christ now stands to plead our cause with tears and crying before a reluctant God. He does not stand as a mere petitioner before God. He functions as the victorious Priest-King Who asks what He will from a Father Who always hears and grants His request. As a conqueror He claims His victory.

Focus on Atonement in First John

First John shows that the points of conflict within the apostolic church in Asia Minor were concentrated on Christology and soteriology. The difference of opinion ran so high that a split took place in several church congregations around Ephesus. To this critical situation John addressed his three letters. In 1 John we can identify the doctrinal errors which are now characterized as docetism or an incipient Gnosticism. To refute the new theology of the errorists, John appeals emphatically to the original message of the apostles concerning the redemptive significance of the flesh and the death of Jesus and how we can have saving knowledge and fellowship with God. The challenging fact emerges from the false claims made by John's adversaries that both parties justified their opposite positions with terms derived from John's Gospel. In the judgment of John, "his adversaries were innovators or 'progressives' who were distorting the tradition as it had come down from the beginning" (R. E. Brown, *The Epistles of John.* AB 30. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983, p. 70).

This explains why 1 John opens with an appeal to the original gospel truth: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life . . . so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship [*koinōnia*] is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:1, 2; cf 1:5; 2:7; 3:11).

At the center of the controversy was the true interpretation of John 1:14 and 3:16. These beautiful declarations about God's self-revelation in Christ Jesus could be misinterpreted. Was the real purpose of Jesus' earthly life solely to reveal God's character and His glory in human terms, but not to do anything new that changed the relationship between God and human beings? Did not Jesus say to Philip: "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9)? Was the purpose of Christ's coming solely His incarnation, in order to reveal God's love for sinners, as could be derived from John 3:16?

John hastens to clarify why God gave His Son, stressing that Christ's death is of crucial importance. In 1 John 5:6 he argues: "This is the one who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood." Here John explains God's love to those who misunderstood Christ's coming. He came not only to obey God in baptism, but also to die as an atonement for our sins. John 19:34 may be seen as the background for this stress on Christ's blood. Jesus shed His blood on the cross, says John, when a soldier pierced His side with a spear, "bringing a sudden flow of blood and water." The emphasis of 1 John is clearly on one misunderstood point: the redemptive value of the death of Jesus Christ. The Letter stresses that our fellowship or reconciliation with the Father comes only by way of the shed blood of Christ.

Christian believers have fellowship with God and each other only when "the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). John does not focus on the believer's first forgiveness of sins or his initial justification at baptism, but on his daily need for forgiveness of sins. His point is that if we try to walk in the light, as Jesus walked (2:6), then the blood of Jesus still cleanses us from our present sins, because of Christ's continuing ministry as Mediator. It is important is to notice that John uses the *present* tense of the verb to "purify" in John 1:7. John thus develops further the implication of John 3:16 by stressing the atoning quality of the blood of Jesus, as was taught extensively in the Letter to the Hebrews. John uses the sacrificial term *hilasmos* (atonement, atoning action) and thereby appeals to the priestly theology of Israel's sanctuary cultus. In the book of Leviticus the death of an offering by itself did not yet effect atonement or reconciliation.

If an anointed priest had sinned, the officiating priest had to consecrate the blood of the slaughtered sin offering by sprinkling it first seven times "before Yahweh" in the Holy Place. Then he had to put some of the blood on the horns of the altar of incense (Lev 4:6, 7). The theological meaning of this priestly ritual was explained in Lev 17:11, stating that God Himself had provided this blood for Israel on the altar as the means to make atonement for one's life [*exhilaskesthai*, in LXX]. This theology taught the exact opposite of the pagan atonement rituals, which all were based on the concept of salvation by works. In Israel it was not man who offered the blood to God, but Yahweh who provided and graciously accepted the blood or life of a substitute for the repentant sinner. This text (Lev 17:11) presents Yahweh as both the subject and the object of the atoning or propitiatory action for the redemption of man. Reconciliation or fellowship with God was realized by means of an anointed priest who presented the sacrificial blood as the atonement for the sinner. The reason why human guilt must be atoned by propitiation and expiation lies in the very nature of the Holy covenant God Himself.

The fact that the Holy One does not ignore or overlook the reality of sin reveals that He is not indifferent to the moral condition of man. The apostle John insists on this holy character of God as the motivation of God's love to send His Son "as an atoning sacrifice [*hilasmos*, propitiation and expiation] for our sins" (1 John 4:10). John's Letter emphasizes the ongoing need for Christians of a heavenly Mediator who is able to forgive and to cleanse their hearts and consciences.

John rejects the false claim of some erroneous believers that they were already now "without sin" because they "knew" God (1 John 1:8; 2:4). This claim suggests that such believers felt so illuminated by their knowledge of God that they asserted: "We are not guilty although we have sinned." In other words, their sins were not considered any threat to their fellowship with God. Such a superficial estimate of sin the apostle calls a serious self-deception (1:8). For John, the believer should not deny or ignore his guilt but rather confess it before God: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Here John reflects the cultic setting of Israel's covenant. "The priest will make atonement [*kipper; exhilaskesthai*] for man's sin, and he will be forgiven" (Lev 4:26, 31; 19:22).

John insists that God cannot treat sin in believers as nonexistent. He plainly urges us therefore: "My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin" (1 John 2:1). This moral standard echoes Jesus' counsel to the forgiven paralytic: "Do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse may befall you" (John 5:14, NASB). Paul is equally bold: "Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means!" (Rom 6:1).

Nevertheless, believers are not yet sinlessly perfect in this "flesh and blood" (1 Cor 15:50) and do stumble in many ways (Jas 3:2). Therefore, John points to the believer's sole assurance of God's fellowship: the heavenly mediation of the risen Lord. If a righteous one is overcome by sin, but does not conceal his sin and confesses and renounces it (Prov 28:13; 24:16), "we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One" (1 John 2:1). Jesus as the Paraclete (Helper/Intercessor, 1 John 2:1) stands before the Father both as our intercessor and our advocate, defending us against the accusations of Satan (Rev 12:10; 1 John 3:8).

This must not be interpreted as the effort of a loving Jesus trying to change the attitude of a righteous Father. Jesus Himself is presented rather as the "Righteous One" who acknowledges the believer's faith and claims forgiveness before the Father, because He presents His atoning blood as meritorious and propitiatory (see Matt 10:32). John, therefore, unites the court motif with the sanctuary setting:

He is the atoning sacrifice [*hilasmos*, atonement] for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2).

The term *hilasmos* used by John means "atoning action," with the implication of both propitiation and expiation. Propitiation is primarily directed toward the Holy One who cannot tolerate evil (Hab 1:13), while expiation is directed toward the defilement in the sinner. It is helpful to see that Psalm 130:3, 4 in the Greek version (LXX) uses *hilasmos* (propitiation) for the divine act of forgiveness and of redeeming mercy (vs 7). Zechariah 8:22 uses the cognate verb [*exhilaskesthai*] for seeking to obtain "favor" from Yahweh by the Gentiles.

Micah specifically points out the rationale for the possibility of divine propitiation when he explains: "*He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in mercy*" (Mic 7:18 NKJV). The OT witness indicates that atonement [hilasmos] has primarily a Godward effect (mercy) which results in the forgiveness and cleansing of the repentant sinner (Dan 9:9).

God expressed His love not only in accepting Christ's meritorious sacrifice for us, but primarily in providing His own Son as man's Substitute and Mediator. This important insight in the nature of God's love is, for John, the heart of the gospel. God actually sent His Son for one supreme purpose: to become His appointed atonement [*hilasmos*] for our sins and in this way to "take away our sins" (1 John 3:5). It seems more adequate to translate *hilasmos* by *atonement* rather than by either propitiation or expiation (R. E. Brown, AB 30:221).

Atonement includes both the Godward and the manward aspects, both propitiation and expiation. As man's only Mediator, Christ bestows on His followers forgiveness and cleansing from the Presence of the Father. Through this priestly work of Christ before the Father, it is possible for us to have communion or fellowship [*koinōnia*] with the Father and with His Son (1 John 1:3).

John's interpretation of the atoning blood of Christ presents the larger view which includes both Christ's death on the cross and the application of its merits by Christ as our High Priest in the Presence of the Father. John calls the risen Lord Himself "the atonement" [*hilasmos*] for our sins (1 John 2:2). We continuously need Christ's atoning, mediatorial ministry with the Father, because we still are affected by and fall into sin. We can never claim to have no sin or no guilt. Ellen White has explained our abiding need for Christ's Godward ministry in terms that consider the weight of sin beyond our natural comprehension:

> The religious services, the prayers, the praise, the penitent confession of sin ascend from true believers as incense to the heavenly sanctuary, but passing through the corrupt channels of humanity, they are so defiled that unless purified by blood, they can never be of value with God. They ascend not in spotless purity, and unless the Intercessor, who is at God's right hand, presents and purifies all by His righteousness, it is not acceptable to God. All incense from earthly tabernacles must be moist with the cleansing drops of the blood of Christ. He holds before the Father the censer of His own merits, in which there is no taint of earthly corruption. He gathers into this censer the prayers, the praise, and the confessions of His people, and with these He puts His own spotless righteousness. Then, perfumed with the merits of Christ's propitiation the incense comes up before God wholly and entirely acceptable. Then gracious answers are returned (*Selected Messages*, Book 1, p. 344).

The revelation that true believers still need the atoning ministry of Christ can also be perceived in John's Apocalypse, which portrays Christ as both Priest and "a Lamb looking as if it has been slain" (Rev 1:12, 13; 5:6). His sacrificial blood will cleanse all believers till the end of time (Rev 7:14) and will provide their victory over Satan, "the accuser of our brethren" (Rev 12:10, 11, NKJV).

The question whether God cannot forgive without any sin offering arises not in Scripture, but in our philosophical speculation about a different God concept. In Holy Scripture, it is the very love of God that provides Christ as the Lamb or atoning sacrifice for us (1 John 4:10; Rom 5:8-10). This atonement is not in conflict with God's love, but is the most profound manifestation of His love. While such divine love expresses infinite love for the sinner, it exposes at the same time God's inexorable rejection of sin. The holy One reveals that sin cannot be tolerated before Him and has no place in His universe. If God would pardon man's sin without an atonement, "sin would have been immortalized" (E. G. White, *RH* Apr, 23, 1901; in *Question on Doctrine*, p. 668). Scripture does not explain the fullness of the atonement in one particular formula or in a single text or parable. God's holy love is portrayed in the majestic righteousness of His law, or in His forgiving mercy for the sinner. We may be tempted to absolutize a preferred motif or attribute of God, or a particular parable of Jesus (e.g. "the lost son"). But such fragmentary use of Scripture leads inevitably to a reductionism of the revelation of God and to a mutilation of the apostolic gospel. The biblical view must be allowed to broaden and correct our limited views. This alone will give all glory to God and will raise in our consciousness the infinite value of the human soul before God.

Summary

Our study aimed to present a disciplined reflection of the biblical revelation on salvation and the atonement. We intended to find the authentic, original meaning of the message of Christ and of His apostles, by means of a responsible exegesis.

Christ Himself first attached redemptive significance to His expected violent death. He explained that His divinely appointed mission was to realize in His life and death the messianic prophecy of Isaiah 53. He, therefore, called His voluntary death a ransom price that would redeem many from sin's bondage and its divine curse. More than that, He consecrated His blood as the true sacrificial blood of God's new covenant, shed for the forgiveness of sins. Jesus saw His death as the bitter cup from His Father which He had to drink for our salvation. His cry of forsakenness by His "God" indicates that Christ experienced the unspeakable bitterness of a real separation from God so that we may again be restored into favor with God.

From Paul's letters we learned that divine reconciliation comes not by a mere declaration of God or by the teaching of Christ only, but through the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ and the shedding of His blood as our Substitute. Paul's most decisive passage in Romans 3:25, 26 teaches with clarity that God was actively involved in the sacrificial death of Christ on the cross, by displaying Him publicly as the receiver of God's punitive righteousness. Thus, for Paul, the cross of Christ demonstrates *God's costly forgiveness*. God forgives our sins without condoning them.

This apostolic teaching, that reconciliation is achieved by means of Christ's atoning sacrifice on the cross, is also found in the writings of Peter and John, and most elaborately in the letter to the Hebrews. They all apply Israel's sanctuary types to Christ as the Lamb that God provided for the satisfying propitiation for our sins and to Christ as our only High Priest in heaven to provide justification by grace and cleansing from the accusings of our troubled consciences. Only the acceptance of Christ's death for us puts an end to all legalistic enticements to merit our own salvation (Gal 3:1). Regarding this way of salvation through Christ's atonement the apostles allowed no alternative gospel, no other way of salvation. Rather, they warned all who would seek a different gospel: "How shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation?" (Heb 2:3).

Endnotes

1 NIV is used in this paper.

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A LOVE AFFAIR WITH THE LAW

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Introduction

Have you ever heard any of these expressions—or ever used them? "I love you so much." "I dream about you night and day." "I'd rather have you than a million dollars." "Your troubles are my troubles." It sounds like a lover whispering to his sweetheart, doesn't it? But no, it's David talking about the law.

David expresses with exuberance what the law of God means to him."O how I love thy law! it is my meditation all the day" (Ps 119:97). As he considers the workings of God's laws in nature as well as in the affairs of man, he exclaims: "More to be desired are they than gold, yea than much fine gold" (Ps 19:10). When he sees people spurning God's law, he cries, "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law" (Ps 119:136). To the psalmist, law is sweeter than honey in the honeycomb (Ps 19:10).

We would have to admit, that David's expressions are a bit unusual. Unfortunately, the word "law" often arouses skeptical feelings. People don't usually like to hear about rules and regulations. True in the secular world, it may be even more so in the Christian world. Unfortunately, law in the spiritual realm is often viewed as a negative aspect—in opposition to the positive message of the gospel.

Salvation and Law. This short study will seek to portray that, in truth, salvation and law are so bound up together they cannot, if understood correctly, be separated. Since all law comes from God, and expresses various facets of His character, (such as

justice, love, constancy, etc.) law cannot be in antitheses to salvation or any other expression of His character.

In this sense, one could say quite fairly, that, salvation is all about law. The whole function of salvation is addressed to getting the law back into the heart, the being of man. The process begins on this earth at the time of conversion, continues throughout life, and is completely fulfilled at the Second Advent when the believer is re-created—brought back to the original perfection—with God's law an integral part of the being.

Bible Terminology. In the Scriptures, the word "law" is understood in different ways. The Hebrew word *torah* is used in a wide sense and may mean not only a regulative code of conduct as we use the term "law," but also "the Bible," that is, the Old Testament as a teaching instrument. The Greek word *nomos* is also associated with this much wider sense of the Hebrew term. When *nomos* is used with the definite article as "the law," it is usually thinking of a specific law or the law as a way of life. When it speaks of "law," without the definite article, it is thinking of law in general, law as a governing principle.

Law As a Governing Principle. Law in general, or law as a governing principle, can be understood as the placing of a divine structure upon all created reality by the Creator. It can be viewed as the revelation of God both in the natural world and in the spiritual world. This general principle of law is most important to the well being of all created beings, for it brings consistency and dependability to the universe, setting limits and bounds to time and space.

"Law is the principle and operation of order in the world. . . it expresses the fact that diverse and changing relations unfold in a dependable and intelligible pattern."[1] Law brings order and direction to an otherwise chaotic existence. It keeps man and all other reality, from "swirling around unpredictably like small balloons whose air is escaping. We are not to be like wild balloons, but like aircraft—controlled, disciplined, orderly and capable of reaching our chosen destination."[2] Without law there could be no meaningful history of this planet. Reference to the past would have no utility in decision-making or in understanding the functions of life.

In the same sense, just as God built his laws into the structure of the physical creation, so also He built His spiritual or moral law into man's nature at creation. So we could say that spiritual law is not a set of rules, but is a recognition of what is, of how life is naturally lived in a perfect state. Until man sinned, spiritual law could be considered also part of the "law of nature." Frank Holbrook comments, "Neither physical nor moral law oppresses the creation. . . . Both angels and human kind in their *original* creation—possessing *naturally* loving hearts—would have taken pleasure in obeying God."[3]

Moral Law

Implanted Within Human Mind. With moral law we think especially of the principles of the Ten Commandments. Before sin, as mentioned above, this law was incorporated in natural law. In every respect man was created to cooperate with the will of God. Every fiber of his being responded naturally to the goodness and justice of his Creator.

Moral law may not have had a systematic, external expression at first. It probably operated within the mind of man as controlling principles of love toward God and the created world about him. So long as man operated within the bounds of these principles he was very likely unaware of any external structure of law.

To illustrate: When a marriage is dominated by love, the couple is unaware of the undergirding legal requirements of the marriage relationship. They have no thought of the mandated principles of the marriage vows. They are too wrapped up in trying to please each other. If love wanes, the relationship begins to disintegrate; the couple ends up in the divorce court; their greatest concern is no longer love, but law: What are the legal demands that must be adhered to?

In the perfect state the law was within man. Thus moral law began as a part of natural law, being written in Adam's being, not apart from him. Timothy Crosby observes: "Once God created the universe and gave it a specific form, not all possibilities remained open. Moral laws. . . spring from the very nature of God Himself, and are dictated by the structure of the universe." He further states that just as "'downness' is a necessary part of the system that He

created, similarly, the prohibition of murder reflects the very nature of society and God, and so it is with all other moral laws."[4]

So it could be said that just as natural law cannot be broken, neither can moral law be broken within the bounds of perfect creation. Expressed another way, we may say that the moral law *was violatable*, but *not* within a perfect state. Having violated moral law, man moved outside the perfect creation. It became necessary for moral law to be phrased as an outward code to be obeyed. And to some, it now even appears as an enemy.

It is interesting to note, however, that even at this point, all vestige of the moral law has not been obliterated from fallen man, as can be gathered from Romans 2:14, 15. "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness. . . ." Some sense of "ought" seems to speak at times to all human beings.

Law Describes God. Moral law originates in the very center of God's holy being; it springs from the very nature of God Himself. God's law cannot originate from some cosmic oracle outside of Himself.[5] And it can never be considered as antagonistic to His love. If God is love, and law is the expression of God's character, then law must equal love (1 John 4:8).

The law, when given at Sinai, written on two tables of stone, was as much a description of God as it was a code. And with it came the covenant of grace which further characterized the God who gave it.It was Christ Himself who spoke to His people Israel at Sinai when He made a covenant of love with them based on these ten great principles.

The moral law summarized in ten brief statements "is comprehensive of all human conduct. It is the only law that can effectively control the conscience. It is for all time a condensed manual of human conduct and covers the entire field of human duty."[6] While there are said to be 35 million laws, yet no improvement upon the Ten Commandments have been found. It is heaven's standard of holiness and an expression of Heaven's love.

When Jesus, the Lawgiver Himself, came to this earth and walked among men, He explained the meaning of the law in terms of a personal spiritual relationship to his God and to his fellowmen (Matt 22:37-40). When each commandment is seen as the expression of love, the law loses its negative and external dimension and is seen from its spiritual perspective as a covenant of love between God and man. Thus breaking moral law is not merely the breaking of some external code, but in a deeper sense is an affront to the person of God whose character is the essence and foundation of its precepts.

To view moral law other than as an essential part of God's nature, may lead easily to an unhealthy dichotomy between God's justice and His mercy—that of seeing God's law as an external code which identifies and condemns sin and forces Him to carry out penalties that He regrets. To pitch law against grace is like pitching law against God. Richard Fredericks,[7] quotes Nathaniel Dinock saying:

> There can be nothing in the demands of the law, and the severity of the law, and the condemnation of the law, and the death of the law, and the curse of the law, which is not a reflection (in part) of the perfection of God. Whatever is due to the law, is due to the law because it is the law of God, and is due therefore to God Himself.

"The law expresses God's character and personality, revealing a moral God who is concerned equally that justice and mercy triumph."[8]

God's dealings with Israel as a nation demonstrates the close association of His grace with His law, with grace—in a sense—preceding law. God first met Israel in Egypt and miraculously delivered the nation from bondage. Only then did God invite the nation to accept His law as a covenant of mutual trust and commitment. Similarly, in the life of the Christian, Christ died while we were yet estranged sinners; only then did He ask for obedience to His law (Romans 5:8, John 14:15).

Unity of Law and Grace. Just as law is inseparable from God, it is inseparable from grace, from the gospel. There is a tendency by some modern thinkers (antinomians) to strain out the divine justice from the divine benevolence. To sink benevolence into an emotion rather than exalting it as a principle. The employment of such theological "prism" puts asunder what God has joined together. Ellen White quoted a Professor Edward A. Park:[9]

> The law is a transcript of the divine perfections, and that a man who does not love the law does not love the gospel; for the law, as well as the gospel, is a mirror reflecting the true character of God.

There exists a fundamental theological union between the law and the gospel that if not recognized, will lead to certain obvious perils.

> This peril [of not appreciating the law] leads to another, that of underrating the evil of sin, the extent of it, and demerit of it. In proportion to the rightfulness of the commandment is the wrongfulness of disobeying it.[10]

Further, with "the habit of underrating the divine law and justice, and the extent and demerit of human disobedience, men easily slide into the habit of underestimating the grace which has provided an atonement for sin."[11]

G. C. Berkouwer comments, "If anything is clear in the Biblical revelation it is certainly that the cross is the revelation of God's love but *also*, at the same time, of his holiness and justice." He adds, "The cross shows us that sin was atoned for precisely because *it was also condemned*. Thus the Gospel is a fountain of knowledge for our sins as well as our forgiveness."[12]

God Upholds His Law. Jesus declares (Matt 5:17, 18) that He did not come to destroy the law, but to fulfill and to magnify it. His *life* fulfilled and magnified the law, and "by the crucifixion, the law of Ten Commandments was established. The gospel has not abrogated the law, not detracted one tittle from its claims. It still demands holiness in every part."[13]

When we speak of the "fall" of man, we speak of man's transgression of the will of God. Man has stepped outside the bounds of the law and finds himself in a state of rebellion. Salvation is not God adjusting His law in order to help man out of his dilemma. Salvation is God's way of upholding the justice of His law while finding a way to meet the demands of its violation.

Through Calvary, Christ presented to man the invitation and the power to break the control of sin and be drawn into a new relationship with God. Salvation instead of changing the *law* confirmed the law through the death of the Son of God, and gave power to change *men*. Salvation is God's work of bringing man back into harmony with the law and His expressed will. The purpose of the entire plan of salvation is the restoration of man, this earth and even the entire universe to the original pre-sin condition. Once more the "law of God" will be the natural thing to do.

The Present Function of the Moral Law

We have discussed the law—its place in a perfect world, its place in the very heart of God, its place in man's being at the time of creation, and the evidence that God upholds his law through the plan of salvation. But it is obvious from humanity's universal sinfulness that the moral law is no longer a primary controlling part of man's nature. So, what is the function of the law now in the plan of salvation? Its function is twofold.

(1) To the lost sinner, it reveals his condition.

(2) To the saved sinner, it provides a standard of behavior and points the way toward the restoration of all things. It becomes implanted in his heart as a token or pledge of the full restoration or recreation when law will once more be inseparable from the nature of man. A further discussion of these points follows.

Reveals the Sinner's Condition. Man in his fallen condition does not know—apart from the Holy Spirit—that he is lost. Thus he feels no desire to change toward goodness. His confrontation with the law shows him his desperate situation. But, when initially confronted with the law, he finds himself in a strange dilemma: (1) He is unable to keep the law, but (2) God demands that he should. C. S. Lewis observes, in this respect:[14]

> The Moral Law does not give us any grounds for thinking that God is 'good' in the sense of being indulgent, or soft, or sympathetic. There is nothing indulgent about the Moral Law. It is as hard as nails. It tells you to do the straight thing and it does not seem to care how painful, or dangerous, or difficult it is to do. If God is like the Moral Law, then He is not soft.

Without Christ the law presents bad news to man in his carnal state. C. S. Lewis describes the situation in colorful language.[15]

> If there does exist an absolute goodness it must hate most of what we do. That is the terrible fix we are in. If the universe is not governed by an absolute goodness, then all our efforts are in the long run hopeless. But if it is, then we are making ourselves enemies of that goodness every day. . . . We cannot do without it, and we cannot do with it. God is the only comfort, He is also the supreme terror: the thing we most need and the thing we most want to hide from. He is our only possible ally, and we have made ourselves his enemies.

It is not until man realizes that there is a real moral law, and a Power behind the law, and that we have broken that law and put ourselves at odds with that Power, to use Lewis' words—"It is after all this, and not a moment sooner, that Christianity begins to talk."[16]

The law has been the "schoolmaster" bringing the sinner to Christ (Gal 3:24). But, having brought man this far, the law now becomes helpless. For by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified (Romans 3:20). It cannot save.

Before going on, let us answer this question: Why can't the law save the sinner? Is there something wrong with the law? Ivan Blazen, in a presentation at the Daytona Beach 1986 North American Division Evangelism Council, poses that question: Is something wrong with the law? He then answers:[17]

> No, the law has just been called holy, just and good. Then what is the problem? Reading Romans 8:3, 4: "What the law could not do in that it is weak through the flesh." That is the crux—"weak through the flesh." The problem is not the law, it is *us*. The principle of indwelling sin makes it impossible for the law to bring about the righteousness in the life that it would like to bring about. That's why Paul says in Gal 3:21, If a law had been given which could make alive, then indeed righteousness would be by the law, but the law cannot bring life.

He goes on to say, "But do you mean that the law never promised life? Oh, yes. It promised life alright. Romans 7:10 speaks of 'The law which was ordained unto life.'"[18] But the carnal nature beats it back. An interesting comment from the "Augsburg Sunday School Teacher," August 1937, is quoted in the *SDA Bible Commentary*:[19] "The law would work differently *if* we were to let it have its way in our hearts." It leads to righteousness which would make life possible.

Could we then say that, in a sense, in the beginning, law brought life. Adam in his original condition did not need a savior, although he needed a *sustainer.* The law was within him; as he continued in it, he continued in life. But Adam and his race having fallen, rather than the law of God dwelling within, the principle of sin is dwelling in the members. In such a condition the law of God can do nothing other than condemn and thereby deal a death blow.

Much of Paul's commentary on the law deals with it on this level—the law as our condemner. If the law is so delightful, why is Paul so harsh with it? By Paul's time a great body of tradition had been added to the requirements God had given. E. W. H. Vick comments:[20]

> These traditions obscured the purpose of the law, which was to reveal what God is like and to tell men what He expects them to be. This traditional system placed obedience to external commands ahead of a personal relationship with the God who made the commands. Acceptance to this system was considered necessary to salvation. . . . Salvation involved performance. . . One was saved by what one knew, and by what one did.

Paul's argument is against this practice of using the "law" as a legalistic system to earn merit with God. "When the letter was emphasized and the spirit forgotten, the relationship with God degenerated into a matter of doing this and doing that, keeping one law or another, externalism."[21]

In the Pharisee's system, man would not be acceptable in God's sight if he did not do all that Jewish tradition required. This the Pharisees were working very hard to accomplish. Paul insisted that because of the inability of the carnal nature to come up to this standard, the law could bring nothing but condemnation. "For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, 'Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, and do them.' Now it is evident that no man is justified before God by the law; for 'He who through faith is righteous shall live'" (Gal 3:10, 11, RSV).

Here we see the picture in Romans 7 of a man striving to keep the holy law, but being beaten back by the power of indwelling sin. So the next step is man's realization that he cannot keep the law on his own.

Blazen describes man's need, at this point, for "a healthy look at Calvary." Man sees at Calvary how awful sin is; how powerful it is; how much it takes to get rid of it. He realizes that he is helpless

on his own, that what he needs is not "good intentions, but a Savior."[22] Though the law is spiritual, and belongs to the heavenly realm, it does not have power to help man at this point.

What the penitent needs now is Jesus Christ. And coming to the cross, by faith receiving justification, man is freed from the condemnation of the law. So, according to Romans 10:4, the "end" or *telos*—aim and goal of the law—is to point the sinner to the righteousness of Christ.[23] "We do not try to approach God under law, by way of what we do. We grasp the gift of His grace in faith. . . . This is what it means to be under grace and not under law."[24]

Becomes an Internal Guide. Now the sinner has come to the cross for justification, and has been granted pardon and the imputed righteousness of Christ. What happens to the law in the process? Being looked upon as perfect in God's sight, the repentant believer is no longer condemned by the law. Rather, the believer is lead by the law into closer harmony with God. Once again its function changes. The moral law becomes not our "condemner," but our inner guide (Romans 8: 1-4). Here we come back to David, who as a saved sinner exclaims, "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea thy law is within my heart" (Ps 40:8).

Under the promise of the new covenant the law of God continues to occupy an important role in the life of the Christian. "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days. . . I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts. . . " (Heb 8:10; cf. Jer 31:31-33). This matter of keeping the law is not to be a matter of mere outward conformity, but God promises an inward transformation and an establishment of new principles in the mind.

This inner transformation is described in symbolic language in Ezekiel 36:26, 27 as the prophet declares that God will take away the heart of stone and replace it with a heart of flesh. In conversion the cold, irresponsive heart is replaced by the heart of warmth and life, the "heart of flesh," that is sensitive to the movings of God's Divine spirit.

The resultant, inner harmony is no different than that into which man was created in the beginning—that which existed at creation when spiritual law and natural law beat in unison. The fruit of this harmony with God leads inevitably to obedience in conduct. The inner experience precedes visible conformity. Change in mind results in change in action.

He who receives Christ through the new covenant (new-birth experience) no less receives His holy law as the guide of his life. And thus "becomes a partaker of the divine nature and will be in harmony with God's great standard of righteousness, His holy law."[25] However, action in harmony with law is not offered to God in place of the devotion of the human heart. First the heart is given, then God transforms the heart, and Christlike conduct results.[26]

God's goal for the new covenant is expressed by Ellen White in *Desire of Ages*. The believer may become so in union with God that when he is doing God's will, it will seem to him he is doing his own. "If we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him, we shall be but carrying out our own impulses."[27]

Here the question could be raised: Does Christlike conduct and character result automatically from God's work on the heart, without thought or effort on the part of the believer? The answer is, no! As the Holy Spirit works on the human will, the power of choice must be exercised. Man must exert every human energy on the side of God's will. "To man is allotted a part in this great struggle for everlasting life—he must respond to the working of the Holy Spirit. It will require a struggle to break through the powers of darkness, and the Spirit works in him to accomplish this. But man is no passive being, to be saved in indolence. He is called upon to strain every muscle and exercise every faculty in the struggle for immortality; yet it is God that supplies the efficiency.[28] The believer's efforts do not earn salvation, but if his/her heart has been transformed by the Holy Spirit, then he/she will enlist every power on God's side.

We may now summarize the two basic functions of God's law as expressed in the Ten Commandments. First, it points out sin in individual lives by revealing God's will for the human family. This is its preliminary work under the operation of the Holy Spirit to bring conviction of sin and to create a sense of need in the soul. Second, the Holy Spirit "writes" God's law on the mind of the believer. The law, now dwelling within as it were, continues to serve

as guide and a mirror as at first (James 1:22-25). But it is the work of Christ to provide the power for godly living. Nevertheless, faithful obedience to the divine precepts becomes the believer's delight (Ps 40:8).

Conclusion

We see around us the disintegrating effects of sin and lawlessness. Even within the churches there is lack of power. Ellen White comments: "The nature and the importance of the law of God have been, to a great extent, lost sight of. . . . Here is to be found the secret of the lack of the Spirit and power of God in the revivals of our times.[29]

The message and mission of God's people today is to proclaim the everlasting gospel of Revelation 14 to this dying world, this world that is "hurting and bleeding" from the results of "broken love" and a "broken law." An important part of this message deals with the presentation of a deeper understanding of the broad, spiritual nature of God's holy law. "We have a world wide message," declares Ellen White, "The ten commandments of God and the testimonies of Jesus Christ are the burden of our work."[30]

The mission is not to give a call to legalism or judgmentalism, nor to pronounce law as a way of salvation. It is a call to the worship of the Creator; a call to the submission and acceptance of the atoning death of Calvary for the violated law; it is a call to let Christ come into the heart and establish His throne in the very seat of life, to accept the love of God as it is poured out, prompting wholehearted obedience to Him (Deut 6:4-5).

A homey, personal story illustrates the theme of this study. Our family moved to a mid-western city and bought a house on a busy street. We brought our little collie pup with us. At considerable expense and long hours of work, we erected a fence.

The little dog, tied on a chain, watched the family without the least understanding of the love going into the toil of hauling material, pounding posts, stretching wire. But when the fence was finished and he was free to run, the favorite pastime seemed to be his trying to find a way to get out of the enclosure. Some days later when the phone rang in my office, I heard a teary voice begging me to "Come home quickly, Daddy, something awful happened."

I rushed home to find mother and three children gathered around the form of the little collie dog—stretched on the grass, bloody and lifeless—struck by a fast-moving car on the busy front street to which he had escaped. So the tears of the five all rained down together. Our beautiful little dog—if only he could have seen those tears, could have understood the mystery of the fence—that it was love that erected the fence—nothing else—only love.

The church's message to the world is just that. To tell them God's law was never meant to oppress the universe. It was given, all for love. It was provided at great expense and suffering—all for love—only for love.

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A LOOK AT THE LARGER VIEW OF CALVARY: AN EVALUATION OF THE DEBATE IN THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

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Introduction

Seventh-day Adventists have grappled with the meaning of Calvary for a long time. Two major emphases have developed, (1) The Substitutionary model (afterwards referred to as SM) in which Calvary is the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ to pay human debt and satisfy God's broken law (2 Cor 5:19). Some view this as the Penal, Forensic or Legal model. It also includes Christ as representative man (2 Cor 5:14, Rom 5:18-19).[1] (2) The Great Controversy Trust-Healing model (afterwards referred to as GCTHM) in which Calvary is viewed in the larger setting of the great controversy between Christ and Satan with Christ's death answering three basic questions: (1) Does sin bring death?, (2) Is it death at the hand of our gracious God? and (3) Is it important to understand that God does not kill any of His erring children? Some view this as a qualified type of Moral Influence theory. There are those who believe these two views are mutually exclusive.

Is one theory right and the other wrong? Or, is there room for aspects of both? Is one model really more restricted than the other, or are both informed by the great controversy paradigm? In other words, Is it correct to say that the GCTHM has a larger view than the SM? If it does, then how does one define "larger"? Is it "larger"

when compared to the classical atonement theories, such as the "Christus Victor," Socinian, Moral Influence, Governmental, Ransom and Satisfaction theories, for example?[2] Or, is it "larger" when compared to an understanding of the great controversy? Or, is it "larger" because it incorporates the total revelation of Scripture and the inspired insights of Ellen G. White? The GCTHM adherents believe theirs to be the larger view, because it looks at Calvary in the setting of the great controversy.

Exponents of both models are saying things that are to be found in inspired writings. Yet *selective use* of those writings as well as "straw men" are involved in the GCTHM.[3] The purpose of this article is irenic. There is no desire to criticize those who have devoted much time to presenting the truth as they see it. Truth is bigger than any of us. Thus, references to the published works (books, video and audio tapes) of exponents of these two views are not cited although this presentation is the result of researching them in the light of inspired sources. We should remember that changing world views have contributed to new atonement theories.[4, 5, 6]

Different biblical words accepted by the SM express Christ's atonement, such as "justification," "redemption," "propitiation," "reconciliation," and "victory." These have generated numerous theories. I have discussed these in my article "Toward Understanding the Atonement," in the *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, Vol. 1, #1, Spring 1990, pp. 57-89. This article will not review those theories, but will consider what must be included in "the larger view of Calvary." The fact that Nicea (A. D. 325) and Chalcedon (A. D. 461) pronounced on the nature of Christ, but no conciliar decree has done the same about His works (atonement), should serve as a caution against arriving at any simple model. Within space limitations, we will look at (1) twelve aspects of the larger view of the cross and (2) examine four areas of the content of redemption (SM) that Calvary reveals.

Thesis. Scripture and the writing of Ellen G. White must judge one's model of the atonement, rather than the reverse. That is to say, the model must not judge Scripture and inspired writing, selectively using them, and interpreting them from any preconceived ideas about Calvary and the great controversy issue, or judging some parts of God's Word as more primitive than others.[7] Although God invites us to use our reason (Isa 1:18), reason must not be the final court of appeal.[8] Human reason must bow before divine revelation, or we are left with rationalism.[9] It should be kept in mind that "those who are exalted in their own opinions will despise the blood of the Atoning Sacrifice, and will do despite to the Spirit of grace."[10] Furthermore, we would have no idea of Calvary apart from divine revelation.

We should also recall that J. H. Kellogg's claim that his pantheistic view of God presented a larger view than only a personal being?[11] And A. T. Jones believed Kellogg's view to be "the larger and true idea" of God when compared to the God of Seventh-day Adventists,[12] a view supported by the non-Adventist press.[13] Although different in many ways, nevertheless both Kellogg's view of God and that of the GCTHM deny the need of a substitutionary payment on Calvary and the need for the subsequent heavenly sanctuary intercession.[14]

The thesis before us involves the following three major premises:

1. The plan of salvation has eternal dimensions that dismiss any simple model of the cross as inadequate.

2. Calvary is more than a demonstration that sin brings death. Such is a restricted view for the following reasons: (a) The great controversy issues are far larger than the question "Is God or Satan right about sin resulting in death." The question of death is a subsequent issue arising after the controversy was launched. (b) The prior and larger issues of the great controversy have to do with the supremacy of Christ and God's eternal law. Inspiration is very clear on this.[15] These two, together with ten other aspects, will form a truly larger view of Calvary that I will attempt to spell out in this article.

3. I define "the larger view" of the cross as the full revelation of Scripture and the writings of Ellen G. White, rather than a view of the great controversy representing less than all that is revealed (as in the GCTHM).

Illustration. While in my doctoral studies at the University of Edinburgh, I read systematically through Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics* (13 volumes, 7, 946 pages) in seventy-nine and a half days. It was a herculean task, but there is no better way to become emersed in the thinking and system of a theologian of the caliber of Karl Barth. Unlike most theologians, Barth has attempted to look at all theological topics from the perspective of Jesus Christ. At the outset this seemed refreshingly different. It had real appeal. There is a drawing power in a focus on the love of God as seen in Christ! But, as I grappled with Barth's system and reasoning, I became aware that he was presenting his own idea of Christ and holding that view above Scripture, judging Scripture in the light of that view. The result was that he rejected some biblical insights simply on the basis of their disagreement with his preconceived view of Christ.

Barth's view of Christ caused him to reject the existence of Satan and fallen angels! His idea of Christ made any final punishment, or God's wrath, meaningless as his system moves inexorably to universalism—despite his protestations to the contrary. What did he do with the texts that said otherwise? He simply dismissed them as irrelevant.

Could this happen in the Seventh-day Adventist church? Could it be done in the name of the great controversy, or in defense of a gracious God? Could ideas about either be taken and superimposed over Scripture to restrict it to preconceived views on such subjects as God's wrath? The only way to prevent such a possibility is to test one's ideas by submitting them to the judgment of *all* of God's divine revelation in Scripture and the writing of Ellen G. White. We will attempt to do this within the necessary limits of this article.

The Eternal Dimension. There are eternal dimensions to salvation's plan that stagger the mind. Concerning the eternity past Ellen White says, "The salvation of the human race has ever been the object of the councils of heaven. . . It has existed from all eternity. . . So surely as there never was a time when God was not, so surely there never was a moment when it was not the delight of the eternal mind to manifest His grace to humanity."[16] Concerning the future eternity she says, "It will take all eternity to comprehend the science of redemption, to understand something of what it means that the Son of the infinite God gave his life for the life of the world."[17] So Calvary comes with an eternity behind it and an eternity before it!

No wonder Ellen White describes salvation's plan as "immeasurable,"[18] that it "far exceeds the comprehension of the human mind,"[19] that it "is too high to be fully reached by human thought,"[20] and "increases in greatness as we contemplate it."[21] Do we realize what this means? It means that the more we study it the more opens up to be studied. It isn't a case of mastery. Rather, with the passing of eternity the magnitude of the content of Calvary will be ever unfolding without end! "It cost an infinite price to deliver the captives of Satan from the captivity of sin."[22] Calvary is an infinite subject which will take an infinite eternity to understand!

Concerning the angels Ellen White says, "They saw the Redeemer take step after step down the path of humiliation. They saw him rejected, denied, insulted, abused, and crucified, and yet it was something beyond all finite intelligence to comprehend the full mystery of redemption."[23] So even angels, who watched Jesus die, could not comprehend the full mystery involved, and they were sinless beings of a higher order than humankind (Heb 2:7)! How much less can sinful mortals, who did not observe Calvary, comprehend (cf. Rom 11:33-34)! In fact Ellen White says that "the redeemed throng will range from world to world, and much of their time will be employed in searching out the mysteries of redemption. And throughout the whole stretch of eternity, this subject will be continually opening to their minds."[24] No wonder there are so many theories! It is a humbling fact that the sum total of all the theories fail to do justice to the eternal revelation of Calvary yet to come. This article included!

Twelve Major Components of the Larger View of Calvary

1. The larger view does not confine itself to our gracious Heavenly Father, but sees also the centrality of Christ in the great controversy.

Christ indicated how the Old Testament spoke of Himself (Luke 24:25-26; John 5:39). The last biblical book is a revelation of Christ (Rev 1:1) in the setting of the great controversy. In Revelation the Father sits on the throne in the background (e.g. Rev 5:6; 14:1-5, 14-20; 19:11-16). The war in heaven is between Michael (Christ) and Satan (Rev 12:7-10), and Christ does not hand over the kingdom to the Father until after the destruction of "all his enemies" at the end (1 Cor 15:22-28).

Even though Christ came to reveal the Father (John 14:9), since the Father's character and government has been questioned by Satan, it is also true from sin's inception, that "to dispute the supremacy of the Son of God, thus impeaching the wisdom and love of the Creator, had become the purpose of this prince of angels."[25] To meet this issue, "the King of the universe summoned the heavenly hosts before Him, that in their presence He might set forth the true position of His Son. . ."[26] Note Satan's response. "The exaltation of the Son of God as equal with the Father was represented as an injustice to Lucifer."[27] "He would never again acknowledge the supremacy of Christ," nor "the authority of Christ."[28]

At the end of the millennium Christ and His cross is central before the gaze of all humans who have ever lived. Satan recalls his "envy of Christ" and "his constant efforts to oppose the work of Christ."[29] Thus, throughout the millennia, as Ellen G. White rightly indicates in the naming of her book, it has been *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan*.

2. The larger view involves the Trinity and not just the Father (We will develop this later).

3. The larger view involves the eternal mediation of Christ, and includes His priestly ministration in the heavenly sanctuary.

From eternity Christ has been the Word of God (John 1:1-2). Called "Michael the Archangel" (Jude 9, Rev 12:7, cf. Dan 12:1), He mingled with the angels, as a mediator between the infinite God and the angel creation. With sin's inception, the Father announced to the angels "the true position of His Son."[30] After the fall of man, Christ pled three times with the Father to become man's Substitute-Saviour.[31] Later in Gethsemane He would plead three times to "let this cup pass" if possible (Matt 26:39-44). "He was to stand between the sinner and the penalty of sin."[32]

Though the Father is equally loving, the way to the Father is through Christ (John 14:6 cf. John 6:44), as man's Mediator (1 Tim 2:5; cf. Gal 3:19-20; Heb 8:6; 9:15; 12:24). Even though Christ does not pray to the Father to get Him to love mankind (John 16:26-27), yet even man's religious worship is unacceptable without Christ's intercession.[33] The larger view of Calvary believes that "the intercession of Christ in man's behalf in the sanctuary above is as essential to the plan of salvation as was His death upon the cross"[34] (cf. Rom 4:25).

4. The larger view includes operation of all the divine attributes and not just that of love.

"Righteousness and justice are the foundation" of God's throne (Ps 89:14; 97:2; cf. Exod 34:6-7; Jer 9:24). As Ellen G. White notes, "When Adam fell, God's attributes of holiness, justice and truth could not be changed."[35] Calvary demonstrates God's justice (Rom 3:25-26). Yet, by some, "love is dwelt upon as the chief attribute of God. . . God's justice, His denunciations of sin, the requirements of His holy law, are all kept out of sight."[36]

5. The larger view must include Satan's attack against God's law.

"Those only who have a just regard for the law of God can rightly estimate the atonement of Christ which was made necessary by the violation of the Father's law."[37] The GCTHM focuses on the great controversy against God's character and government. Basic to that government is His law. Ellen G. White can use "government" and "law" synonymously.[38]

We must remember that "Satan has declared that men could not enter the kingdom of heaven unless the law was abolished and a way devised by which transgressors could be reinstated into the favor of God, and made heirs of heaven. He made the claim that the law must be changed, that the reins of government must be slackened in heaven, that sin must be tolerated, and sinners pitied and saved in their sins. But every such plea was cast aside when Christ died as a substitute for the sinner."[39] For, the larger view of Calvary satisfies "the claims of the broken law."[40] "Christ exhausted the penalty and provided a pardon."[41] The sinless One became "sin for us" (2 Cor 5:21). This involves far more than a mere disclosure to restore trust.

At sin's inception in heaven[42] Satan worked "to excite opposition to the law of God."[43] "Satan represents God's law of love as a law of selfishness. . . Jesus was to unveil this deception."[44] His perfect life of law-keeping ended in His "It is finished on Calvary" (John 19:30), at which moment Satan was exposed as false. The larger view of Calvary includes the Life of Christ as also necessary to the atonement. "Through Christ's redeeming work the government of God stands justified."[45] Subsequently, "for the good of the entire universe" God has allowed time, so that "the immutability of His law might be forever placed beyond all question."[46]

The eternal principles of the law, against which Satan revolted, must not be minimized by calling law-giving at Sinai an "emergency measure" as in the GCTHM.[47] For Sinai was actually a type of the end-time judgments, with eschatological escalation involved, in that the local will become global. God says, "The terrors of Sinai were to represent to the people the scenes of judgment. . . When the divine Presence was manifested upon Sinai, the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire in the sight of all Israel. But when Christ shall come in glory with His holy angels the whole earth shall be ablaze with the terrible light of His presence. . . A fiery stream shall issue and come forth from before Him, which shall cause the elements to melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burned up"[48] (cf. Heb 10:26-29; 12:22-29). No wonder that even "the child of God will be terror-stricken at the first sight of the majesty of Jesus Christ. He feels that he cannot live in His holy presence. But the word comes to him as to John, 'Fear not'."[49]

At the close of the millennium the entire universe behold the coronation of Christ. "They see in His hands the tables of the divine law, the statutes which they have despised and transgressed."[50] Just as Christ and the law are seen together with the cross in that final revelation to humankind, so they must be kept together at Calvary. At the close of the great controversy, "the fruits of setting aside the divine statutes" will have been "laid open to the view of all created intelligences."[51]

Law is mentioned at least fifty times in three Ellen G. White chapters dealing with the beginning and end of the great controversy.[52] These chapters are not preoccupied with the three questions of interest to the GCTHM. In fact, these three chapters and a reference in *Desire of Ages*[53] indicate that God did not destroy the fallen angels when banished from heaven because it would take time for the nature of sin to be understood. But with the lapse of sufficient time, His justice would be vindicated when He destroyed them (a view contrary to the GCTHM).[54] Ellen White quotes Hebrews 2:14, to show that Christ's death enables Him to destroy "him that had the power of death, that is, the devil."[55] She even designates the larger view beyond man's redemption as magnifying the law (not questions about sin bringing death), and at Calvary "the penalty of the law fell upon" Christ (as in the SM).[56]

6. The larger view recognizes the seriousness of sin, and man's need of salvation, as well as his need to trust. Man needs a Substitute.

The GCTHM is silent on human guilt needing atonement. It is a limited view of Calvary that overlooks the seriousness of sin as lawlessness (1 John 3:4). Sin is more than a breakdown of trust that only needs information (revelation), and more than a disease that just needs healing. Substitution is a major theme that runs throughout the Bible. It would take a separate article to elaborate on that truth.[57] Justification through Christ's substitutionary sacrifice (Isa 53: 1-12; Luke 22:37; Rom 4:25; 1 Cor 15:1-3; 1 Tim 2:6; 1 Pet 2:24; 3:18; 1 John 4:10) and imputed righteousness (1 Cor 1:30, cf. vs. 23) are essential components of salvation. In Gethsemane Satan tempted Christ with the thought that substitution would defile Him forever.[58] The death of the second Adam is the solution to the sin of the first Adam (Rom 5:18-19).

7. The larger view is cosmic in scope, contributing to the understanding of unfallen beings as well as to man.[59] Whereas man unlike angels, needs redemption,[60] man also with unfallen beings needs revelation. To both classes Calvary is God's response to Satan's questioning of His Word.

Satan "misrepresented God, attributing to Him the desire for self-exaltation. With his own evil characteristics he sought to invest the loving Creator. Thus he deceived angels. Thus he deceived men. He led them to doubt the word of God, and to distrust His goodness. Because God is a God of justice and terrible majesty, Satan caused them to look upon Him as severe and unforgiving."[61] Note that in heaven Satan's thrust was against God's word, as it has been ever since, as well as against His character and government. Therefore the larger view of Calvary must be true to all of God's Word to properly defend Him.

8. The larger view is more than a revelation of God. It is also an unmasking of Satan and an exposure of man.

Because God is holy, and true to Himself, He did something about sin and Satan at the cross (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). The cross reveals the unholiness of Satan and man, that as sinners these created beings took the life of their own Creator. John Stott speaks to some of what we say here when he says, "All inadequate doctrines of the atonement are due to inadequate doctrines of God and man."[62] Calvary is Christ's victory over Satan (Heb 2:14).

9. The larger view must include all that Scripture says about Jesus. He is more than a Friend.

Christ is more than a Friend (John 15:15). He is our God (John 1:1,14; 20:28), our Creator (Heb 1:1-3), our Lord (1 Cor 11:26), our Master (Col 4:1), our Teacher (John 13:13), our Mediator (1 Tim 2:5), our Saviour (Rev 5:9-12), our High priest (Heb 4:14-16), our Advocate (1 John 2:1) our judge (John 5:22) and our King (Rev 19:16). Calvary does demonstrate His love to us (John 12:32). It does reveal that He is our Friend. But, properly understood, Calvary shows Him doing for us that which we could never do for ourselves (Rom 5:8; Eph 2:8, 9).

Calvary is a gift of recreation, a new beginning, a new chance (cf. Eph 1:3-8). Calvary reveals that Christ took our place, carried our sin, died in our stead as our Substitute (Isa 53:4-10; 2 Cor 5:21). Calvary reveals our God at work for us and calls forth worship, adoration and praise which far transcends just friendship talk (cf. Rev 4:8-11; 5:9,12; 12:10-12). It will be our delight to serve Him as our Creator, Saviour and King as well as our Friend. The larger picture of Scripture must not be limited to friendship talk anymore than the multiple attributes of God must be restricted to just love, or the multiple biblical insights of Calvary confined to only disclosure.

The GCTHM proposes that we are God's friends, not His servants (identified with the SM, or legal model by the GCTHM). Yet the larger view of the cross also includes Christ as the "suffering Servant" (eg. Isa 42 and 53) and our response as "Christ's servants" (1 Cor 7:22; cf. Rom 1:1; Eph 6:6; Luke 17:10; Heb 3:5; James 1:1; 1 Pet. 2:16; Jude 1; Rev 1:1). Even Job, cited by the GCTHM as speaking well of God, is called by God His servant, Job 42:7. It is servants who will be ready for Christ's return (Matt 24:45-46) and receive Christ's commendation "Well done" (Luke 19:17).

10. The larger view is not a disclosure that demands priority over the claims of Scripture.

Scriptural revelation must have priority over any human insight into the significance of Calvary, for apart from Scripture the meaning of Calvary would be unknown. Any interpretation of the disclosure of Calvary must of necessity be in harmony with the rest of Biblical revelation (e.g. "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all" Isa 53:6, or substitution). The disclosure at Calvary must not be placed above, or in place of, revelation in Scripture. Any elevation of the disclosure at Calvary above biblical claims is the same as Brunner's "Truth as Encounter" or Barth's "Christomonism." The cross is placed above Scripture just like Brunner's encounter (or experience) is placed above the Bible, and Barth's "Christ" is placed above God's Word. All three, though different, share common ground in placing human reason as judge over divine revelation.[63]

Seventh-day Adventists know Satan will come pretending to be Christ in the end-time. That disclosure can only be exposed as counterfeit by the judgment of God's Word—we will meet Christ in the air and not on the ground (1 Thess 4:16-18; Matt 24:23-28). Satan's disclosure in Eden, with alleged evidence concerning not dying by eating the forbidden fruit, was given to discredit God's Word (Gen 3:1-6). Satan's consistent strategy is to deny God's Word through disclosure. Therefore, God's Word, with its truth-claims, necessarily has priority even over alleged divine disclosure until after the Second Advent.[64]

11. The larger view must include all that Scripture says about the cross. This includes all the Biblical metaphors describing salvation.[65]

It follows, that the larger view of Calvary must include all that Scripture says about the cross, and not just disclosure. A selective use of Scripture (as in the GCTHM) is no different than Satan's questioning of God's Word as to whether death will come through sin (Gen 3:1-6; basic to the GCTHM). In both instances the reason of a created being is placed above a "thus saith the Lord."

Authentic trust in God is demonstrated by trusting in the totality of divine revelation. Disclosure alone (as in the GCTHM) is no different from the confined view of occult interpretations found in channelled sources of the New Age Movement[66] and its precursor in the Theosophical Society.[67] All share common ground in rejecting substitution, for man is seen as only needing revelation and not redemption.

12. The larger view includes redemption (SM) as well as revelation (GCTHM), and redemption necessarily has priority over revelation as its content.

Relative to human salvation, the larger view of Calvary, as given throughout Scripture, involves redemption (e.g. Matt 20:28; Rom 3:24; 5:9; Eph 1:7) as well as revelation (John 12:32; Rom 2:4). Redemption is the objective side of atonement, and revelation is the subjective side. The objective side necessarily has priority over the subjective, otherwise the revelation would be without meaningful content. It follows that any preoccupation with the *affects* of revelation is a confinement to the results of the cross rather than its cause. Redemption and revelation are the two sides of what happened on Calvary, and must both be given their proper place.

Having briefly mentioned the twelve areas important to the larger setting of the cross, we come now to focus on four crucial factors involved in redemption. For in looking at the two models of the cross subscribed to by Seventh-day Adventists, we could legitimately view them as having to do with (1) primary focus on redemption (SM) and (2) sole focus on revelation (GCTHM). If the first concentrates on the content of Redemption, the second concentrates on its affects, without any attention to its content. These four major aspects of redemption found in inspired sources are missing in the GCTHM; hence, it must be considered a narrower view, even though wrongly called the larger view.

Redemption: Justice And Mercy

It is necessary to grasp what is involved in redemption before we ever move on to speak of its revelation. We must understand the function of God as Redeemer before we are able to understand what He reveals about that redemption. For it is redemption that is the proper content of Calvary's revelation. In other words, salvation has to do with what Christ did *in our place* (Mark 10:45; *anti*, "in place of," not just *huper*, "for us") at Calvary which in turn constitutes the revelation He makes to produce trust and healing *in us*.

It is not one without the other. If redemption is misunderstood, there is a truncated revelation.

Redemption includes justice as well as mercy (love). God is "a righteous God and a Saviour" (Isa 45:21, NIV; cf. Zeph 3:5). Christ is "righteous and having salvation" (Zech 9:9, NIV), "the Holy and Righteous One" (Acts 3:14, NIV; cf. 7:52), Whose "judgment is just" (John 5:30, NIV). Thus, Scripture reveals God and Jesus with more than the one attribute of love (1 John 4:8). Given that God does what He does because He is who He is, then the sum total of His attributes are in all that He does, including Calvary. That means Calvary must be more than a revelation of love. It must be also a revelation of righteousness, a revelation of justice, a revelation of the sum total of God's attributes. God has no such attribute as abstract love. His love is qualified by His justice, as well as His justice by His love. This means that God's love revealed at the cross is not neutral love, or love cut off from all the other attributes of God. It is "just love," and "loving justice." It is "holy love."

Ellen G. White speaks of the larger view of the atonement in the context of the great controversy. She says,

> God's love has been expressed in His justice no less than in His mercy. Justice is the foundation of His throne, and the fruit of His love. It had been Satan's purpose to divorce mercy from truth and justice. . . By His life and His death, Christ proved that God's justice did not destroy His mercy, but that sin could be forgiven, and that the law is righteous, and can be perfectly obeyed. Satan's charges were refuted. God had given man unmistakable evidence of His love.
>
> Another deception was now to be brought forward. Satan declared that mercy destroyed justice, that the death of Christ abrogated the Father's law. Had it been possible for the law to be changed or abrogated, then Christ need not have died. But to abrogate the law would be to immortalize transgression, and place the world under Satan's control. It was because the law was changeless, because man could be saved only through obedience to its precepts, that Jesus was lifted up on the cross. Yet the very means by which Christ established the law Satan represented as destroying it. Here will come the last conflict of the great controversy between Christ and Satan."[68]

Here we see that any great controversy view of Calvary must

discuss Satan's attempt to divide God's attributes, focusing on justice more than mercy before the cross, and upon mercy more than justice after the cross. A sole focus on God's love (as in the GCTHM) finds itself within the same focus of Satan's post-crucifixion strategy. This needs to be carefully considered.

Leon Morris believes that "throughout the Bible the central question is, 'How can sinful man ever be accepted by a holy God?'"[69] In commenting on the moral influence theory, he notes that "some form of the subjective or moral view is held widely today, especially among scholars of the liberal school. In all its variations this theory emphasizes the importance of the effect of Christ's cross on the sinner."[70] His evaluation is twofold. "It is when it is claimed that this is all that the atonement means that we must reject it. Taken in this way it is open to serious criticism. If Christ was not actually doing something by his death, then we are confronted with a piece of showmanship, nothing more."[71] His second observation lays bare the emptiness of atonement as demonstration. He says that "unless the death of Christ really does something, it is not in fact a demonstration of love."[72]

For example, if someone dives in to save you when you are drowning, you will be forever grateful for such love. But if he dives in while you are safely sitting on the bank you cannot help but wonder about his wisdom, and would have no clue how this reveals his love.[73] And it is doubtful that this act would increase any trust, or produce any healing. As Y. H. Hughes put it,

> God must work in the Atonement itself, as well as in the life that follows. There must, therefore, be an "objective" source of power, and not merely a subjective change in man, before the Atonement can become effective. The degenerations and losses wrought by sin have to be met and conquered, and for this more than knowledge is necessary.[74]

That "more than knowledge" content of Calvary addresses important issues in the great controversy. Ellen G. White says, "His death proved God's administration and government to be without a flaw. Satan's charge in regard to the conflicting attributes of justice and mercy was forever settled beyond question. Every voice in heaven and out of heaven will one day testify to the justice, mercy, and love of God."[75] In his final post-millennial attack against God's government, Satan will attempt "to dethrone Christ" and in this act will be "fully unmasked." Then "his accusations against the mercy and justice of God" will be silenced.[76]

Redemption Includes God's Wrath

The desire to present God in a good light is a commendable motive behind the GCTHM, because "the great deceiver endeavors to shift his own horrible cruelty of character upon our heavenly Father. . ."[77] and "the appalling views of God which have spread over the world from the teachings of the pulpit have made thousands, yes, millions, of skeptics and infidels."[78] Yet, God's own revelation speaks of His wrath. It is all through the Bible, and God warns against a false security.[79] There is a close association between God's wrath and Christ's salvation (John 3:36; Rom 5:9; Eph 2:3-5; 1 Thess 1:10; 5:9-10).[80]

Did not Christ twice overturn the tables in the temple as an act of righteous indignation? (John 2:12-22 and Matt 21:12-16, 23-46; Mark 11:15-19, 27-33; 12:1-12; Luke 19:45-48; 20:1-19).[81] Do we not read of the "wrath of the Lamb" (Rev 6:16)? I am aware of the definition of wrath in Romans 1 (Rom 1:24, 26, 28), to which we will return shortly. However, it is necessary to look at all of divine revelation for guidance on this matter. We must allow revelation to inform us as to why God says so much about His wrath in Scripture. We must remind ourselves that the Bible is not a smorgasbord where we are free to pick and choose what we want and leave the rest. The Protestant principle of *sola scriptura*, where the Bible is its own interpreter and the whole Biblical view is sought, is still the only safe hermeneutic.

It should be emphasized that God's wrath is as far distanced from human wrath as is His love, or any other attribute. Any attribute of God, such as wrath, must be considered as compatible with His attribute of love. God's attributes are no more mutually exclusive than are the three members of the Godhead. These apparently opposite attributes (from a human perspective) belong naturally together within each member of the Godhead as do the three members themselves. Because of space limitations we must confine our attention to only a few illustrations and comments.

The children of Israel tented with the tabernacle in their midst.

"God with them" was one side of the truth about our gracious God. The other was that "the Levites. . .set up their tents around the tabernacle of the testimony so that wrath" would not fall on the Israelite community (Num 1:53, NIV; cf. 18:5). When Korah, Dathan and Abiram rebelled against Moses and Aaron, the earth swallowed them up (Num 16:31-34) and "fire came out from the Lord and consumed the 250" followers (Num 16:35, NIV). The next day the Israelites complained, blaming Moses and Aaron for killing the people (Num 16:41). The Lord said to Moses, "Get away from this assembly so I can put an end to them at once" (Num 16:45, NIV). Then Moses said to Aaron, 'Take your censer and put incense in it, along with fire from the altar, and hurry to the assembly to make atonement for them. Wrath has come out from the Lord; the plague has started. . . Aaron offered the incense and made atonement for them. He stood between the living and the dead, and the plague stopped. But 14,700 people died from the plague" (Num 16:46-49, NIV).

In this incident atonement was clearly associated with God's wrath against rebellion, an insight into atonement at the cross, which in its larger view includes God's ultimate response to Satan's rebellion. The GCTHM claims that sin is self-destruction, that God's abandonment on Calvary gives insight into the final destruction of the wicked. There is truth in this (see next section, and also footnote).[82] However, the larger view must include two causes for the destruction of the wicked: (1) God's wrath against sin (cf. Ps 11:6; Isa 9:5; 34:2)[83] and (2) sin as self-destruction. For example, the final plagues come when God actively intervenes and sends them,[84] as well as when His presence is "withdrawn," and He does not "prevent" Satan's work.[85] Ellen G. White's following insight calls in question the validity of the GCTHM view of sin as only self-destruction. She says,

> God's love is represented in our day as being of such a character as would forbid His destroying the sinner. Men reason from their own low standard of right and justice. 'Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself' (Ps 50:21). They measure God by themselves. They reason as to how they would act under the circumstances and decide God would do as they imagine they would do. . .
>
> In no kingdom or government is it left to the lawbreakers to say what

punishment is to be executed against those who have broken the law. All we have, all the bounties of His grace which we possess, we owe to God. The aggravating character of sin against such a God cannot be estimated any more than the heavens can be measured with a span. *God is a moral governor as well as a Father*. He is the Lawgiver. He makes and executes His laws. Law that has no penalty is of no force.

The plea may be made that a *loving Father would not see His children suffering the punishment of God* by fire while He had the power to relieve them. But God would, for the good of His subjects and for their safety, punish the transgressor. *God does not work on the plan of man. He can do infinite justice that man has no right to do before his fellow man.* Noah would have displeased God to have drowned one of the scoffers and mockers that harassed him, but God drowned the vast world. Lot would have had no right to inflict punishment on his sons-in-law, but God would do it in strict justice.[86]

In view of this statement, and the many biblical texts on God's wrath, we see that the larger setting of divine revelation presents God as more than a gracious friend. He is also the "moral governor" of the world, and does punish sinners with righteous wrath in harmony with His infinite justice. The God who is only gracious is too confined when compared with the larger view of divine revelation.

The Ellen G. White comment that "some are destroyed as in a moment, while others suffer many days,"[87] is dismissed by the GCTHM which interprets God's wrath as only abandonment. But on what basis can human reason overlook the larger definition of wrath in divine revelation, and then ignore the obvious meaning of this statement? But any placing of human reason above God's revelation, whether intentional or not, is the same strategy that has been employed from the inception of sin. Creaturely reason must bow before God's revelation, or it will promote Satan's attack against it.

Redemption and the Cry of Dereliction

A Seventh-day Adventist atonement theory of the cross must explain the meaning of Christ's cry, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me" (Matt 27:46, NIV). Was He suffering from God's wrath or not? To answer this question, some go to Romans 1, where "the wrath of God" (v. 18) is defined as "God gave them over," or abandonment (vs. 24, 26, 28). It is pointed out that the same Greek word *paradidomi* (hand over; give over) is used in Romans 4:25 just as it is used three times in Romans 1:24, 26, 28. In Romans 1 God gave sinners up (*paradidomi*) to the natural consequences of their sins, and so it is suggested that in Romans 4:25 God gave Christ up (*paradidomi*) to die from the natural consequences of sin (cf. Rom. 8:32, *paradidomi*).

But if abandonment is the *only* inspired definition of God's wrath, then why did God drive a third of the warring angels from heaven (Rev 12:8-9) and Adam and Eve from Eden (Gen 3:22-23)? Did abandonment cause the Flood? (Or was it sent by Satan? Hardly, when he feared for his own life.)[88] Will the final destruction of the wicked, including Satan, be simply God's abandonment? Not according to divine revelation.[89] How can the GCTHM say that even the wicked need not fear God when the Bible says they will call for the rocks to hide them from God's wrath (Rev 6:16, 17)?

God often used angels to bring judgment on cities and people,[90] and compare His "direct agency" in natural laws.[91] If God can destroy in the first death, why not in the second? After all, the antediluvians were not safe to save.[92] The world Flood was not God "putting His children to sleep." God sent the flood to destroy the wicked (Gen 6:7; 2 Pet 2:5; cf. Luke 17:27). His children were safe in the ark. If the world in the end-time is in the same condition as it was in the time of Noah (Matt 24:36-39), on what basis can one dismiss the destruction of the first world (Gen 6:3, 7; cf. 8:21) as not instructive of the coming destruction (Rev 19:11, 20-21)? In other words, the larger view of God's wrath involves more than the limited definition of Romans 1.

It is said that this "giving up" in Romans 4:25 is the meaning of "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" in Matthew 27:46 (NIV), and should be read: "Why have you "abandoned me?" Although a different Greek word is used in Matthew (*egkataleipo*), the root meaning is "to abandon." Relative to Romans 1 and 4:25, we must remember that the word *paradidomi* can mean "to betray" (Matt 10:4; cf. John 6:64, 71), or it can mean "to hand over" (Mark 10:33). It is also used of God not sparing His Son but giving Him up for us all (Rom 8:32), and even of Christ giving Himself up to die (Gal 2:20).

Therefore, "giving up" has a number of connotations, depending upon who is doing the "giving up." They are all a part of the larger view of what happened at Calvary. Judas gave Christ up as the betrayer. Christ gave Himself up as our Substitute. The Father gave Christ up in both love and wrath—love because it was as difficult for God to part with Him as for Christ to part from the Father. The anguish of the Father is perhaps best seen typically in Abraham's test to sacrifice his son Isaac (Gen 22:16).

What about the "giving up" as wrath? There are two aspects. First, Satan had always wanted to displace Christ, to take His place. And the opportunity to crucify Him (only because Christ allowed it John 10:18; 19:11) climaxed the long process of Satanic hatred against Christ. Thousands of years of fury were about to be unleashed on the cross. "The pent-up fires of envy and malice, hatred and revenge, burst forth on Calvary against the Son of God, while all heaven gazed upon the scene in silent horror."[93] Jesus said to the chief priests, and others arresting Him in Gethesemane, "This is your hour—when darkness reigns" (Luke 22:53, NIV).

John Murray rightly says, "There may be also within the apostle's purview another aspect of this delivering up, namely, the giving up to all that the arch-enemy and his instruments could do against him."[94] In 1 Corinthians 5:5 and 1 Timothy 1:20 the same word "giving up" is used with reference to "giving up" individuals to Satan. Similarly, the Father gave Christ up to Satan. Calvary was the loving Father, with breaking heart, permitting His beloved Son to be murdered by His rival in the great controversy. We must remember that Calvary exposed Satan for what he really is,[95] as well as revealing the Father and the Son for Who they really are.

But there is another aspect of "giving up" as wrath. The GCTHM says God did not touch His Son on Calvary. Inspired sources express it differently, for "it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer" as a "guilt offering" (Isa 53:10, cf. vs. 6).[96] "He was stricken of God and afflicted to save man from the blow which he deserved because of the transgression of God's law."[97] "The God of justice did not spare His Son. . . The whole debt for the transgression of God's law was demanded from our Mediator. A full atonement was required. How appropriate are the words of Isaiah, 'It pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief.' His soul was made 'an offering for sin.' 'He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities' (Isa 53:10, 5)."[98] Christ "was now suffering under divine justice."[99] This was sacrificial substitution.[100]

What is involved here is the Father, in giving up Christ in love, also gave Christ up with respect to His hatred of the sin-load He bore. In the Greek translation of Isaiah 53:6, 12 (LXX, Septuagint), we find the same Greek word used (*paradidomi*) "gave up" or "delivered" as we find in Romans 1:24, 26, 28; 4:25; and 8:32. The Hebrew text states that God "laid on him the iniquity of us all," and that Christ "bore" the guilt of mankind. It would seem that those translating the Hebrew text into the Greek, identified the "laying on" of sin upon Christ with God's "giving Him up."

As for God "giving up" Christ, in terms of His hatred of sin, we find further insights already in Gethsemane; for "so dreadful does sin appear to Him, so great is the weight of guilt which He must bear, that He is tempted to fear it will shut Him out forever from His Father's love. Feeling how terrible is the wrath of God against transgression, He exclaims, 'My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death'."[101] Christ "felt that by sin He was being separated from His Father. The gulf was so broad, so black, so deep, that His spirit shuddered before it. This agony He must not exert His divine power to escape. As man He must suffer the consequences of man's sin. As man He must endure the wrath of God against transgression"[102] (cf. Zech 13:7). "The sins of men weighed heavily upon Christ, and the sense of God's wrath against sin was crushing out His life."[103]

God's love for Christ and His hatred for sin must be held together as two of the several aspects of this "giving up," in Gethsemane[104] and on Calvary. Christ "feared that sin was so offensive to God that their separation was to be eternal. Christ felt the anguish which the sinner will feel when mercy shall no longer plead for the guilty race. It was the sense of sin, bringing the Father's wrath upon Him as man's substitute, that made the cup He drank so bitter, and broke the heart of the Son of God."[105]

The same Greek word *paradidomi*, used in Romans 1:24, 26, 28; 4:25 and 8:32 is used in the Greek translation of Ezekiel 21:31. [LXX 21:36] "I will pour out my wrath upon you and breathe out my fiery anger against you; I will *hand* you *over* to brutal men, men skilled in destruction." Here God is apparently very active in the process of handing over. Again, the same word describes God's giving Israel over to their idolatry and His consequent banishment of them into exile beyond Babylon (Acts 7:42, 43). This abandonment involves an active sending into captivity. From the biblical and Ellen G. White data reviewed in these last two sections, we have seen that God's wrath is not confined to the abandonment definition of Romans 1.

> God has given in His word decisive evidence that He will punish the transgressors of His law. Those who flatter themselves that He is too merciful to execute justice upon the sinner, have only to look to the cross of Calvary. The death of the spotless Son of God testifies that 'the wages of sin is death,' that every violation of God's law must receive its just retribution. Christ the sinless became sin for man. He bore the guilt of transgression, and the hiding of His Father's face, until His heart was broken and His life crushed out. All this sacrifice was made that sinners might be redeemed. In no other way could man be freed from the penalty of sin.[106]

Notice that this abandonment of the sinless to become sin was to pay the penalty for law-breaking which is a larger view than mere revelation of love (as in the GCTHM). Do not the redeemed sing, "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased (*agorazo*) men for God" (Rev 5:9)? Was He not a ransom (*lutron*, Matt 20:28; Mark 10:45; 1 Tim 2:5,6) for mankind? At the end of the great controversy, Christ says, "Behold the purchase of My blood!"[107] God's wrath involves both abandonment and active judgment. Thus, even while Christ hung on the cross God sent fierce lightnings of His wrath against Jerusalem, warning of its impending judgment.[108]

If what we have discovered about the definition of God's wrath is true, then how was it exercised on Calvary? Are we driven back to a heathen view of God's wrath needing to be appeased by Christ's death? To answer this question, we need to look at the function of the Trinity in Redemption.

Redemption and the Trinity

To better understand what happened at the cross we must look at it from the context of the Trinity. First, we must emphasize that the Father so loved the world that He gave Jesus (John 3:16), and Jesus said of His intercessory work, "I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf. No, the Father himself loves you. . ." (John 16:26-27).

Ellen G. White gives us a remarkable insight about the Father. "Had God the Father come to our world and dwelt among us, humbling Himself, veiling His glory, that humanity might look upon Him, the history that we have of the life of Christ would not have been changed. . . In every act of Jesus, in every lesson of His instruction, we are to see and hear and recognize God. In sight, in hearing, in effect, it is the voice and movement of the Father."[109] In fact, she says that "the heart of Christ is full of unutterable love toward every soul that comes to him. . . The love manifested in Christ reveals the parental character of the Father; for God suffered with Christ."[110]

As the Transactional theories of the Atonement see Christ making a death-payment for our sin to the Father, we need to be clear on the larger view of the Father's role at Calvary. Ellen G. White says "God Himself was crucified with Christ; for Christ was one with the Father."[111] "The Lord of glory was put to a most shameful death, and God himself was in Christ, suffering with his only-begotten Son, in order to reconcile the world unto himself,"[112] and "He loved Him most when the penalty for the transgression of His law fell on Him."[113]

These are powerful insights—the Father suffered *with* and *in* Christ. In fact, the Trinity has suffered from sin's inception.[114] But note the balance between this shared suffering and the Father's wrath in the following statement:

> There are many who have thought that the Father had no part in the sufferings of the Son; but this is a mistake. The Father suffered with the Son. . . The guilt of every descendant of Adam was pressing upon his heart; and the wrath of God, and the terrible manifestation of his displeasure of iniquity, filled the soul of his Son with consternation. The withdrawal of the divine countenance from the Saviour, in this hour of supreme anguish, pierced his heart with a sorrow that

can never be fully understood by man. Sin, so hateful to his sight, was heaped upon him till be groaned beneath its weight. The despairing agony of the Son of God was so much greater than his physical pain, that the latter was hardly felt by him. The hosts of Heaven veiled their faces from the fearful sight. They heard his despairing cry, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' They saw the divine Sufferer die beneath the sins of the world.[115]

Oh the depths of anguish in this statement! The Father suffering with His Son held together with the Father's wrath against human sin. The Father fully involved in the suffering beside His Son but distanced from Him through His wrath against sin. We must hold both of these seemingly opposite insights together in order to understand the depths of Christ's anguish.

All the Godhead suffered at Calvary as only perfect love can suffer. Theirs was an infinite suffering possible only by infinite Beings. How can finite beings comprehend? It is into this mystery that we will penetrate as eternity brings ever deeper meaning and wonder. We dare not arrive at a simple model of Calvary, for there is a profundity here that defies any shortcut. We are involved with the greatest mystery that will be an unfolding revelation throughout eternity, as it unfolds deeper dimensions of what was involved at the cross. We must not arrive at a tidy model that seems to honor one side of God's multifaceted attributes anymore than we should focus on one member of the Trinity without proper inclusion of the other two.

Here, at Calvary, God is being true to Himself in His wrath against sin. Here God is being true to Christ in His suffering with Him. Here God is being true to man in providing this incomparable Substitute. Here Jesus is being true to doing His Father's will and true to man as a sacrifice for sin. Here the Trinity remain true to each other in their eternal plan to save man at such infinite cost to themselves. Here God is true to His immutable law. Here is the self-giving of the Trinity to atone for human sin. This is the content revealed by the cross. Sin must be dealt with so as to confirm and produce trust.

"He became our substitute, our surety, before the Father and all the heavenly angels. By imputing the sins of the world to Jesus, he became the sinner in our stead, and the curse due to our sins came upon him. It becomes us to contemplate Christ's life of humiliation and his agonizing death; for he was treated as the sinner deserves to be treated."[116] It is precisely in His mission as our Substitute that "man has been given every opportunity of knowing God and the laws of His government."[117] He took our place and suffered our sin-judgment—eternal separation from God. It was an unimaginable anguish to be plunged into separation after an eternity of union within the Trinity. Already in Gethsemane "Christ's soul was filled with dread of separation from God. Satan told Him that if He became the surety for a sinful world, the separation would be eternal. He would be identified with Satan's kingdom, and would nevermore be one with God."[118] On Calvary:

> Satan with his fierce temptations wrung the heart of Jesus. The Saviour could not see through the portals of the tomb. Hope did not present to Him His coming forth from the grave a conqueror, or tell Him of the Father's acceptance of the sacrifice. He feared that sin was so offensive to God that Their separation was to be eternal. Christ felt the anguish which the sinner will feel when mercy shall no longer plead for the guilty race. It was the sense of sin, bringing the Father's wrath upon Him as man's substitute, that made the cup He drank so bitter, and broke the heart of the Son of God.[119]

With that infinite sacrifice "the demands of justice were satisfied. The way to the throne of grace was opened to every sinner."[120]

Here Ellen White holds several factors together. Christ is man's substitute and the Father suffered *with* and *in* His Son, and yet He also manifested wrath against sin, and Christ felt *separated from* Him. It was at this darkest hour for Christ that the Father loved Him the most. There is no simple formula here. It is complex and intricate because we are attempting to understand the inner-Trinitarian Being of God in the multitude of His attributes in a way that does justice to His "holy love," and also to the "sinfulness of sin," which cannot remain in His presence. It finds the members of the unchangeable Trinity consistently true to themselves, to the law, and to their eternal plan to save man at such an infinite cost. If the Father had to withdraw from His Son for the first time ever in eternity, think of what anguish it was for the Son, equally God, to have to remain and carry the combined load of human guilt till it crushed out His very life! Oh the infinite depths of His sacrifice in our place! How the Father loved Him in this substitution for a rebel race! It is only as we penetrate to this level that we can begin to catch a glimmer of the content of the revelation made on Calvary to bring salvation, trust and healing to human lives.

What is involved is the self-satisfaction of God? As John Stott put it, God "was unwilling to act in love at the expense of his holiness or in holiness at the expense of his love. So we may say that he satisfied his holy love by himself dying the death and so bearing the judgment which sinners deserved. He both exacted and accepted the penalty of human sin. . .Thus the priority is neither 'man's demand on God' nor 'God's demand on men,' but supremely 'God's demand on God, God's meeting his own demand'."[121] Calvary was "divine self-satisfaction through divine self-substitution."[122]

On the cross God expressed "simultaneously his holiness in judgment and his love in pardon," by "providing a divine substitute for the sinner, so that the substitute would receive the judgment and the sinner the pardon."[123] Stott rightly says, "We must never make Christ the object of God's punishment or God the object of Christ's persuasion, for both God and Christ were subjects not objects, taking the initiative together to save sinners... The Father did not lay on the Son an ordeal he was reluctant to bear, nor did the Son extract from the Father a salvation he was reluctant to bestow."[124]

This description of Christ's awful agony on the cross, carrying the guilt of humankind, experiencing the wrath of God, with no hope of ever living beyond that second death judgment is no mere revelation. This is redemption! Here Christ plunges into the abyss never to live again. Here God's holiness, man's sin, God's wrath, and divine justice are given their proper place. Any Seventh-day Adventist Atonement concept, if it is true to all the issues in the great controversy and to all that revelation presents, must either include all this content of redemption or suffer an emptied revelation.

Conclusion

Judged by inspired evidence the GCTHM cannot claim to represent all of Scripture, or present the full reality of Calvary. Substitution has been simply jettisoned, and with it a large segment

of inspired data on Christ's sacrifice for human sin. The larger view of Calvary holds together all biblical and other inspired data. It holds together all of God's attributes, including wrath, and all members of the Trinity in their freely given[125] self-substitution, self-satisfaction and self-reconciliation[126] to redeem a rebel race and meet the issues in the great controversy.

The larger view of Calvary sees God acting against sin in "holy love" as well as acknowledging its self-destructive nature. It maintains the inspired focus on Christ and God's law as central, and hence, substitution and a proper understanding of legal payment as central too. Christ "gave Himself, an atoning sacrifice, for the saving of a lost world. He was treated as we deserve, in order that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no share. He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His. 'With His stripes we are healed,' Isaiah 53:5."[127]

In order to *change* us, Calvary must first be an *exchange* for us. For the larger view of Calvary includes redemption (SM) as the content of its revelation. Because the GCTHM omits this vital content, it can only present a partial and distorted revelation of Calvary.[128]

Endnotes

1 J. D. G. Dunn says "As Adam represents man so that his fallenness is theirs, so Jesus represents fallen man so that his death is theirs." *Sacrifice and Redemption: Durham Essays in Theology,* ed. S. W. Sykes, (Cambridge Univ. Press, Cambridge: Cambridge, 1991), p. 51.

2 See Norman R. Gulley, "Towards Understanding the Atonement," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, Vol. 1, #1, Spring, 1990, pp. 57-89.

3 Selective use to be documented in article. An example of a straw man is claiming that the Legal model results in legalism. Cf. Rev 12:17; 14:12.

4 See Sydney Cave, *The Doctrine of the Work of Christ* (Nashville, TN: Cokesbury Press,1937). So today, with its fragmentation and alienation "the image of healing has become predominant among concepts of atonement."

5 Paul S. Fiddes, *Past Event and Present Salvation: The Christian Idea of Atonement* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989). Fiddes presents a healing model of the atonement that produces trust.

6 Ibid., p. 58. Fiddes expresses a number of views held by the GCTHM. See chapter 5. What is the unchanging world view of inspired sources? This is the fundamental question before us.

7 Cf. "Satan is making the world believe that the Bible is a mere fiction, or at least a book suited to the infancy of the race," Ellen G. White, *Great Controversy*, p. 555.

8 In the great controversy creaturely reason does consider the evidence for God's justice, which evaluates everything He has done including His acts of revelation in Scripture. This would require a separate article to explore, but all creaturely reason will eventually admit the justice of divine revelation, (Ellen G. White, *Great Controversy* pp. 668-669).

9 "The tattered shreds of human reasoning will be found to be only as ropes of sand in the great day of God." Ellen G. White, *SDA Bible Commentary*, Vol. 6, p. 1069. Satan's strategy in the end-time is to use "intelligent" decoys in the church, *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 474.

10 Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, April 21, 1890, p. 242 (Vol. 2, p. 378).

11 J. H. Kellogg, *The Living Temple*, Good Health Publishing Co., Battle Creek, Michigan, 1903, pp. 29-33.

12 W. A. Spicer, *How the Spirit of Prophecy Met a Crisis, Memories and Notes of the "Living Temple" Controversy*, 1938, p. 52.

13 W. A. Spicer, *How the Spirit of Prophecy Met a Crisis*, p. 56.

14 See footnote 128 and #3 component of Larger view.

15 Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 33-43; *Great Controversy*, pp. 492-504; 662-673.

16 Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, June 12, 1901, p. 371 (Vol. 4, p. 185).

17 Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, Jan. 16, 1893, p. 166 (Vol. 3, p. 13).

18 Ellen G. White, *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Oct. 13, 1896, p. 645 (vol. 3, p. 401).

19 Ellen G. White, *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Oct. 22, 1895, p. 674 (vol. 3, p. 302)

20 Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, Dec. 30, 1889, p. 786 (Vol. 2, p. 345).

21 Ellen G. White, *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, March 10, 1891, p. 145 (vol. 2, p. 469).

22 Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, April 16, 1894, p. 372 (Vol. 3, p. 109).

23 Ellen G. White, *The Review and Herald*, Nov. 21, 1912, (vol. 6, p. 294).

24 Ellen G. White, *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, March 9, 1886, p. 146 (Vol. 2, p. 26).

25 Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 36.

26 Ibid.

27 Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 37.

28 Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 40-41.

29 Ellen G. White, *Great Controversy*, p. 669.

30 Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 36.

31 Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, p. 149-152; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 63,64.

32 Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 64.

33 Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, Vol. 1, p. 344.

34 Ellen G. White, *Great Controversy*, p. 489.

35 Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, May 14, 1902, p. 306 (Vol. 4, p. 238).

36 Ellen G. White, *Great Controversy*, p. 558.

37 Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, Vol. 1, p. 232.

38 E.g. Ellen G.White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 43 and *Great Controversy*, p. 671.

39 Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, Feb. 5, 1894, p. 212 (Vol. 3, p. 97).

40 Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, Vol. 1, p. 341.

41 Ellen G. White, *Questions on Doctrines*, p. 674.

42 See *Patriarch's and Prophets*, pp. 33-43, 63-70; and *Great Controversy*, pp. 492-504, where Satan's attack against God's law in heaven, and his quest for freedom apart from law, place law as central to Satan's attack, rather than relegated to some emergency measure introduced by God much later in human history, as is taught in the GCTHM.

43 Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 38.

44 Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages*, p. 24.

45 Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages*, p. 26.

46 Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 42.

47 The GCTHM considers the great controversy as an "emergency" in which the law giving at Sinai was an "emergency measure."

48 Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 339

49 Ellen G. White, *Last Day Events*, Pacific Press Pub. Assn., Boise, Idaho, 1922, p. 277; cf. *Great Controversy*, pp. 640-645.

50 Ellen G. White, *Great Controversy*, pp. 668-669.

51 Ellen G. White, *Great Controversy*, p. 670.

52 Ellen G. White, *Great Controversy*, pp. 492-504; 662-673; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 33-43. Cf. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 63-70 where Law is mentioned 16 times in the chapter "The Plan of Redemption."

53 Pages 763-764.

54 See section below on God's wrath.

55 Ellen G. White, *Great Controversy*, p. 503.

56 Ibid.

57 See Norman R. Gulley, *Christ Our Substitute*, Review and Herald Publishing Assn., Takoma Park, Washington, D.C., 1982.

58 Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, Dec. 2, 1897, p. 740 (Vol. 3, p. 435).

59 Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages*, pp. 19-20.

60 The GCTHM equates man's need with that of unfallen angels—the sole need of revelation. But Scripture makes a distinction (Heb 2:14-18).

61 Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages*, pp. 21-22.

62 John R. W. Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, IVP, Downer's Grove, Illinois, 1986, p. 109.

63 See footnote # 8.

64 See footnote # 8.

65 See footnote # 1.

66 See Norman R. Gulley, "The New Age Attack on Jesus Christ," *Adventist Perspectives*, Vol. 3, #2, 1989, pp. 48-56.

67 For example, H. P. Blavatsky, *Collected Writings 1877: Isis Unveiled*, The Theosophical Publishing House, Wheaton, Ill., 1972, p. 171.

68 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, Pacific Press Publishing Assn., Mountain View, California, 1940, pp. 762-763.
69 Leon Morris, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* W. A. Elwell, ed., Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1987, p. 100.
70 Ibid.
71 Leon Morris, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, p. 101.
72 Ibid.
73 This is an adaptation of an analogy used by Leon Morris in *The Cross of Christ*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1988, p. 21.
74 T. H. Hughes, *The Atonement*, George Allen and Unwin and Co., London, 1949, pp. 205-206.
75 Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, July 12, 1899, p. 453 (Vol. 4, p. 44).
76 Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 670.
77 Ellen G. White, *Great Controversy*, p. 534.
78 Ellen G. White, *Great Controversy*, p. 536.
79 Ellen G. White, *Great Controversy*, pp. 560-562.
80 See John Driver, *Understanding the Atonement for the Mission of the Church* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1986), pp. 155-162, where wrath is considered in the context of His covenant love.
81 Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages*, pp. 157-166; 589-600.
82 Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages*, p. 764.
83 Ellen G. White, *Great Controversy*, pp. 672-673.
84 Ellen G. White, *Last Day Events*, p. 243.
85 Ellen G. White, *Last Day Events*, p. 242.
86 Ellen G. White, *Last Day Events*, pp. 240-241 (emphasis added).
87 Ellen G. White, *Great Controversy*, p. 67.
88 Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 99.
89 Ellen G. White, *Great Controversy*, pp. 641-644; 657; 672-673.
90 For example, see the *Comprehensive Index to the Writings of Ellen G. White*, Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1962, Vol. 1, p. 232, where referencing for the "destroying angels" is given.
91 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*, Vol. 8, 259-261.
92 Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 92.
93 Ellen G. White, *Great Controversy*, p. 501.
94 John Murray, *The New International Commentary on the N. T., Romans*, Vol. 1, Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1965, p. 324.
95 Calvary tore away Satan's disguise, and uprooted sympathy for him from heavenly beings. See Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages*, p. 761.
96 Cf. Ellen G. White, *SDA Bible Commentary*, Vol. 5, p. 1103.
97 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*, Vol. 4, p. 418.
98 Ellen G. White, *In Heavenly Places*, p. 15.
99 Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, Dec. 2, 1897, p. 740 (Vol. 3, p. 435).
100 See Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, Vol. 1, p. 215.
101 Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages*, p. 685.
102 Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages*, p. 686.
103 Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages*, p. 687.
104 Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages*, p. 693.
105 Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages*, p. 753.

106 Ellen G. White, *Great Controversy*, pp. 539-540.
107 Ellen G. White, *Great Controversy*, p. 671.
108 Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages*, p. 756.
109 Ellen G. White, *That I May Know Him*, p. 338.
110 Ellen G. White, *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, March 17, 1896, p. 162, (Vol. 3, p. 342).
111 Ellen G. White, *The Faith I Live By*, Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1958, p. 50.
112 Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, June 18, 1896, p. 374 (Vol. 3, p. 301).
113 Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, July 12, 1899, p. 453 (Vol. 4, p. 44).
114 Cf. Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 263.
115 Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, Nov. 25, 1889, p. 706 (Vol. 2, p. 339).
116 Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, April 24, 1893, p. 391 (Vol. 3, p. 35).
117 "When there was no heart to pity, His arm brought salvation. God laid help on One that was mighty, saying, 'Save man from destruction.' The Son of God accepted the work joyfully, becoming man's substitute and surety, that He might save man from his sin, and call him from transgression to obedience. He pledged Himself to take man's nature, and stand at the head of the human race, to satisfy every claim made against them as a people bound in the slavery of sin. Through this gift of God to the world man has been given every opportunity of knowing God and the laws of His government" Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, Nov. 15, 1899, p. 738 (Vol. 4, p. 75).
118 Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages*, p. 687.
119 Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages*, p. 753.
120 Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, July 31, 1901, p. 482 (Vol. 4, p. 192).
121 John R. W. Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois, 1986, p. 152.
122 John R. W. Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, p. 159.
123 John R. W. Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, p. 134. The first phrase is in the interrogative form in Stott.
124 John R. W. Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, p. 151.
125 Christ freely gave Himself (John 10:17-18), answering Bozo's famous question (see Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, August 22, 1900, p. 530; Vol 4, p. 140, *Desire of Ages*, p. 22; Bozo's question in Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo*, The Library of Christian Classics, Westminster Press, Philadelphia, Chicago, 1949, p. 731; cf. Jack Provonsha, *You Can Go Home Again*, Review and Herald Publishing Assn., Washington, D.C., 1982, pp. 27-32).
126 See Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages*, p. 113, "God desired to teach them that from His own love comes the gift which reconciles them to Himself," cf. Lev 17:11; Heb 9:14; 1 John 2:2; 4:10.
127 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*, Vol. 8, pp. 208, 209. Cf. *Desire of Ages*, p. 25.
128 This so-called larger view (GCTHM) focuses on only three major questions, and dismisses the need of others. It suggests that the legal model is only for the immature, and the Bible is only an emergency measure (what do you do with

the Bible after you grow up?). In the end-time the translated group are to be mature enough to stand on their own, although Matt 20:28; John 15:5; Heb 13:5 and Rev 3:10 suggest otherwise. When the word "truth" in Scripture is always interpreted as "the truth about God," this seems to violate the context at times. For example, the sealing (Rev 7:1-4), is said to be a settling into "the truth about God." But this is too confined a definition, for the larger view (SM) also includes *all biblical truths* (*Great Controversy*, pp. 593, 594). Could this confinement of the GCTHM view rob people of being sealed? "God says it, and I believe it" is jettisoned, along with biblical and Ellen G. White insights into the end-time crisis.

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Salvation and the Sanctuary

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Introduction

It is hardly a secret that some among us regard the two elements of our title as at the least limiting one another or at worst flatly in conflict. How could two teachings, so clearly presented in the Scriptures, be incompatible when set adjacent to one another? The answer to that question is, Are we truly looking at two incompatibles, or do we only think we are?

Before coming to several observations, we had best explore what we mean by salvation in the setting of the sanctuary. If as Adventists we find ourselves in the untenable position of promoting two beliefs at war with each other, we should be eager to discover it and set our house in order.

The Critics' Challenge. In brief, the problem posed by critics is this: If salvation is subsumed in the act of Christ at Calvary, what significance can rest in a functioning sanctuary, whether on earth or in heaven? Walter Martin's charge that disappointed Adventists of 1844 produced the sanctuary idea to cover their gross error in proclaiming the return of Christ seems to assume some credibility. Of course Martin is simply mouthing Dudley Canright's explanation. But Canright's obsessive intent to demolish the Adventist message renders any judgment he might advance as suspect.

Heavenly Sanctuary: A Reality

When God told Moses, "Let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them" (Exod 25:8), He introduced the idea that theirs was to be a work of replication, not creation. "And see that you make them after the pattern for them, which is being shown you on the mountain" (Exod 25:40, RSV). I am quite aware of the ranging discussions about just what was shown to Moses. Did he see an actual structure elsewhere in the universe or was he shown a model, something perhaps even lacking in physical form, what we today call a concept?

The Hebrew word *tabnit* means a plan or pattern; however the context suggests quite directly the existence of a cosmic reality—whether the word structure in human terms conveys the meaning accurately is not the fundamental question. The point is that repeatedly the Scriptures refer to a reality. While its substance quite probably does not consist of bricks and mortar, stones, wood timbers and paneling, its reality is not to be doubted if we are to take the Scriptures seriously.

Neither can we allow ourselves to fall in the trap of reducing the sanctuary to a relationalism that denies it reality, an allegory, a symbolic presentation in the abstract that instructs us in some etherial way of what occurs in that existential moment of encounter as man meets God.

Of course we recognize the all-too-present temptation to limit God, enclosing Him in a crystalline display case fabricated in human imagination. At the same time it is true that the God who transcends all structures still asks us to prepare a place where in this world His presence may be manifest and His name dwell. Listen to Deuteronomy 5:11 "then to the place which the Lord your God will choose, to make His name dwell there, thither you shall bring all that I command you: your burnt offerings and your sacrifices. . ." (RSV). The same God who dwells not in houses made with hands recognized the virtue to be found in a place of intimate contact. It was not the structure that consecrated God, but God who invested virtue in a place of communion and reconciliation with those who believed in Him.

Not only is this cosmic sanctuary mentioned when initiating the wilderness sanctuary, and once more as David begins plans for a permanent temple, but also time and again through the Scriptural record. Striking examples occur in the Psalms, Ezekiel 1, Isaiah 6, and of course Daniel 7. Nor are we finished there, for in the New Testament we encounter Christ the high priest, ministering in the "greater and more perfect tent, (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation" (Heb 9:11, RSV). And Revelation is replete with sanctuary allusions, some of which become quite meaningless unless a heavenly sanctuary exists in verity. It seems wholly unlike our God to lead us to believe in the reality and function of something posited only for its utilitarian value as a catalyst for spiritual concerns.

Does Christ's Priesthood Diminish His Death?

Now we come to a second question. Does recognition of a continuing role of the heavenly sanctuary diminish the significance of Christ's death at Calvary? Let me condense a very long discussion to a brief response. No, the continuing ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary enhances the cross rather than obscures it.

Indeed, it delivers us from narrow reductionism that limits Christ's work. Many of our friends in the evangelical community exalt the Christ of the cross, and rightly so, but to the point that the post-Calvary Christ becomes redundant. What does one do with a Christ after His purpose is completed? Is He, like some obsolete piece of machinery, then assigned a quiet pedestal in the museum of heroic salvation, or is He quietly relegated to a vanishing place? I speak reverently of our Lord and glory in His triumph that overthrows the reign of sin and brings to us the gift of His justifying grace as well as His transforming power in our lives.

But in grasping the meaning of the heavenly sanctuary and Christ's ministry there in our behalf, whole new understandings of the Lord emerge. The value of His work assumes a linear sense, and the Jesus of Calvary becomes immediately relevant to me moment by moment, today and tomorrow as my High Priest in the presence of God. He is the sacrifice who by the continual ministry of His blood in my behalf stands in my stead before the watching eyes of the universe and the very throne of God. Far from diminishing the meaning of the cross, the Adventist understanding enhances the present relevance of that sacrifice for its virtues flow in a continuous ministry on my behalf.

Final Judgment Ministration

But what of the idea of 1844 and the final judgment ministry beginning then? It is to this point the critics of our message finally come. Is not the merit of salvation at Calvary abridged in the idea of a final review of every person's commitment just prior to the return of Jesus? Do we not have here a form of double jeopardy? What was secured by Christ at Calvary and conferred in response to faith upon the needy sinner now risks being lost in a final review.

We must recognize that the Bible nowhere teaches the Calvinistic doctrine of infallible perseverance, that once one accepts Christ he cannot fall away. To the contrary, the Bible teaches explicitly that although nothing can displace the achieved victory of Christ on the cross, and therefore the certainty of salvation for the earnest believer, that standing is contingent on his/her remaining in Christ's service.

Numerous passages of Scripture teach this truth. For example, 1 Corinthians 15:1, 2. "Now I would remind you, brethren, in what terms I preached to you the gospel, which you received, in which you stand, by which you are saved, *if you hold it fast*" (RSV). Here is certainty and assurance in salvation, but recognition of the need to persist in trusting in Him. This is not new to Adventists, for we long have held to a modified Arminian theology, but to the degree our critics adopt Calvinist tendencies in theology, they will remain uncomfortable with our position.

The crucial point is this; nothing that occurs in the heavenly sanctuary—including the pre-advent judgment that finds Christ standing in the place of each trusting believer—*nothing* can in any way jeopardize or in the least weaken the significance of the cross. That sacrifice stands as the sole means of salvation to every one that believeth and is sufficient to save to the uttermost every one that cometh to Him, to borrow explicit biblical language.

The pre-advent judgment presents no threat to those whose trust is in Jesus. Indeed, Daniel sees the tribunal rendering judgment in favor of the saints (7:22). And it is Christ's merits which stand in place of the believer, crediting once more the virtue of the cross. To set the achievements of the cross in conflict with the pre-advent judgment is to distort shamefully the concerted harmony that exists between Christ's accomplishments at the cross

and the application of those accomplishments before the throne of God. May God have mercy on those who in false zeal would pry them apart.

Why a Sanctuary?

Now let us address the question, Why a sanctuary? Critical scholars pose numerous answers to this question. Because of structural and even slight conceptual similarities between the Hebrew sanctuary and holy places dedicated to the gods of pagan neighbors, they presume a dependence upon other religions.

It is not inconceivable that in designating the form of structure God allowed the use of existing technology in carrying it out, as with the use of workmen from Hiram of Tyre. But the overriding goal of Hebrew worship was not appeasement, as with other religions, but reconciliation, restoration to the holiness that marks the character of God, in stark contrast to the worship of pagan deities. The biblical narrative clearly tells us that God conveyed the messages about what His sanctuary should be like, and as Adventists we accept the report of the Scriptures.

Several quite clear reasons stand out in our understanding today why the establishment of a sanctuary was so valuable. To what degree these were apparent to worshipers in ancient times we cannot say, but the wealth of potential existed. Unquestionably we are today advantaged by understanding how New Testament writers, as well as the Spirit of Prophecy, enhance the meanings resident in the Old Testament sanctuary system.

Medium for Teaching Divine Truth. In the sanctuary on earth we see dimly the significance of God's magnificent center at the heart of the universe. Wrapped in earthly instruction and ceremony are profound truths about God's righteousness, His purposes and His means of restoring rebellious humans to full fellowship with Him. In the gore and grisly rawness of sacrifice was a penetrating witness to the seriousness of sin as well as the extraordinary means required to solve the problem.

Even if in time the priests reduced it to commercialized trivialism, devoid of the heartrending sense of responsibility and release it was intended to convey, the hearts of some remained sensitive.

And surely the youth, when first confronted with witnessing a sacrifice, must have been touched.

Provision for Experiencing Personal Salvation. But more significant than its work as a teaching device was its foreshadowing the greater reality in God's purpose. The Hebrew worshiper was not playing religion or building a symbolic sand castle faith. By faith in the promised Redeemer, he walked away from his worship a forgiven person, one restored in fact to harmony with God. His act was meritorious as God reached out in acceptance of his act of faith. It was not the deed that restored, but God's conferral that achieved it. To reduce the earthly sanctuary to a mere teaching device is to be unfaithful to the word of God. It represented an objective reality.

Practical Insights

A Place of Forgiveness. Let us review briefly several principles residual in the sanctuary. It was a place of refuge. In a manner quite distinct from the cities of refuge, the sanctuary offered a place where one could enter the presence of God to be freed from guilt. Once purged of that guilt, he went from the altar to cope with the consequences of his wrong act or decision, but with the knowledge all had been made right with God. Not incidentally, the heavenly sanctuary is the place where today our High Priest cleanses us from iniquity, enabling us to face the consequences of our choices with cleared consciences.

Portrayal of Divine Grace and Justice. Just as the earthly sanctuary offered lessons in God's character and justness, so in the sacrifice of Christ we trace these same qualities. How could one understand how God could be fair and yet pass over the sins of those who called upon Him in humble repentance? Paul speaks of Jesus Christ, "whom God put forward as an expiation by His blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness [justice], because in His divine forbearance he had passed over former sins; it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous, and that he justifies him who has faith in Jesus" (Rom 3:25-26, RSV).

How to Cope. And the sanctuary was the place to learn how to cope with the apparent triumph of evil in the world. After a review of multiple temptations of the world and the apparent

success of the wicked, the distressed psalmist reports, "But when I thought of how to understand this, it seemed to me a wearisome task until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I perceived their end" (Ps 73:16-17, RSV).

Focus on God. Another merit of the sanctuary, today the heavenly one, is in lifting our experience with God above the everyday concerns of life. While Christ assures us of His intimate concern with our practical needs, and we rest secure in His promises, our natures call for something that lifts us above individualistic self-concerns. Even excessive concern over inner spiritual progress needs subordination to the sweep of the grand purposes of God. A glimpse of God's throne room brings this catharsis from self.

Reconciliation and Restoration. Inescapably, the Scriptures tie together salvation and the sanctuary, perhaps nowhere more profoundly than in 1 Corinthians 5:7-8. "Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our paschal lamb, has been sacrificed. Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (RSV). Ties with the passover are obvious, with Christ the atoning reconciliation, all of which centers in the sanctuary. The result: a changed, transformed life of joy.

Divine Command Center. From our study of the Word there arises a kind of insight unrecognized by those who bypass the significance of the sanctuary. Although we tend to think of the sanctuary in terms of a place of contact with God, a place of reconciliation and forgiveness, which is natural as it stems from a human point of view, the heavenly sanctuary emerges as far more, the command center of the universe, the post from which God governs eternally.

Away and above the fixed form in which our minds try to reconstruct it, here is the grandest of all: where thousand thousands minister before Him, where angels innumerable come and go, where flows a continual cascade of choirs in praise, where creatures formed in His life-giving acts best behold the majesty and the holiness of His character. Truly the hub of the vast universe, its reality is undeniable and its benefits extend to all creatures. Invested with His person, it glows with glory immeasurable, a touch of which earthlings beheld at times in His *shekinah* presence.

With the entrance of revolt into the universe, God adapted the functions in His command center to make it a place of reconciliation where fallen creatures, half-blind but repentant under the plying ministry of His Spirit, could approach Him for healing all transgressions. From that grand center our Lord left for this dark, rebellious world. Paul's glorious passage in the *kenosis* of Philippians 2:7, describes this in its stark contrast. Emptying Himself, He becomes obedient, even to the death of the cross. Wherefore God has highly exalted Him, that at His name every knee should bow and tongue confess—Jesus Christ is Lord. Received back into the presence of the Father, He ever lives to make intercession, and soon will return to receive us in power and glory.

Conclusion

One may ask, does the sanctuary message diminish the worth of the cross? God forbid, it enhances the cross, for here its cosmic glory at last is clear. Adventists need to hold fast to the message of Christ in His sanctuary. As with no other message, it opens to us the remnant the reality of full salvation. "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in" (Ps 24:7). Soon ours will be the unspeakable joy of stepping into the throne room. Nothing must rob us of that experience!

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PROGRESSIVE CREATIONISM AND BIBLICAL REVELATION: SOME THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

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Introduction/Background

The purpose of this essay is to examine the intellectual roots and the current status of the discussion concerning progressive creationism and to identify and evaluate eight theological implications of affirming the presence of death for millions of years prior to the appearance of *homo sapiens* in the geologic column as required by progressive creationism. This piece can be methodologically likened, in the language of a fine arts painter, to a limited palette endeavor. This means that the article is an academic account informed, in this instance, by the presuppositions of a high view of Scripture, *sola scriptura*, and Christ's death understood in a forensic substitutionary sense.[1] However, as an objective theological, reflective exercise, the author hopes that the work will reach a wide academic audience, including readers holding alternative theological presuppositions.[2]

Progressive Creationism Defined. Progressive creationism, popularized in 1954 by Bernard Ramm in his book *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*, is a form of broad concordism between the biblical creation texts and science which invokes God's intervention to effect vertical radiation of species, that is, to obtain macroevolution over a period of approximately six hundred million years.[3]

Human Destiny: Biblical View. This investigation concerning the historical roots and current status of the discussion about progressive creationism is best introduced by considering a momentous divine desideratum articulated in Exodus 25:8 as follows: "Have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them."[4] The Hebrew word *shākan*, translated "to dwell," means that, contrary to Aristotle's unmoved mover who does not concern himself with human affairs,[5] the true God desires to dwell permanently in nearness and closeness[6] with His created beings; hence, God's faithful, forgiving, loving acts in the Old Testament, the exodus, the cultic system, the atonement, the gospel commission, and the consummation actualized by the Second Advent of Christ.

Jesus amplifies this same desire in His famous discourse in the upper room: "I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am" (John 14:3). Through these words Christ presents a truth of personal destiny upon which Christians, as it were, "hang their souls."

Origins: Biblical View. Connected with this truth about destiny, however, is the biblical teaching about origins. The following words introduce the issue at stake: "For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth . . . and all that is in them" (Exod 20:11). In these words God outlines the method employed in the creation of humanity.

Christians eagerly accept the truth of Christ's destiny statements; however, statements concerning origins from the same source are not accepted with equal readiness. Does a faulty origin statement impact upon the certainty of the destiny statement? For example, if science falsifies the divine claim about origins, on what basis does the Christian rely upon Jesus' statement about destiny?

Can the Christian scholar legitimately accept the destiny statement in a literal sense while at the same time discounting the truthfulness of the origin statement in a literal sense? The implication seems to be that the truthfulness of Jesus' destiny statement, interpreted in a literal sense, stands or falls upon the truthfulness of the origin statement. Thus, the basic underlying issue of biblical authority is at stake in the discussion of progressive creationism

and of the theological and philosophical implications stemming from its claims.

Contemporary Denial of Scriptural Data Lays Foundation. Leading contemporary liberal and evangelical theologians respond similarly to the underlying issue of this study. Historically, their work forms the intellectual basis upon which the concepts of progressive creationism are grounded. For example, perceiving the serious implication of the eschatological claims of Jesus noted above, Rudolph Bultmann introduced his epoch-making demythologizing method.

In what may be the most theologically influential forty-some pages written in this century, namely, the famous 1941 address "New Testament and Mythology: The Problem of Demythologizing the New Testament Message,"[7] Bultmann deals precisely with biblical elements which he believes to be falsified by science. As a consequence, Bultmann makes use of helpful existential concepts, as he says in an earlier letter (1926), from "phenomenology, into which my colleague and friend, Heidegger introduced me,"[8] in order to ascertain what he considered to be authentic human existence "exhibited by the text."[9]

The result of applying this method is well-known. For Bultmann and other liberal scholars and theologians, the literal, historical Fall of Adam, the entrance of sin interpreted according to a literal reading of Genesis, the literal return of Christ, and so on, are no longer tenable. Here are Bultmann's challenging words regarding the last point: "We can no longer look for the return of the Son of Man on the clouds of heaven or hope that the faithful will meet him in the air."[10]

Current Status of the Progressive Creationism Debate. The current status of the discussion about progressive creationism is in flux. Because of convictions concerning origins analyzed above, not only liberal scholars, for example John Polkinghorne[11] and Arthur Peacocke, but even leading evangelical thinkers such as J. I. Packer, Clark Pinnock, and Davis A. Young are advancing beyond progressive creationism.[12] These thinkers do so because they already agree with Polkinghorne's recent claim that at the popular level the concept of the "God-of-the-gaps" as employed in progressive creationism is dead.[13] Consequently, these scientists, scholars, and theologians are now championing non-concordist, theistic evolution.[14]

Nevertheless, both theistic evolution and progressive creationism require the constant operation of the death and life cycle for over six hundred million years prior to the appearance of *homo sapiens* in the geologic record, that is, before the appearance of the biblical Adam. What are some of the theological implications of affirming death prior to Adam? What is the theological price of adopting either theistic evolution or progressive creationism? We turn to this task in the discussion below.

The following reflections are divided into two parts. First, space permits only a summary of Paul's discussion in Romans concerning the origin of death, and a brief analysis of selected treatments by contemporary scholars of this Pauline material. Second, I shall explore eight significant theological implications of the admission by progressive creationism that death necessarily existed prior to Adam for approximately six hundred million years.

Origin of Death: Pauline Position. Important Pauline passages which treat the origin of death are located in Romans chapters 5 and 8. In brief outline, one can say that the former chapter links the appearance of death to human sin, while the latter chapter links human sin causally to the phenomenon of death within the brute animal kingdom. Paul states that "Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men" (Rom 5:12).

In this passage Paul makes the crucially important causal linkage between the original appearance of sin and the first entrance of death. Death is placed in an unqualified perspective, suggestive of a universal all-encompassing meaning of the term. However, the most important theological point to notice is the relationship between human sin and death, because it is upon this connection that the atonement is based.

What about the origin of the life-and-death process in the lower animal kingdom? Does Paul link the origin of death in the animal kingdom in some sense to the sin of Adam? Romans 5:14 states that death reigned from Adam, not from a time long before Adam. Again, does this beginning of the reign of death at the time of Adam include death in the lower animal kingdom as well? If

Paul's words can be properly viewed as responding in the affirmative to this question, then he is in effect establishing the affinity between human beings and the natural world in opposition to forms of essential dualism prevalent in the Hellenistic world.[15]

Romans 8:20 suggests a positive response to this query by stating that "the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it." Moreover, the creation is subjected not only to frustration but to "decay" (vs. 21, *phthora*), that is, to that which implies death. In this context the "creation" which is subjected to decay or death refers to the lower animals and not to human beings, because in Romans 8:22-23 Paul contrasts the said "whole creation" that groans for liberation from this subjection to decay and to death with himself and other Christians (humans) who also groan for liberation from the bondage to death. John Murray underscores this point by stating that the scope of the term "creation" (vs. 21) is limited to the nonrational creation and that the subjection within this realm means the "mortality of the body,"[16] that is, the death of lower animals.

Thus, two domains—comprising a single unified totality of God's creation—groan for liberation from death stemming from the sin of Adam and God's consequent subjection of both realms: first, the human race subjected to death by divine action because of human sin;[17] and second, the lower brute creation, subjected to death by God because of human sin.

Furthermore, Paul's position concerning the entrance of biological death in the lower animal kingdom because of the sin of the first human beings is consistent with important biological inferences from a prelapsarian philosophy of nature gained by a literal reading of Genesis 1:30. In this creation text God states that "to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food." These important words, giving the nature of the diet of land and air creatures, carry significant biological implications.

This dietary insight suggests that the uncursed first dominion consisted in a predation-free habitat, that is, a habitat free of the life and death cycle in the creatures noted. This shows why the lower animal creation mentioned by Paul in Romans 8 groans to be liberated from a cursed dominion, because the second dominion is death-dominated. In other words, Paul may view all forms of death as phenomena which are ultimately foreign elements, something which a loving God must have temporarily superimposed because of the sinful action by the human overseer of the lower animal kingdom.

Understandably, not all scholars share the same interpretation of the meaning of death in Paul's discussion. Some evangelical scholars interpret what they consider to be Paul's own understanding and meaning of the word "death" as not conflicting with modern evolutionary biology.

Hugh Ross, for example, believes that Paul limits the meaning of the term "death" in Romans 5 and 8 to human spiritual death, thereby excluding the concept of biological death either of humans or of the lower animals from the meaning of the term "death."[18] In this fashion he harmonizes the Bible and science by interpreting Paul's original intent and meaning in a way which accedes to the claims of science. In other words, he believes that Paul's own, original meaning in Romans 5 and 8 does not conflict with a progressive creationist point of view requiring physical death prior to Adam.

By contrast, with nothing theologically to fear, one liberal theologian understands that Paul's own, original meaning in Romans 5-8 clashes with the claims of progressive creationism. However, this theologian simply reinterprets what he sees as Paul's original meaning of the connection of sin and death stated in Romans 6:23 in a way as to be in harmony with modern science. Thus, Arthur Peacocke, eminent Oxford scholar and author of many recent, influential books on science and religion,[19] makes the following assumption when discussing death in relation to Christian anthropology:

> Biological death was present on the earth long before human beings arrived. It is the prerequisite of our coming into existence through the creative processes of biology which God himself has installed in the world . . . . God had already made biological death the means of his creating new forms of life. This has to be accepted, difficult though it may be for some theologies.[20]

I appreciate Peacocke's honesty in perceiving and admitting

the potential theological difficulties of his evolutionary assumption about the presence of death prior to Adam, who for Paul is "a historic personage and not just the mythological personification of every human being."[21]

However, notice how Peacocke reinterprets Paul's corollary message (to Rom 5:12) in Romans 6:23 about the wages (or the "soldiers pay")[22] in light of what he has written above: "So when St. Paul says that 'the wages of sin is death,' that cannot possibly mean for us, now, *biological* death . . . . [In] that phrase St. Paul can only, for us, mean 'death' in some figurative sense of, [perhaps], the death of our relationship to God as the consequence of sin."[23]

Peacocke's words "for us, now," and "for us" indicate that Peacocke understands that Paul in Romans 6:23 is speaking literally about the causal linkage between sin and death of all kinds, perhaps even about the origin of death of all kinds; and that Paul is, therefore, saying something in Romans 6:23 which is unacceptable to modern theology. Above all, Peacocke's words "for us, now," and "for us" indicate that he is deliberately reinterpreting Paul's original meaning to conform with modern anthropology.

This illustrates that in some cases, though not in all instances, a liberal scholar may ascertain the original intended meaning of a biblical writer more adequately than some evangelical scholars, even though the scholar who employs higher criticism may not consider the original meaning normative for contemporary theology.

Having completed the summary of Paul's discussion in Romans concerning the origin of death, and an analysis of contemporary responses to Paul's position, we turn now to a brief consideration of eight theological implications of the claim by either theistic evolution or progressive creationism that death existed prior to Adam for long ages.

Death Prior to Adam: Implications of Claim

First. The claim impacts upon the literal and historical trustworthiness of the Bible in general. One can, for example, trust neither the historicity of the fall of Adam nor the actuality of a universal "wet flood" if the literal biblical statements about these events are countered by the statement that death existed prior to Adam.

Second. To assert the ongoing cycle of life and death prior to Adam for millions of years deeply affects our perception of the character of God in at least two important ways. On the one hand it necessarily leads to the conclusion that the God, who purportedly notices when a sparrow falls (Matt 10:29), countenanced and intended the suffering and death of animals for millions of years prior to Adam. Thus, the merciful character of God is compromised.

On the other hand the claim of death before sin destroys the integrity of God's character. If indeed millions of years of death existed before Adam, then God, knowing this fact, articulates in the fourth commandment of Exodus 20 a creation methodology in direct opposition to the truth. The irony of this conclusion is that in the original presentation of the Ten Commandments as recorded in Exodus 20, the ninth prohibits the bearing of false witness. But the progressive creationism theory causes God Himself to tell a lie in the fourth commandment, thereby transgressing His own law.

Of course, this action clearly contradicts the honesty of God acclaimed both in the Old and New Testaments. God inspired Balaam with the following words, "God is not a man, that He should lie" (Num 23:19). Paul praises the God "who does not lie" (Titus 1:2), while in Hebrews we find these famous words, "It is impossible for God to lie" (Heb 6:18).

Third. If death existed before Adam for millions of years, then the crucial causal linkage between sin and death is broken. If the connection between sin and death is severed, then the basis for Christ's atonement is also destroyed. For example, if death is not related to sin, then the wages of sin is not death. Consequently, Christ's death as a wage for sin loses its power to save the believer from death.[24] Thus, a most serious implication of this aspect of progressive creationism is that it undermines the concept of the saving, atoning blood of Christ, that is, the heart of the gospel, the cross of Christ.

In light of this implication a passage in Hebrews is notably relevant, warning all investigators against lessening in any way the value of the blood of Christ: "How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?" (Heb 10:29).

Fourth. The claims of progressive creationism require a reinterpretation of some of Jesus' teachings. This can impact upon a Christian's willingness to accept the full Lordship of Christ if the believer does not experience complete confidence in all the teachings of his Lord and Saviour. For instance, an exegete would need to reinterpret Jesus' own understanding of the historical truthfulness of Cain's murder of Abel presented as follows:

> Therefore this generation will be held responsible for the blood of all the prophets that has been shed since the beginning of the world, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the sanctuary (Luke 11:50-51).

These words indicate that Jesus regarded the account of the murder of Abel to be a reliable, historical fact. Because the account of Abel's death is recorded in Genesis 3, this implies that Jesus regarded the chapter as giving dependable historical facts. Abel, of course, had a very famous father, whose historical existence by implication Jesus also endorses by these words. However, progressive creationism would require Jesus' own understanding in this case to be reinterpreted to harmonize with science.

Moreover, these claims force the Christian scholar to reinterpret the original monogamous nature of marriage as described by Jesus in the following language: "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning" (Matt 19:8).

The statement, "it was not this way from the beginning," indicates that Jesus accepted the historical reliability of the creation account recorded in Genesis 2, outlining the ideal character of marriage as monogamous, and that this ideal was in fact illustrated by the first pair of human beings to exist on earth. The claims of progressive creationism require radical reinterpretation of these teachings of Jesus, thus undermining total confidence concerning some of Christ's instruction.

Fifth. The claims of progressive creationism negatively impact the theology of worship in sabbatarian Christian communions. Recent scholarly discussions of the theological meaning of the

Sabbath for contemporary Christians include works by Jürgen Moltmann,[25] Niels-Erik Andreasen,[26] and James B. Ashbrook.[27] Ashbrook concludes that the "Sabbath rest-and-reorganization are built into our very being. The basic cycle of rest/synthesis/activity is the means we have for the making of meaning, and meaning-making is the making of soul."[28]

These general studies indirectly raise a corollary issue of the divine will regarding the identity of a contemporary Sabbath day of rest and worship which is negatively impacted by the tenets of the progressive creationism theory. If death existed before Adam, including millions of years of evolution, this renders untenable the concept of a literal six-day creation as the basis for a seventh-day Sabbath. Thus, a contemporary believer who understands the New Testament to teach that the seventh-day Sabbath remains unchanged from Old Testament practice could not base his/her selection of a day of worship upon the Genesis creation texts or the fourth commandment. This demonstrates how progressive creationism can impact upon contemporary worship.[29]

Sixth. If death existed before Adam, death is a divinely intended part of life. This significant conclusion raises the following question: If death is part of the divinely-instituted economy of life, how can death be properly viewed as the last enemy to be destroyed as Paul states (1 Cor 15:26)? In light of the implied negative answer to this question, in the view of progressive creationism death would be a reality neither to be changed nor removed by means of some future new creation in which "there shall no longer be only death" (Rev 21:4, NASB).

Thus, how does the concept of the integral part of death in the natural world and in its life processes impact on the *parousia*? Viewing death in this perspective, are we to conclude that the early Christians mistakenly expected the Second Advent of Christ to put an end to death and suffering as outlined in Revelation 21 and 22? It would seem so. However, a literal reading of Scripture shows that these early Christians correctly looked for the *parousia*, enjoying a strong biblical basis for their hope in the return of their Lord. Thus, Christians today who adopt progressive creationism differ from the early Christians in this respect.

Seventh. The notion of the existence of death before Adam impacts on the conflict between Christ and Satan over the final salvation of humanity. If death existed before Adam, then Christ ultimately redeems no one, as noted above, and thereby fails to achieve His great longing to dwell with His people. Consequently, Satan succeeds in preventing reconciliation between God and His people, thereby achieving his goal.

Eighth. Even if a return of Christ were possible in view of the six hundred million year development of life claimed by progressive creationism, God's promise in Isaiah 65:17 to create a new heaven and a new earth is thrown into serious confusion. For example, What length of time will be required to accomplish this new creation? Will God take another six hundred million years in creating the new earth as He allegedly needed to guide the evolution of the first earth to completion according to the claims of progressive creationism? Are the meek to be kept waiting in the New Jerusalem for six hundred million years while their promised inheritance, the new earth, evolves into a habitable place like it did the first time? Such concepts, of course, mock the creative power of the God of the Bible. However, this possible conclusion is a serious implication of progressive creationism viewed in light of the presuppositions of this paper.[30]

Conclusion

These eight evaluations show a few of the important theological implications of affirming death prior to Adam and his transgression. From the perspective of this study, the Christian scholarly community stands before two mutually exclusive alternatives. Although reluctant to cast positions into either/or terms, the author discovers no *tertium quid* in this instance.

On the one hand the scholar may accept the complete canonical witness in a fashion similar to the way in which Jesus viewed the authority of the Old Testament, namely, as authoritative, reliable, propositional revelation. On the other hand if the Christian scholar accepts the six hundred million years of death prior to Adam, then he/she may as well adopt Bultmann's methodology and conclusions in order to remain consistent.

In the ongoing scholarly discussions of these and related issues, however, those involved need to exercise continually the utmost respect, genuine love, and courtesy to one another, and an openness to new ideas lest we deny our caring Christ, the author of all interpersonal relationships worthy of His name.

Considered in the light of the reflections presented in this piece, the admonition of Hebrews 10:35-37 is appropriate for all Christian scholars, theologians, and scientists working within the academy. In this passage believers are encouraged not to cast away their confidence which has great recompense of reward, because, as verse 37 promises, "yet a little while, and he that shall come will come" (KJV). This hope means that John 14:1-3 has yet to be fully realized, that Christ will indeed take human beings to Himself, thereby achieving His deepest desire.

Endnotes

1 A high view of Scripture is here assumed to mean one which accepts the unity, reliability and authority of the entire Bible as divinely-revealed, propositional revelation. In this view, for instance, chapters 1-11 of Genesis are assumed to be straightforward factual accounts of historical events concerning the way in which God created this world as a life-sustaining habitat, and concerning the entrance of sin and death into the world.

2 In chapters 1 and 2 of *The Analogical Imagination* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), David Tracy distinguishes three kinds of theology: fundamental, systematic, and practical. Concerning these distinctions, Robert Neville observes that practical theologies are those associated with movements of social change, and their audience is the participants in these movements. Fundamental theologies are those that ask the basic questions in a wholly pluralistic, perhaps even secular, context with little or no regard for communities of faith, and their audience is mainly the academy. Systematic theologies are those oriented to the self-understanding and guidance of "communities of faith" (*A Theology Primer* [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991, xiv]). The current essay addresses the audiences Tracy calls systematic and fundamental.

3 Bernard Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1954; reprint ed., Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans,1984). See particularly the section called *"Progressive Creation"* (76-79) in this book, and above all Ramm's comments on page 191 about the limits of the natural biological process with respect to horizontal and vertical radiation of species within the paradigm of progressive creation.

4 Scripture quotations are taken from the *New International Version* unless otherwise noted.

5 *Metaphysics* Bk. XII: Ch. 9.

6 R. Laird Harris, ed., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol. 2 (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), p. 925.

7 See Werner Georg Kümmel, *The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of Its Problems* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972), p. 456, n. 466.

8 Ibid., p. 457, n. 468.

9 Ibid.

10 Rudolph Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," in *Kerygma and Myth*, ed. Hans Werner Bartsch and trans. Reginald H. Fuller (London: S.P.C.K., 1952), p. 4.

11 John Polkinghorne, "God's Action in the World," *Cross Currents* 41:3 (Fall 1991): 293-307.

12 J. I. Packer, "The Challenge of Biblical Interpretation: Creation" in *The Proceedings of the Conference on Biblical Interpretation 1988* (Nashville: Broadmann Press, 1988), 21-33; Clark Pinnock, "Climbing Out of a Swamp: The Evangelical Struggle to Understand the Creation Texts," *Interpretation* 43: 1 (January 1989): 145; Davis A. Young, "Scripture in the Hands of Geologists," Part II, *Westminster Theological Journal* 49 (1987): 303.

13 John Polkinghorne, "God's Action in the World," *Cross Currents*, 41:3 (Fall 1991): 295; cf. Nancy M. Malone, "The Silence Speaks," *Cross Currents*, 41:3 (Fall 1991): 291. In basic support of this concept Daniel L. Migliore of Princeton Seminary states that because the grammar used by science and theology are two different languages, and because the stories of Genesis 1 and 2 are not scientific descriptions, "the purposive activity of the creator and the purposefulness of the world cannot be directly 'read off' what we perceive and experience. It is an affirmation of faith, not an empirical observation." See Daniel L. Migliore, "The Ecological Crisis and the Doctrine of Creation," *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* n.s. 22:3 (1991): 275.

14 The current scholarly drive toward accepting either non-concordist, theistic evolution, or a broad concordist progressive creationism seems to be unnecessary. The endeavor is unwarranted because recent paleontological, biological, geological, philosophical, and geochemical evidence can be correctly interpreted as strongly consistent with a faith position which accepts as true the Scripture's assertions of an origin *de novo* of biological forms by some causality other than random causes and an origin occurring within a relatively recent time. But these assertions are topics for other papers with extensive evidentiary documentation.

However, anyone interested in an introduction to some of the more recent studies presenting evidence in support of these claims may consult the following sources: Robert H. Brown, "Correlation of C-14 Age with Real Time," *Creation Research Society Quarterly* 29:1 (June 1992): 45-47; Harold Coffin, *Origin by Design* (Washington, D.C: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1983); Michael Denton, *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis* (Bethesda, Maryland: Adler & Adler, Publishers, 1986); Gerhard F. Hasel, "Genesis 5 and 11: Chronogenealogies in the Biblical History of Beginnings," *Origins* 7:1 (1980): 23-37; Fred Hoyle and Chandra Wickramasinghe, *Why Neo-Darwinism Does Not Work* (Wales, United Kingdom: University College Cardiff Press, 1982); Phillip E. Johnson, *Darwin on Trial* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1991); Michael J. Oard, "Evidence for Only One Ice Age," in *Proceedings of the Second International Conference on Creationism 1990: Volume II Technical Symposium Sessions and Additional Topics*, ed. Robert E. Walsh (Pittsburgh: Creation Science Fellowship, 1990), 191-200; Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 381-405; Ariel A. Roth, "Those Gaps in the Sedimentary Layers," *Origins* 15:2 (1988): 75-92; A. E. Wilder-Smith, *The Scientific Alternative to Neo-Darwinian Evolutionary Theory: Information Sources & Structures* (Costa Mesa, California: TWFT Publishers, 1987); G. E. Snow and G. T. Javor, "Atmospheric Oxygen Rules Out Biochemical Evolution," in *Our Real Roots*, ed. Leo R. Van Dolson (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1979); William H. Shea, "A Comparison of Narrative Elements in Ancient Mesopotamian Creation Flood Stories with Genesis 1-9," *Origins* 11:1 (1984): 9-29; Kurt P. Wise, "Baraminology: A Young-Earth Creation Biosystematic Method," in *Proceedings of the Second International Conference on Creationism 1990: Volume II Technical Symposium Sessions and Additional Topics*, ed. Robert E. Walsh (Pittsburgh: Creation Science Fellowship, 1990), pp. 345-360.

For a useful treatment of the implications of theistic evolution for Christians see L. Jim Gibson, "Theistic Evolution: Is It for Adventists?" *Ministry* (January 1992): 22-25.

15 For comments concerning such forms of dualism in the Hellenistic world, see Paul W. Meyer, "Romans," in *Harper's Bible Commentary*, ed. James L. Mays (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), p. 1153.

16 John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1968), p. 304.

17 It should be noted that a recently published dissertation focusing on these passages of Romans 8 takes an alternative point of view arguing that Paul does not have Genesis 3 and the fall of Adam in mind in this context, but rather the Genesis flood-tradition. See Olle Christoffersson, *The Earnest Expectation of the Creature: The Flood-Tradition as Matrix of Romans 8:18-27* (Stockholm: Almquist & Wiksell International, 1990).

18 Hugh Ross, *The Fingerprint of God* (Orange, California: Promise Publishing Co., 1989), p. 154.

19 See the following works by Arthur Peacocke: *Science and the Christian Experiment* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), and *Creation and the World of Science: The Bampton Lectures, 1978* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979).

20 Arthur Peacocke, "The Challenge of Science to Theology and the Church," in *The New Faith-Science Debate*, edited by John M. Mangum (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), p. 16.

21 Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), p. 142.

22 Ibid., p. 185.

23 Peacocke, "The Challenge of Science to Theology and the Church," p. 16.

24 A similar point is made in an article by John D. Morris entitled, "Evolution and the Wages of Sin," appearing as the No. 209 *Impact* topic (November 1990): iv-iv, available from the Institute for Creation Research, El Cajon, California.

25 See chapter 10 entitled, "The Sabbath: The Feast of Creation" in Moltmann's *God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), 276-296. This work comprises Moltmann's Gifford Lectures, 1984-1985.

26 Niels-Erik Andreasen, *Rest and Redemption: A Study of the Biblical Sabbath* (Berrien Springs, Michigan: Andrews University Press, 1978).

27 James B. Ashbrook, "Making Sense of Soul and Sabbath: Brain Processes and the Making of Meaning," in *Zygon* 27: 1 (March 1992): 31-49.

28 Ashbrook, p.46.

29 The thrust of this article is not to determine the divine will concerning the proper day of worship for contemporary Christians. However, the seriousness of implication number five above is, of course, particularly significant for Christians taking seriously the creation account as the basis for a selection of a worship day.

Readers may be interested in a brief outline indicating the basis upon which some Christians understand the New Testament teaching concerning a day of worship in contemporary times. According to Hebrews 8:7-13 and 10:15-18, it is the privilege of Christians living in the gospel period to participate, by means of the Holy Spirit, in the new covenant experience.

That the seventh-day Sabbath forms part of the new covenant terms is strikingly demonstrated by the fact of Jesus' death for sin (Romans 6:23; 1 Cor 15:3; Matthew 26:39-45; and Matthew 27:50) as follows: If it were possible that the definition of sin (the Ten Commandments [1 John 3:4], which are the same thing as the terms of the new covenant [Hebrews 10:16, Romans 13:8-10]) could be changed in any sense, then God would have done so in order to do away with sin in order that His son would not have had to die, because the Scripure states that Christ died precisely because sin existed (1 Cor 15:3). The Son in effect asked God the Father whether that kind of change in the law was possible (Matthew 26:39-45) while at the same time saving humanity. If the law could have been changed, the cup (the cross) could have passed from the lips of Jesus as He requested. That in the mind of God the Father the law could not be changed in any respect is shown by the subsequent death of Jesus. For this reason some Christians believe that the costly fact alone of Jesus' death establishes the perpetuity of the seventh-day Sabbath, the fourth precept of the Decalogue.

Moreover, in Romans 3:31 Paul suggests the perpetuity of the law. In addition, Our Lord says that the Sabbath was not given to the Jews but to mankind universally (Mark 2:27; Genesis 2:2-3). Finally, the women who wished to anoint the body of Jesus kept the Sabbath "according to the commandment" after the burial of Jesus, thus showing that the author of the gospel of Mark believed that the death of Jesus did not abolish this beautiful term of the new covenant (Luke 23:55-56). For a fuller exposition concerning this issue see, "The Sabbath" in *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . .*," Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (Hagerstown, Maryland: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1988), pp. 248-267.

30 From a confessional perspective, one might conjecture whether God will create the new earth within a time frame analogous to the original creation of the first earth, viz., in one week. In any case and by God's grace it will be a high privilege for Christians to witness the creation of the new earth in what ever fashion the event occurs.

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ISRAEL IN BIBLE PROPHECY

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Introduction

The subject of Israel in Bible prophecy is of intense current interest to both Jews and Christians. The State of Israel was founded in 1948, three years after the horrendous holocaust caused by Nazi hands had come to an end. By the time the carnage of the holocaust was over the world was shocked to learn that several million Jews had lost their lives. This tragedy of destruction, the attempted genocide of an entire people, stands unequaled in history in this century.

During the Gulf War in 1991 when the State of Israel was attacked by thirty-eight scud missiles all eyes were on the nation again. Political leaders wondered whether Israel would react to the threatening attacks. Day after day admiration for Israel grew among friend and foe as this courageous people defied their enemies without retaliating.

At that time a member of the Knesset, Israel's parliament, was interviewed on one of the TV networks in the United States. The interviewer raised the question whether Israel would withdraw from the occupied territories as a condition for the withdrawal of occupying forces in Kuweit. This member of the Knesset explained forcefully on American television that Israel had no "occupied territories," only "liberated territories."

The official maintained that the expression, "occupied territories," meant that the territories belonged to someone other than Israel. But in his view this was untrue. He insisted that these were

"liberated territories" because the Bible indicated that God had given to Israel the land which he had promised to Abraham. Israel had simply liberated these land areas from unlawful occupation by others.

Interpreting Bible Prophecy

The view of this Israeli leader is shared by various Christians. There are Christians who deny the conditional nature of certain types of prophecy. They claim that any promise ever made to Israel, including Israel's possession of the land of Canaan, remains binding in perpetuity. These promises, they insist, must be fulfilled to a literal, ethnic Israel. Thus all promises and prophecies made to ancient Israel in the Bible are believed to remain in force and call for a literal fulfillment by a literal Israel.

Contrary to this position is the view held by other students of the Bible. These claim that the prophecies regarding Israel are conditional in nature. The prophecies were applicable to Israel, ethnic Israel, only if she remained faithful to God's covenant. Once the covenant was broken by Israel, the prophecies could no longer be fulfilled to a literal Israel because she had forfeited the blessings of the covenant.

A State's Right to Exist

Before we engage in a study of the biblical evidence this writer wishes to express his personal opinion that this investigation of the testimony of Scripture is in no way meant to imply that the State of Israel, formed in 1948, has no right to exist. In this writer's opinion the State of Israel has as much a right to exist on the basis of international law as any other state. We need to keep in mind that the modern State of Israel is perceived in its partially written constitution[1] as a secular state. The modern State of Israel is constitutionally no religious state. From this vantage point the modern State of Israel is, therefore, hardly different from any other secular state formed in modern times.

Schools of Prophetic Interpretation

It is essential to recognize that Christian understanding of Israel in Bible prophecy is affected by the four differing "schools" of prophetic interpretation. These four major "schools" of prophetic interpretation have their own history and are built on contrasting presuppositions. They deserve to be heard.

Historical-critical School. Modern liberal, progressive scholars follow the historical-critical method of interpretation. It is of fairly recent origin, having been in full flowering only for about one hundred years. These scholars dominate most of the universities around the world. Historical-critical research is based on principles and presuppositions of the historical-critical method.[2] This method is under serious attack from some biblical scholars who have worked within the method for years and have become very disenchanted with it and from scholars who have been trained in the method but turned against it.[3]

This does not mean that the method is no longer used. It remains the major method of biblical study in a secular sense.

At present there are many additional or alternative approaches that are used or proposed in various attempts to move beyond historical criticism. Among them are such methods as structuralism, narrative methods, dialectical hermeneutic, total interpretation, close reading method, deconstructive method, reader oriented criticism, and so on. Each one of them has its own presuppositions and procedures that deserve very careful analysis and reaction. In spite of all of these alternative or supplemental approaches, the historical-critical method remains by and large still dominant in modern liberal scholarship.

One of the major principles of the historical-critical method is that of analogy, that is, that history is moved by cause and effect relationships in which no supernatural causes are allowed. Analogy also means that the past has to be understood on the basis of the present.[4] It has been freely admitted that ". . . the principle of analogy is incompatible with Christian belief"[5] as it has been functioning into the present. "Often the procedure of historical[-critical] biblical criticism has required first the removal of all claims of revelation, and then imposed upon all testimony the *a priori* claim that divine disclosure is impossible," writes Thomas C. Oden[6] of Drew University. These methodological procedures reveal that the historical-critical method is a secular methodology in which the

new spirit of human autonomy[7] permeates all aspects of modern culture—the sciences, philosophy, theology, and so on.

For the historical-critic of today there is no significant predictive element in biblical prophecy.[8] If there is any predictive aspect left, it is one of short-range prediction only in which the ancient prophet speaks about what is contemporary with his own time or later than the historical circumstances which he reflects.[9] The short-range predictive element is not derived from a supernatural revelation. The function of the prophet is not to predict (foretelling) but to proclaim (forthtelling). G. Ernest Wright states it succinctly, "The prophet thus had messages for his own people in his own day."[10]

This view of modern liberalism (here used as a descriptive not pejorative term), or historical-criticism, allows at best a kind of prognostication that is based on the superior insights of a human writer but not on divine, supernatural revelation or inspiration in which actual information is passed from God to the prophet. There is no divinely given prophecy in the sense of a sure prediction about the near or distant future.[11]

Many careful students of the Bible have come to conclude correctly that the historical-critical interpretation of prophecy is a *reinterpretation* of what the biblical text actually says and claims for itself. The historical-critical method does not take the biblical text at face value. It treats it on the basis of modern presuppositions of how a writer/editor of the biblical book should be evaluated in view of modern perspectives and philosophical deductions.[12] This method does not lead to faith but serves to secularize belief systems.

Preterist School. A second major view of prophetic interpretation is known as preterism. Preterism is a method of prophetic interpretation which recognizes genuine predictive prophecy in the Bible. However, it holds as a basic premise that all prophecies about the future that were ever made have been fulfilled in the past by the end of the first century A.D.

As regards the books of Daniel and Revelation the preterist school holds that these books found their fulfillment in the New Testament period and the very early history of the Christian church till about A.D. 100.[13]

The preterist position is deeply indebted to the Spanish Jesuit scholar Luis de Alcazar (1554-1613), who projected the Antichrist back into the distant past by identifying him with the Roman emperor Nero.[14]

Major aspects of the preterist view were in the course of time incorporated into the historical-critical method of prophetic interpretation and other aspects were absorbed into the futurist method of interpretation. Preterism does not command many followers today. But it was quite widely supported in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Historicist School. The third school of prophetic interpretation is known as historicism. It is the oldest school of prophetic interpretation of the four known at present. It may be described as the continuous historical method of prophetic interpretation because it understands biblical prophecy to be continuous and consecutive as regards the predicted sequences of empires and events in the books of Daniel and Revelation. The prophecies are seen to unroll in historical fulfillment from the time of the biblical writer to the eschaton, the end of the world and the new creation, without a break or a gap in the prophetic view.

Historicism takes the biblical picture of prophetic prediction, regardless of short-range or long-range prediction, at face value. It follows the biblical picture of divine revelation to humans (viz. prophets) in which God actually foretold what would happen in the near or distant, even very distant, future. The historicist school of interpretation cannot exist without the acceptance of the biblical claim that God has absolute foreknowledge of history and that He has made known ahead of time what would take place in the future.

Historicism accepts the biblical emphasis of conditional prophecy as regards the ancient covenant people Israel. The prophecies about Israel are to be fulfilled to literal Israel as long as, and only if, Israel remains obedient to the covenant given her by God. If Israel should fail to keep the covenant, then God would not be able to automatically fulfill the promises He had made to them in the past. God would remain loyal to His promises but they would be fulfilled to those who would be faithful to Him. This faithful remnant people of God is not restricted to ethnic descendants of Abraham.

Historicism has been the time-honored method of interpretation for the majority of Bible believers from the beginning of

Christianity well into the beginning of the twentieth century.[15] Historicism, however, has found significant competitors in the three other methods of interpretation, particularly futurism in contemporary evangelical Christianity in the second half of the twentieth century.

It has been said that futurism is "knocking at our door,"[16] the door of historicism, urging to be received. Its aim is to modify, challenge, and, if possible, to replace the historicist method of prophetic interpretation which has so profoundly shaped Christianity at large and Protestantism in the last centuries.

Futurist School. The fourth major school of prophetic interpretation is known as futurism.[17] It has became a major part of modern dispensationalism. Futurism has deep roots in the Counter-Reformation through the Spanish Jesuit scholar Francisco Ribera (1537-1591).[18]

Ribera put prophetic fulfillment into the future. "In 1590, Ribera published a commentary on the Revelation as a counter-interpretation to the prevailing [historicist] view among Protestants which identified the Papacy with the Antichrist. Ribera applied all of Revelation but the earliest chapters to the end time rather than to the history of the Church. Antichrist would be a single evil person who would be received by the Jews and would rebuild Jerusalem . . . and rule the world for three and a half years."[19]

Ribera was subsequently supported by Robert Cardinal Bellarmine (1542-1621),[20] who opposed the year-day principle and identified the "little horn" of the book of Daniel, usually identified with the Papacy, with the Seleucid king Antiochus IV of the second century BC who persecuted the Jews (see 1 Maccabees).

Among the early Protestant futurists were such major figures as S. R. Maitland, James H. Todd and William Burgh. They explicitly stated in the 1820s and 1830s that they followed Ribera.[21] From then on futurism was quickly adopted into the system of dispensationalism which developed from the 1830s onward.

Present-day Futurist Beliefs. Present-day futurism sees the establishment of the State of Israel as a direct fulfillment of biblical prophecy.[22] Leon J. Wood, a prominent dispensational-futurist writer states, "The clearest sign of Christ's return is the modern state of Israel."[23] The widely read Hal Lindsey writes, "The most important prophetic sign to herald the era of Christ's return" and "one of the most important events of our age" is the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948.[24] Dispensationalists and futurists also see the reunification of Jerusalem on June 6, 1967, as a direct sign of fulfillment of prophecy.[25]

There is an expected rebuilding of a temple in Jerusalem which in the view of many is to take place in the middle of the seven-year tribulation period.[26] Any visitor in Jerusalem today can go to a particular place and inspect temple utensils that are made ready for this temple to be built.

Futurism holds that in the final millennial dispensation another temple will be built, the millennial temple, in which Jews will literally sacrifice animals again but not in an expiatory way. They will be "memorials of the one complete sacrifice of Christ."[27]

In futurism there is the widely anticipated "secret rapture"[28] of all true believers which is to take place before the great tribulation.[29] No believer has to go through the dreadful tribulation.

In historicism believers will go through the tribulation of "the time of trouble" unharmed and specially protected by God's mighty arm; in futurism believers will be raptured into heaven at the beginning of the tribulation. Only unbelievers will experience the great tribulation in the end of time in the view of dispensational-futurism.

Main Concept in Futurist Interpretation. In contrast to "historicism"[30] "futurism" is based on the literalistic method of dispensationalist interpretation.[31] It should be clearly understood that in futurism prophetic fulfillment is based on the concept that all promises made to ancient Israel are unconditional and, therefore, must be literally fulfilled to "natural Israel." This literalism demands that the prophetic and apocalyptic portions of Scripture relate primarily to the future, that is, after the end of the present Church age or dispensation which represents a gap or parenthesis in prophecy.[32] This so-called "church age" is considered outside the biblical view of prophecy.[33] Furthermore, the Bible is interpreted in such a way that the claim is substantiated by dispensational-futurists that neither the Old Testament nor the New Testament has anything to do with the Church. The Bible, it is claimed, does not know of a Church or the time it will occupy. With the alleged biblical silence of the Church dispensation every unfulfilled prophecy about and relating to ancient Israel is projected into the future, because the Church is not perceived to be the legitimate heir to any of the promises made by God in the past.

In futurism prophetic fulfillment is to come in the future and is to center around Israel as a nation,[34] the Middle East, including the coming of a future Antichrist and the False Prophet. A significant role is assigned to Russia,[35] and a literal battle of Armageddon which will take place in Palestine,[36] and so on.

Origin of Dispensationalism. Futurism is linked up with dispensationalism. "Modern dispensationalism"[37] is rooted in the teachings of John N. Darby (1800-1882),[38] a trained lawyer who became a prolific writer with more than 53 volumes, each averaging some 400 pages.[39] Darby was one of the early leaders of the Plymouth Brethren Movement in England.[40] In 1845 he broke away over the issues of ecclesiology and prophecy to form the "Exclusive Brethren," also known as "Darbyists."

The second key impulse for dispensationalism came from Cyrus Ingerson Scofield (1843-1921), a lawyer and legislator from Kansas, who produced the notes for the original Scofield Reference Bible. It was first published in 1909 and has seen a more recent revision in 1967. This Bible with its extensive notes has been a major force to popularize dispensationalism.

There are other key names that shaped dispensationalism in more recent times. Among them are Lewis Sperry Chafer,[41] and more recently Arno C. Gaebelein, H. A. Ironside, Charles Caldwell Ryrie, J. Dwight Pentecost, Leon J. Wood and, of course, John F. Walvoord, the President Emeritus of Dallas Theological Seminary.

In recent years the book, *The Late Great Planet Earth*,[42] authored by Hal Lindsey, claimed to have been translated into over 30 languages, sold over 30 million copies in its first ten years of publication.[43] Written for the laity, this book has brought unprecedented popularity to dispensational-futurism.[44]

The majority of popular radio and TV preachers around the world belong to the dispensational-futurist camp of prophetic interpretation. The dispensational-futurist approach is dominant among conservative Christians of many different Protestant churches on all continents.

Modern dispensationalism holds tenaciously that the history from creation through the millennial kingdom to come is divided into seven different dispensations.[45] They form a key part of the dispensational-futurist hermeneutic of biblical interpretation in general and the literalistic prophetic interpretation for which it stands.[46]

Pillars of Futurist Prophetic Interpretation

There are three essential pillars of dispensationalism. They are wed to futurism: (1) The radical distinction between Israel and the Church; (2) the insistence on a literal (that is, literalistic) interpretation of the Bible; and (3) the unifying principle of the glory of God.[47] They interlock and define the essence of dispensational-futurist interpretation. Since the first two are "basic aspects of futurist eschatology,"[48] they need more careful analysis at this time.

Israel and the Church Distinguished. The distinction between Israel and the Church, in the words of the well-known dispensationalist exponent, Charles Ryrie, is "probably the most basic theological test of whether or not a man is a dispensationalist, and it is undoubtedly the most practical and conclusive."[49]

This distinction between Israel and the Church, that is, its total separation, is also a pillar of the futurist interpretation of prophecy and dispensational eschatology.[50] This means that the entire notion of a "gap" between the 69th and 70th week of Daniel 9:24-27 has its rootage in this distinction. The alleged resultant dispensation of the Church Age (supposedly outside of biblical prophecy in the sense that neither the OT nor the NT knows anything about the period of the Church) is based on the distinction of Israel and the Church.

We can see that this distinction between Israel and the Church is the foundation of futurist eschatology and the interpretation of the events of the end time. It is thus of vital importance to investigate the biblical evidence for this alleged distinction.

Arguments for the Israel/Church Distinction. According to futurism and dispensationalism the term, "Israel," refers to the earthly Jews (or Judaism), that is, "natural Israel," and the Church refers to a heavenly people. A prominent dispensationalist writer

states, "This whole distinction between Israel and the Church is based upon the unique character of the Church. The Church is unique as to its nature, its time and its relation to Israel."[51]

Any adequate understanding of the undergirding foundations of futurism and its view on Israel must give full attention to the relationship of the Church to Israel. It is claimed that the Church is the mysterious body of Christ[52] and the time of the alleged Church Age dispensation reaches from Pentecost to the rapture.[53]

The entire theory of the pretribulation rapture,[54] which means "that the Church will be taken away from the earth before the beginning of the tribulation,"[55] "grows out of the distinction between Israel and the Church."[56] It forms one of the cardinal features of dispensational-futurist eschatology.[57] A complete enumeration of differences between Israel and the Church has been provided in a list of twenty-four contrasts provided by the early dispensationalist writer, Lewis Sperry Chafer,[58] the founder of Dallas Theological Seminary. They are summarized by J. Dwight Pentecost.[59]

The essential point of this differentiation is that Israel is the entity to which all the promises in the OT were made. Therefore, the promises must be literally fulfilled to literal, natural, ethnic Israel—not to the Church that other Christians define on the basis of New Testament evidence as "spiritual Israel."

This fulfillment started to take place in 1948 when the State of Israel was established in Palestine. It will reach into the millennial kingdom, that is, the millennium. "The Church," it is claimed, "is not now fulfilling them in any literal sense."[60] Thus Israel will see all of them fulfilled in a literal way primarily during the millennium which will be experienced on earth.[61]

It is claimed that the Church is an entity of an essentially "spiritual" type and the promises made to ancient Israel do not apply to the Church. Charles Ryrie summarizes as follows: "Use of the words Israel and Church shows clearly that in the New Testament national Israel continues with her own promises and the Church is never equated with a so-called 'new Israel' but is carefully and continually distinguished as a separate work of God in this age."[62]

Dispensational-futurist interpreters continue to insist that whenever the Bible uses the term "Israel" it means literal, ethnic

Jews and whenever the Church is mentioned it is always a spiritual entity. The Church is never identified with Israel and Israel is never identified with the Church.

Biblical Analysis of the Israel/Church Distinction

How does this important pillar of the dispensational-futurist hermeneutic fare in light of the total biblical message? If it should turn out that the Old Testament and the New Testament will not sustain such a distinction, then the very foundation of dispensationalism and its futurist views of Israel will be destroyed.

It would mean secondly that the projection of events to be fulfilled through "natural Israel," in the near future in Palestine, or in the distant future during the millennium on earth, have no biblical foundations.

A third implication is that if the radical separation of Israel and the Church does not hold, then the whole concept of a Church Age with its gap or parenthesis would lack the support that is claimed for it.

Fourthly, the whole idea of the "secret rapture" would be undercut,[63] since it is tied to the distinction between Israel and the Church.

Evidently the stakes are high. Let us take a careful look at major biblical evidences.

Israel in the Old Testament

Our attention must turn to the Old Testament. It is in the Old Testament where we encounter the name "Israel" for the first time.

The designation "Israel" has various connotations.[64] This fact in itself, as we shall see, is an important element that runs counter to futurism's and dispensationalism's claim that the usage of the designation is rather uniform throughout the Old Testament.

A Person. To begin with "Israel" is the name given to the patriarch Jacob: "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome" (Gen 32:28, NIV). His struggle "with God," and "with the angel" (Hos 12:3-4), "symbolizes Jacob's new spiritual relation to Yahweh and stands for the reconciled Jacob through God's forgiving grace."[65]

In short, the inauguration of the term "Israel" in the Bible makes it a term for a person, an individual, and not a people or a nation.[66] Jacob is characterized and identified through a faith relationship to God. There is nothing in the early part of the Bible that makes Israel uniquely or consistently a term for a nation or people. There is also no emphasis on physical or ethnic lineage. "Israel" is a term for a person of a true faith response and faith relationship with the covenant God.

This early connection of "Israel" and faith is hardly accidental. It seems to set the stage for what is to follow in the OT.

Descendants of Jacob. In the book of Genesis there are 43 usages of the name "Israel." Out of these 29 usages refer to Jacob, an individual. The remaining usages mention the "sons of Israel" in the sense of the "children of Israel/Jacob." "The tribes of Israel" are used twice (Gen 49:16, 28).

In the book of Exodus the patriarch Jacob is referred to twice by the name "Israel" (Exod 6:14; 32:13). In 41 instances, beginning with Exod 4:22, the name "Israel" is employed for the Israel to be redeemed from Egyptian bondage.[67] It consisted for the most part of ethnic descendants of Jacob, respectively Abraham.

Composite of Ethnic Descendants and a "Mixed Multitude." The Israelites were joined by a "mixed multitude" (Exod 12:38) in the Exodus. This reveals that their ethnicity did not remain the unique factor in what constituted the entity of Israel in the post-Exodus period. The totality of the people of Israel, made up of ethnic descendants together with the "mixed multitude" of nonethnic descendants, was called to worship God (Exod 4:22). They were designated "his people Israel" in Exodus 18:1 (NIV), and later as "the Lord's community" (Num 20:4, NIV). Thus the term "Israel" seems to be more inclusive than pure ethnicity.

"Holy Nation." God calls Israel to be a "holy nation" (Exod 19:6). The term "nation" (*gôy*) is not typical of Israel in the Old Testament (cf. Deut 4:6-8). The typical term used for God's people in the OT is the term "people" (*'am*).

Israel, however, is called to be a "nation" (*gôy*). This is so because of the sovereign election of God and not because of any ethnicity or pure lineage.[68] Israel is a special people in its election and not a "'secular' people."

Israel is a community of faith and faith makes Israel this special community.[69] In this Israel "what counts is not the ethnicity, what counts is not the natural, but very uniquely her relationship to Yahweh."[70] Here we meet once more the faith aspect as the key notion of the true Israel of God.

This entire element of faith is rooted in Abraham, the father of the faithful, who is called out of Mesopotamia and into Canaan (Gen 12:1-3). Here too the promise is given to him that he should be a "nation" (*gôy*). The term "nation" (*gôy*) is used to "describe a people in terms of its political and territorial affiliation, . . ."[71]

The widely used term "people" (*'am*) for ancient Israel is the typical term for "consanguinity and a common racial parentage."[72] The usage of both terms for ancient Israel (nation/people) means that Israel would consist of a population made up of both blood relationship *and* people, although lacking blood relationship would share the same faith. Thus Israel is a spiritual entity in harmony with the design of God for Abraham (Gen 12:1-3; 17:4, 5) and, thus, Israel emerged from Egypt as both ethnic descendants and a "mixed multitude." The true Israel of old was to be a faith community where ethnic lineage was never the unique criterion for belonging to Israel.

Covenant Community. On Mt Sinai God made a covenant with Israel so that this redeemed Israel of faith could remain in a covenantal faith relationship with God (Exod 19-24). Israel is a religious or faith community.

Israel is at the same time a political community which had to function alongside other nations in the ancient world. In this double role as a religious and political/national entity Israel was to experience all the covenant promises as long as she remained faithful to the Lord (Deut 26-28).

Every covenant promise ever made by God is conditional, depending on whether Israel keeps the covenant with her Lord (Lev 26-27; Deut 26-28).[73] The covenant promises are dependent on the faithfulness of the covenant people. The covenant promises were not to come automatically to Israel according to the flesh, or according to an ethnic line. These covenant promises remained dependent on Israel's faithfulness to her God. What counts is a faith relationship based on the covenant and not ethnic origin.

Covenant Obedience: Prerequisite for the Land Promise. A faith-obedience aspect is specifically underlined in the curses and blessings in Leviticus 26 and linked already to the covenant made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. If Israel shall persist in disobedience to the Lord, then the Lord will take Israel into exile and "the land shall rest" (vs 34). "But if they [the Israel in the exile] confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their ancestors, . . . if then their uncircumcised heart is humbled and they make amends for their iniquity, then I will remember my covenant with Jacob; I will also remember my covenant with Isaac and also my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land" (Lev 26:40-42, NRSV).

This unambiguous statement indicates that the land promise was not unconditional. It was conditional upon Israel's obedience to the Lord. Only an obedient and faithful Israel would retain possession of the land.

The land referred to in the covenants made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is not promised unconditionally to the patriarchal descendants, because it is part of the Abrahamic covenant (Gen 12:7: 26:5, 6) which in itself is conditional in that it is dependent on human obedience (Gen 12:1; 12:7; 15:9, 10; 17:1, 9; 18:19; 22:17-19; 26:5).[74] No one will deny that the Abrahamic covenant is tied up with a true faith relationship with God (Gen 15:6) which was demonstrated by Abraham.[75]

A Portion of the Nation. In numerous Old Testament passages the word "Israel" is not used as a designation for the entire nation of the twelve tribes. A few examples may suffice to demonstrate this restricted usage.

In 1 Samuel 17:52 and 18:16 "Israel [is] clearly used to denote an entity different from Judah."[76] There are 48 occurrences of the word "Israel" in 2 Samuel as a designation of the territory of the Northern Kingdom, exclusive of the Kingdom of Judah.[77]

A similar kind of distribution has been noted by F. Anderson and D. N. Freedman in the book of Amos. They observe that when the name "Israel" appears in the book of Amos by itself, it refers to the Northern Kingdom,[78] except in Amos 9:7 where it seems to refer to Israel in its collective sense. Even if one disagrees with some passages, it is certain that "Israel" does indeed refer many times to the Northern Kingdom.

In 33 usages out of 43 in the book of Hosea "Israel" is understood as a designation for the Northern Kingdom.[79] It is suggested that in about 564 usages "Israel" refers in the Old Testament to the Northern Kingdom and in other usages it refers to the Southern Kingdom.[80] At other times it can refer to both kingdoms.

Remnant of Faith. There came a time when Israel as a religious and national entity apostatized and entered into pagan religious worship. As a result a remnant of faith became the true Israel of God in the Old Testament. For example, in the ninth century the Israelite remnant of faith consisted of Elijah and the seven thousand who remained loyal to God and his covenant within an apostate nation Israel (1 Kgs 19:18).

The Elijah experience reveals that the true Israel is "a remnant loyal to Yahwistic covenant faith."[81] This faithful remnant would not bow the knee to Baal. From this time onward the true Israel of God is a religious entity of faithful and loyal persons, even though there is also the unfaithful Israel as a national entity. The latter is an apostate Israel. The apostate Israel will not inherit God's covenant promises, because they are no longer faithful to their covenant God. This is explicitly expressed in the formula "Not my people" in Hosea 1:9.

In the book of Amos the picture is the same. The "remnant of Joseph" of which Amos prophesied (Amos 5:15) is a faithful remnant from Israel. National or natural Israel is rejected and is not the remnant.[82]

Isaiah affirms explicitly that the remnant of faith of the future will be a "holy seed" (Isa 6:13) which is "recorded for life" (4:3). It "will inherit the election promises and form the nucleus of a new faith community (Isa 10:20f.; 28:5f.; 30:15-17)."[83]

Ezekiel affirms that this remnant of faith will have a "new heart" and a "new spirit" (Ezek 11:16-21). The remnant motif is used in the OT prophets only in a religious-theological sense and never in a national-ethnic one. In short, in the OT the remnant of faith is the true Israel of God from the time that national Israel apostatized.

Summary. The word "Israel" is used in the Old Testament in several ways. First, it is used for an individual, Jacob, who is renamed "Israel," so as to mark his conversion experience and his new spiritual relationship with God.

Secondly, the designation "Israel" is used of the Israel of the Exodus which was enslaved in Egypt and redeemed by Yahweh to worship him as a religious covenant community. This Israel included the "mixed multitude" and is not a purely "natural Israel."

Thirdly, ancient Israel is designated a "nation" (Hebrew gôy), indicating that it is made up of people who are not limited to consanguinity, or blood relationship, but that it is intended to be a "holy nation." What counts is a faith relationship and the spiritual character of the people.

Fourthly, "Israel" as a designation can be used for the nation as a whole, or for the Northern Kingdom alone, or for the Southern Kingdom alone, or for both as a united kingdom. Israel is also a term which is employed for the apostate nation which is rejected by God and about which God says, "Not my people" (Hos 1:9). They have broken God's covenant and have disqualified themselves from being His people. This Israel is rejected by God and will not be blessed with the covenant promises.

Fifthly, Israel is a designation used for a remnant of faith that goes forth from national Israel or lives within/alongside national Israel. This remnant of faith inherits all covenant promises of God. This view is supported by the Abrahamic covenant (see especially Gen 17:10, 14; 18:19; 22:15-18; 26:4-5) where the promise of the covenant is linked repeatedly to obedience that keeps the promise alive.

There are predictions that reveal that Gentile believers will be incorporated into this Israelite remnant of faith (Isa 46:3-4; 45:20; 56:6-8; 66:19). "The total picture of the Old Testament eschatological remnant reveals that Israel's covenant blessings as a whole will be fulfilled, *not* in unbelieving national Israel, but only in that Israel which is faithful to Yahweh and trusts in His Messiah."[84]

In short, the Old Testament indicates that the dispensational-futurist claim which holds that only "natural Israel"[85] will experience the promises made by God cannot be brought into harmony with the biblical evidence.[86] The Old Testament evidence reveals clearly from the beginning that only a faithful people will inherit the promises made in the Abrahamic covenant regarding the land.

Israel in the New Testament

How is the word "Israel" used in the New Testament? Dispensational-futurists claim that the radical distinction between Israel as a literal people and the Church as a spiritual people is maintained throughout the NT. Charles Ryrie refers to 1 Corinthians 10:32 in his claim that "natural Israel and the Church are also contrasted in the New Testament."[87] This proof-text needs some attention and we will deal with it later.

Hans LaRondelle counters Ryrie's argument as follows, "The question is not, Does the New Testament contrast the Church with 'natural Israel'? but rather, Is the Church called 'the Israel of God' in the New Testament and is it there presented as the new Israel, the only heir of all God's promised covenant blessings for the present and the future?"[88] If the Church is identified in the New Testament as the Israel of God, then the major pillar of dispensational-futurism will be seen to be without a foundation in the New Testament as well.

Two issues call for consideration. One is the identification of the Church as the Israel of God. The other is whether the Church inherits all Old Testament promises. We will address these issues in what follows.

Church: Inheritor of OT Promises. The issue of the inheritance of the Old Testament promises by the Church is crucial. Vern S. Poythress raises several decisive questions, "To which Old Testament promises is Christ heir? Is he an Israelite? Is he the offspring of Abraham? Is he the heir of David?"[89] He answers by quoting 2 Corinthians 1:20, "For as many as may be the promises of God, in Him [Christ] they are yes" (NASB). The phrase, "as many as may be the promises of God," means all the promises of God. They find their "Yes;" and they find their "Yes" in Christ.

2 Corinthians 1. None of the "promises of God" made in the OT are outside of Christ. Christ is the "Yea" (KJV), the Yes, the focus and fulfillment of all the promises made of old.[90] This text provides a Christocentric answer to the question of the inheritance of the Old Testament promises. Such a Christocentric response from the New Testament runs counter to the dispensational-futurist argument which links the promises to an ethnic, literal Israel.

A second question is asked: "Now to which of these promises

are Christians heir in union with Christ?"[91] We follow here the incisive points made by Poythress who refers to passages from the writings of the apostle Paul in answering this matter.

Colossians 2. In Colossians 2:9-10 Paul affirms that Christ's followers are "complete" in Christ. Verse 10 says, "In Him you have been made complete" (NASB). Our connection with Christ provides us with completeness in Christ, a completeness that includes also all the promises to which Christ is heir. Through Christ all believers, regardless of their national or ethnic origin, are heirs.[92]

Romans 8. In Romans 8:32 Paul emphasizes more specifically, "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?" (NASB). God gives us with Christ "all things," including the promises made to His people in the Old Testament.

The two words, "all things," are comprehensive in intention. "All things" includes everything and leaves out nothing. If nothing is left out, then in Christ and with Christ all believers are given "all things," including the promises previously made to Abraham and his descendants.

We turn to an additional text in Romans 8 where this theme is developed more explicitly still. Paul insists in vss. 16-17: "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow-heirs with Christ" (NASB). Here is an affirmation as to who are the "children of God."

Christians are "children of God." But believers are not orphaned children or disinherited children. We are children with all the rights and privileges of adopted children. And this means that those who belong to Christ are "heirs of God." As children of God we are "fellow-heirs with Christ." "That is to say that we inherit what he [Christ] inherits."[93] All believers in Christ become heirs to the OT promises through Him who is the heir of these promises.

Thus, there is no possibility to separate a "natural Israel," which is said to be earthly, from the Church, which is made up of the "children of God" on earth but which dispensationalists say are "heavenly." The true Israel of God are fellow-heirs of Christ.

Galatians 3 and 6. Paul provides additional points to his argument. He states in Galatians 3:29 unambiguously, "If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, and heirs according to the promise" (NASB). The point here is that those who are Christ's are also "heirs" to the promises given by God in the Old Testament to His people.

The letter to the Galatians affirms that "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:26-28, NASB). The distinction between Israelite and non-Israelite, or Jew and Gentile, with respect to salvation is removed. All human beings share in the same salvation and promises made to those who are God's people.

If this is the case, Who is Abraham's offspring/seed? Is Abraham's offspring/seed only an ethnic Jew? By no means! Abraham's offspring/seed consists of both believing Jews and Gentiles; those who have accepted Christ as their Lord and Savior. The offspring/seed of Abraham are those who belong to Christ and not those who are "natural Israel" as dispensational-futurists wish to hold.

It is pointed out correctly that "the Israel of God" referred to in Galatians 6:16 "is a profoundly religious qualification" which cannot be restricted to ethnic Israelites.[94] A recent commentator has summarized the meaning of this expression, "the Israel of God," as follows, "The expression [Israel of God] does not mean the unbelieving members of the Jewish people, it does likewise not mean the Jewish people in its totality and not even the Jewish Christians who have been converted, but *all believers in Christ regardless of their religious or ethnic origin.*"[95] The believing members of the Church are the "Israel of God" and the inheritors of all promises through Jesus Christ with whom they are fellow-heirs.

Ephesians 2 and 3. In Ephesians the apostle continues to maintain that there is an integration of the Gentiles into the community of the faithful. Gentiles, who were once "separated from Christ, . . . and strangers to the covenants of promise," are "no longer strangers and sojourners, but . . . fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God" (Eph 2:12, 19, RSV).

In Ephesians 3:5-6 Paul reaffirms that Gentile and Israelite believers are together heirs of the promises of God, "the Gentiles are fellow-heirs and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel" (vs. 6, NASB).

This consistent Pauline picture in Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Colossians and Ephesians does not support the distinction between a "natural Israel" and the Church. The Church is made up of converted Jews and Gentiles and both together are fellow-heirs through Christ to the divine promises of the OT.[96]

Parable of the Olive Tree. The famous section of Romans 9-11 which climaxes with the picture of the olive tree (Rom 11:13-24) contains the famous sentence "all Israel shall be saved" (Rom 11:26). It also emphasizes the integration of Israelites and Gentiles.

Modern dispensationalists have interpreted the phrase, "all Israel will be saved," to refer to a mass conversion of all Jews just before Christ's return.[97] Is this the meaning of the passage? Such a sense assumes that "Israel" here is literal, ethnic Israel.

It is imperative to take a more careful look into the parable of the olive tree found in Romans 11:17-24. The picture is of two olive trees, one cultivated, the other wild. The branches of *unbelieving* Jews are broken off from the trunk of the cultivated olive tree of Israel. Then branches of *believing* Gentiles from the wild olive tree are grafted in, leaving a tree of believing Jews and Gentiles.

God has not rejected His people Israel, says Paul (Rom 11:1). "At the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace" (vs. 5, NRSV). He insists that the natural branches of ethnic Israelites have been broken off "because of their unbelief" (vs. 20, NRSV). The matter of faith is what counts and not ethnicity. Non-Israelites, that is, Gentiles, were grafted in and are part of the olive tree "only through faith" (vs. 20, RSV). Unbelief keeps both Jews and Gentiles separated from the cultivated olive tree. But the branches of unbelieving Israelites, who had been broken off, can again be grafted back into their cultivated olive tree, "if they do not persist in their unbelief" (vs. 23, RSV) The point is that physical Israelites can be readopted as believers into the new community of faith.

The community of faith symbolized by the cultivated olive tree from which branches of *unbelieving* Jews were removed and branches of *believing* Gentiles were grafted in consists only of believers, believing Jews and believing Gentiles. Within this context the phrase "all Israel will be saved,"[98] refers to all believing Jews and Gentiles who will be saved (vs. 26).[99] Just as the Gentiles are grafted in during the entire span of time from the NT to the

Second Coming, just so believing Jews are grafted in during the same era. The same qualification for being grafted in, namely, faith in Jesus Christ, is required of both Jew and Gentile. There is no distinction in the way of salvation for Jew and Gentile.[100] There is also no "special way" of salvation for Jews to be saved without Christ.

Paul has stated already in Romans 9:6 that "not all Israelites truly belong to Israel" (NRSV) and in verse 7 he insists that "not all of Abraham's children are his true descendants" (NRSV). In verse 27 he notes with emphasis that "only a remnant of them [children of Israel] will be saved" (NRSV). Thus, the question is whether there is a contradiction on the part of the apostle Paul between these statements and the statement in Romans 11:26 "all Israel shall be saved?" There is a contradiction only, if one posits that the "all Israel" of Romans 11:26 refers to literal Israel in the sense of ethnic Jews. If one follows the context of the Romans 9-11, then the picture of "all Israel" referring to all the true remnant believers of Jewish and Gentile origin is secured.

Summary. We may summarize the New Testament picture. The consistent convergence of the New Testament evidence points in a single direction. The "Israel of God" is the Church. The Church is the community of believers which is made up of both converted and believing Jews and converted and believing Gentiles.[101] Together they are the inheritors through Christ of all the covenant promises ever made in the Old Testament. Together they are the body of Christ in total unity.

There is no Church Age dispensation for Gentiles and a dispensation for Jews subsequent to it. In Christ all things are united. The total and full body of Christ, of which Christ is the head, cannot be split apart into sequential Church and Israelite bodies.[102] Christ has but one body of believing Jews and Gentiles. In short, both Old Testament and New Testament agree that the true Israel of God are believers regardless of ethnic origin or national identity.[103]

Land Promises in the Old Testament

We need to inquire about another major issue. How are the land or territorial promises made by God to Israel to be regarded? Can they in any sense still be valid for "natural Israel," that is, for Jews? Is the promise of the land of Canaan, made to Abraham and the other patriarchs, an eternal and irrevocable promise to their ethnic descendants in perpetuity?

Dispensationalists clearly maintain that all the promises given to Israel of old are to be fulfilled to the literal descendants of Israel on earth. Thus, the establishment of the State of Israel in the year 1948, the subsequent wars in 1956 and 1967, and the territorial expansions of the State of Israel, are all taken as fulfillments of Bible prophecies.[104] John F. Walvoord, a major defender of this position, argues as follows: "The theological implications of the promise of the land to Israel have been shown to be central in God's eschatological purpose for His ancient people."[105]

We wish to maintain again that our discussions of these exegetical matters of the Bible are in no way to be understood or to be interpreted as denying the right of the State of Israel to exist. The issue here is one of biblical interpretation and not of a political, national right.

The Problem of Literalism. A brief consideration of the dispensational, literalist understanding for the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies is in order. In dispensationalism, and its attendant futurism, "literal" or "literalist" interpretation and "literalism" is central. J. Dwight Pentecost writes, ". . . the primary consideration in relation to the interpretation of prophecy is that, like all other areas of Biblical interpretation, it must be interpreted literally."[106] Charles Ryrie maintains that "dispensationalism is the only system that practices the literal principle of interpretation consistently."[107] He continues, "The literal interpretation of Scripture leads naturally to a second feature—the literal fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies. This is the basic tenet of [dispensational-futurist] premillennial eschatology."[108]

It would go far beyond the confines of our purpose to engage in a detailed discussion on the correctness and adequacy of the hermeneutical principle of "consistent literal" interpretation or "consistent literalism."[109] That has been done by others already and need not be elaborated on here again.[110]

"Consistent literalism" holds that God promised to Abraham that his descendants would inherit "all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession" (Gen 17:8 RSV; cf. 12:7; 24:7).[111] It is concluded that the Abrahamic covenant was an "unconditional covenant,"[112] which "has the guarantee of God that He will effect the necessary conversion which is essential to its fulfillment."[113]

For our purpose it is much more important to investigate key principles of prophetic interpretation which the Bible itself uses. In 2 Peter 1:20-21 we are told, "First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own ["private," KJV; NKJV] interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (RSV).

Peter is not announcing a "consistent literal interpretation" or "consistent literalism," but an interpretation under the control of the Holy Spirit who is the Giver of all Scripture. Thus one's "own" or "private" interests in interpretation remain under the control of the Bible, which is its own interpreter.[114]

"Is the principle of 'consistent literalism' the legitimate method of interpreting Biblical prophecies?"[115] As Christian interpreters we cannot interpret the Old Testament as if the New Testament does not exist. As responsible interpreters of the Bible in its entirety we must find out how the Bible reveals the fulfillment of prophecy.[116]

Conditionality of the Abrahamic Covenant. Let us see whether the Abrahamic covenant is depicted in the book of Genesis as unconditional with respect to the human partner in the covenant bond. Does the book of Genesis support the widespread notion that the Abrahamic covenant is unconditional? Does it guarantee that the covenant promises are to be given literally to the physical seed of Abraham? The book of Genesis provides a clear answer to these essential questions.

There are several passages in Genesis which indicate that the covenant with Abraham was not unconditionally bound to the physical descendants of Abraham. The covenant is dependent on Abraham's and his descendants' faithfulness. In Genesis 17:9 God gives His charge: "As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations" (NRSV). Abraham and his descendants can break the covenant. If they can "keep" it, then it is conditional on their obedience. In the same chapter at the end of God's speech reference is made to the fact that

the covenant can be "broken" (vs. 14). Here again, as in "keeping," so in "breaking;" Abraham and his descendants can nullify the covenant promises. The language of "keeping" and "breaking" is typical of covenants in the Old Testament which are conditional.

This is made more explicit in Genesis 18. God, in conversation with Abraham, says that He has chosen Abraham "that he may charge his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice" (vs. 19, NRSV,) "in order that the Lord may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him" (vs. 19, NASB). Here is a clear statement from the Lord that the covenant will remain active only upon the obedience of Abraham and his descendants.

In Genesis 22:16-18 the blessings promised to Abraham will be his "because you have obeyed My voice" (vs. 18, RSV). The outworkings of the covenant are dependent on the obedience to God. In Genesis 26:3-5 God explicitly refers to the promise "to your descendants I will give all these lands" and to other covenant promises. They will be brought about "because Abraham obeyed Me and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My laws" (vs. 5, NASB).

This series of texts is consistent. They reveal that the Abrahamic covenant was not unconditional.[117] The conditionality of the Abrahamic covenant rests on the faithfulness of the human partner. Incidentally, Ellen G. White speaks of "conditions of the covenant made with Abraham."[118] This means that there is no evidence that a literal or literalistic fulfillment of the covenant promises is mandated regardless of the faith relationship of those to whom the covenant was made.

Dispensationalism's insistence on "consistent literalism" forces a meaning upon the text which the biblical text and context resist. There is no statement anywhere in the OT that God would guarantee to literal, natural Israel "the necessary conversion which is essential to its fulfillment."[119] The principle at work is that those of faith are the seed of Abraham (Gal 3:7). There is no support for the view that those of ethnic descent are the true Israel, and that they would be converted en masse in the millennial kingdom or at some other time. "It is those who are of faith that are the sons of

Abraham" (Gal 3:6, NASB) and "heirs according to the promise" (vs. 29, RSV).

Ellen White writes, "All who through Christ should become the children of faith were counted as Abraham's seed; they were inheritors of the covenant promises; like Abraham, they were called to guard and make known to the world the law of God and the gospel of His Son."[120] There is no restriction here to ethnicity or a natural derivation.

"Consistent literalism" reveals that it superimposes on Scripture a principle that seems alien to the plain and literal meaning of the text within its own biblical context.[121]

Conditionality of the Davidic Covenant. The claim for "consistent literalism" is also made for the Davidic covenant. Here is a key statement of a futurist, "According to the established principles of interpretation the Davidic covenant demands a literal fulfillment. This means that Christ must reign on David's throne on the earth over David's people forever."[122] Of course, the Davidic covenant is also understood to be unconditional by many today.

The conclusion that the Davidic covenant is totally unconditional and has to be literalistically fulfilled is based on a one-sided reading of the Old Testament, not to speak of the New Testament. Certainly God had promised in the covenant to David, "I will raise up your descendant after you" (2 Sam 7:12), and "your throne shall be established forever" (vs. 16). This is repeated in several parts of the Old Testament (2 Sam 23:5; Ps 89:3-4, 26-28, 34; cf. Isa 55:3-4).

Before we consider the biblical evidence for the conditionality of the Davidic covenant, it is important for us to analyze the major passage found in 2 Samuel 7:8-16. Students of Scripture have recognized that there are two parts to the covenant.[123] The first part has promises to be fulfilled during the lifetime of David (2 Sam 7:8-11a). These consist of matters that will take place before David's death: a great name (vs. 9); a place for his people (vs. 10), and rest (vs. 11).

The second part of the covenant is separated from the first one by the statement, "the LORD declares to you" (vs. 11b), and by a change from first person speech (vss. 8-11a) to third person speech (vss. 12-16). Furthermore, there is a clear statement that the promises given in verses 12-16 are to take effect in the future, "When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your ancestors" (vs. 12a, NRSV). The promises to be fulfilled after David's death consist of: an offspring (vss. 12b, 16); an eternal throne (vss. 13, 16); and an eternal kingdom (vss. 12c, 16).

The whole biblical evidence must be considered when one wishes to find an answer for the question of the conditionality of the Davidic covenant. There is ample evidence that God has made a divine commitment to fulfill the covenant. Does this mean, however, that the covenant is to be literlistically fulfilled regardless of the faith relationship of the human covenant partner(s)? There are a number of passages in the Old Testament which answer this question.

Psalm 132:11-12 refers to the Davidic covenant. Here it is seen to be dependent on the following condition, "If your sons will keep My covenant, and My testimony which I will teach them, their sons will also sit upon your throne forever" (vs. 12, NASB).

The theme of the conditionality of the Davidic covenant is maintained in Psalm 89:30, 31: "If his children forsake my law and do not walk according to my ordinances, if they violate my statutes and do not keep my commandments, then I will punish their transgressions . . ." (NRSV). The conditionality of the Davidic covenant is maintained with the conditional "if" in the Old Testament.[124] The conditional aspect of the Davidic covenant is here established as incontrovertible.

God would be able to fulfill the covenant made to David only to those who maintain a spiritual relationship with God.[125] Considering the condition of faithfulness to God's testimony, the conclusion of dispensationalists that "Christ must reign on David's throne on earth over David's people forever" is hardly faithful to the biblical witness itself.

The biblical evidence leads the careful student of the Bible to conclude that "consistent literalism" of dispensationalism cannot be reconciled with the internal testimony of the Bible. "Consistent literalism" is an external system that is superimposed on the Bible and does not allow the Bible to speak on its own terms. Therefore, dispensationalism seems to be a system that puts meanings on the Bible that are out of harmony with the simple and plain meaning of the witness of Scripture.

Land Promises in the New Testament

How are the promises about the land which were repeatedly made in the Old Testament to be fulfilled? We have seen that both the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants are conditional as far as the human partner is concerned. We know also that it is a fact in the Old Testament, and maintained in the New Testament, that Israel of old did not remain faithful. Furthermore, Israel as a national entity rejected Christ. In view of these facts can we conclude that the land promises made in the Bible still need to be fulfilled to literal, ethnic Israel, to Jews? Or, does the Bible support the conclusion that the "new Israel" of believing Jews and Gentiles inherit the land promises?

Christ's Testimony. In the Sermon on the Mount Christ gives a beatitude, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (Matt 5:5, RSV). Hans LaRondelle states that two conclusions need to be drawn: (1) In this beatitude Jesus Christ assigns the whole earth to his spiritual followers. In another beatitude the kingdom of heaven is assigned to the poor in spirit, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (vs. 3). Jesus assigns the inheritance of heaven and earth to the meek and the poor in spirit. (2) The original promise made to faithful Abraham is expanded for the Church to include the earth made new.[126]

This New Testament view is based, of course, on the Old Testament. The Psalmist had stated already in Psalm 37:11, 29 that the "meek" and the "righteous" would inherit the "land." The term for "land" here (as in the original promises made to Abraham) is expressed by the Hebrew term *'erets*. This Hebrew term can have the meaning of either "land" or "earth."[127]

When Christ speaks of the inheritance of the "earth" He brings out the larger meaning inherent in the Old Testament term. Christ wants his followers to have more than a limited "land." They shall inherit the whole earth! Christ brings the "land/earth" promises to include the whole earth. Paul likewise saw this fullness of intention in the Abrahamic covenant promise itself. "The promise to Abraham and his descendants that they should inherit the whole world (Greek *kosmos*), did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith" (Rom 4:13).

This view is not alien to the Old Testament itself. The ultimate view that God's people will be the inheritors of a recreated new heaven and a new earth (Isa 65:17-19) is present in the prophetic eschatology. The condition for receiving the "new haven and the new earth" is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ's Promises. The letter to the Hebrews and the writings of Paul agree that from the days when Christ had come in the flesh and when literal Israel had failed to accept Him the geographical and territorial promises were to be understood in their complete sense. Earthly Jerusalem was no longer the holy city and the dwelling place of God. The earthly temple had lost its meaning with the death of Christ as well.

The Israel of faith of the new covenant has a new city. It is the heavenly Jerusalem. The new covenant Israel has a new temple, the one which is in heaven. The new covenant Israel has a new High Priest, the exalted heavenly Christ. The new covenant Israel has a new country, the heavenly one.

The best question to ask is, How did Abraham understand the covenant promises made to him?[128] Abraham sojourned "by faith . . . in the land of promise as in a foreign country, . . . for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb 11:9-10, NKJV). The city he was looking for was not the Jerusalem of the Jebusites, but the one in heaven, the "heavenly Jerusalem" (Heb 12:22).

How about the "land" that was promised to Abraham and his descendants? Hebrews 11:13-16 tells us, "And having confessed that they [Abraham and his descendants] were strangers and exiles on earth, . . . they [Abraham and his descendants] desire [were longing for] a better country, that is a heavenly one" (NASB).

How did Abraham understand the covenant promises? He understood them to involve the entering of the heavenly Jerusalem and the heavenly country. Abraham, according to Scripture, did not understand the promises to be literally or literalistically restricted to Palestine in the past or in the future.

It is helpful also to consider Hebrews 12:22, "But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem" (NASB). Here believers, both Jews and Gentiles, have in a sense already reached the heavenly Jerusalem and, as it were, the heavenly Mount Zion. This is in fulfillment of the Abrahamic and Old Testament promise of Isaiah 60:14 and Micah 4:1-2. In another sense every follower of Abraham still "seeks the one [city] to come" (Heb 13:14). We have reached the heavenly Jerusalem through Jesus Christ, our Forerunner, who is already there while we are still on the way.

The book of Revelation reveals that the covenant promises given to Abraham will not be literally fulfilled to Jews during the millennium. Since every believer has proleptically come to Mount Zion and the heavenly Jerusalem as Hebrews 12:22 affirms—and thus there is no need to wait for a millennial fulfillment as futurists and dispensationalists hold—the final reality of the fulfillment in its completeness awaits the believer according to Revelation 21-22. It will be fulfilled in its finality and in its most comprehensive divine intention when there will be a new heaven and a new earth. "Since Christians share in Abraham's inheritance of the heavenly city now, they will share in it then also."[129]

All the promises made by God will be fulfilled to the believer without any regard to ethnicity. The qualification of fulfillment on the part of humans is faith, genuine faith, in the Lord of Scripture, manifesting itself in faith obedience. That faith is never linked to any ethnic background or national entity. It is a gift and quality of life available to every human being.

Endnotes

1 Cecil Roth and Geoffrey Wigoder, eds., *The New Standard Jewish Encyclopedia* (new revised ed.; London: W. H. Allen, 1975) 993, 1151.

2 For a defense of the historical-critical method, see Edgar Krentz, *The Historical Critical Method* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975).

3 For critical reactions and/or rejection of the historical-critical method, see Walter Wink, *The Bible in Human Transformation. Toward a New Paradigm for Biblical Study* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973); Gerhard Maier, *Das Ende der historisch-kritischen Methode* (2nd ed.; Wuppertal: Brockhaus Verlag, 1975), English transl. from 1st ed. *The End of the Historical-Critical Method* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1974); Gerhard F. Hasel, *Biblical Interpretation Today* (Washington, DC: Biblical Research Institute, 1985); Eta Linnemann, *Historical Criticism of the Bible: Methodology or Ideology?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1990).

4 See the detailed description of this principle by Van A. Harvey, *The Historian and the Believer. The Morality of Historical Knowledge and Christian Belief* (New York: Macmillan Comp., 1966), pp. 69-74.

5 Ibid., p. 15.

6 Thomas C. Oden, *After Modernity . . . What? Agenda for Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publ. House, 1990), p. 126.

7 Harvey, *The Historian and the Believer*, pp. 38-67.

8 For example, Robert P. Carroll, *When Prophecy Failed. Cognitive Dissonance in the Prophetic Traditions of the Old Testament* (New York: Seabury Press, 1979), pp. 112-120; Joseph Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy in Israel* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983), pp. 19-52; Robert R. Wilson, *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980).

9 G. Ernest Wright, *Isaiah* "The Layman's Bible Commentaries" (London: SCM Press, 1964), 8. Wright speaks of the "rule of thumb" of predictive prophecy in the following way: "A prophecy is earlier than what it predicts, but contemporary with, or later than, what it presupposes."

10 Ibid.

11 This is well stated by Klaus Koch, *The Prophets. The Babylonian and Persian Periods* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 2:73-80, and Wright, p. 8: "The prophet had thus messages for his own people in his own day. It would not be within the primary function of his office to address another people in another time than his own."

12 John J. Collins, *Daniel, 1-2 Maccabees* (Wilmington, DE: Glazier, 1981), pp. 11-12, writes about "the authenticity of Daniel's prophecies" as follows: "The issue is not whether a divinely inspired prophet *could* have foretold the events which took place . . . years before they occurred. The question is whether this possibility carries any *probability*: is it the most satisfactory way to explain what we find in Daniel? Modern [historical-] critical scholarship has held that it is not" (italics his).

13 Charles C. Ryrie, *Biblical Theology of the New Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1959), p. 346.

14 Luis de Alcazar, *Vestigatio Arcani Sensus in Apoclypsi* (published posthumously in 1614). See LeRoy Edwin Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of our Fathers* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Assoc., 1948) 2:506-10.

15 See L. E. Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers: The Historical Development of Prophetic Interpretation.* 4 vols. (Washington: Review and Herald Publ. Assoc., 1946-54).

16 See the paper produced by the Biblical Research Institute and Ellen G. White Estate entitled, "Critique of *Give Glory to Him* by Robert Hauser" (August 1984).

17 See George Eldon Ladd, *The Blessed Hope. A Biblical Study of the Second Advent and the Rapture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1956), pp. 35-60.

18 Froom, 2:489-93.

19 Ladd, *The Blessed Hope*, 37-38.

20 Froom, 2:495-502.

21 Froom, 2:511.

22 So among others John F. Walvoord, *The Nations, Israel and the Church in Prophecy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1988), pp. 19-26 of the section "Israel in Prophecy."

23 Leon J. Wood, *The Bible and Future Events: An Introductory Survey of Last-Day Events* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1973), p. 18.

24 Hal Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1970), p. 54.

25 For example, C. F. Baker, *A Dispensational Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1973), p. 606.

26 So Thomas S. McCall, "Problems in Rebuilding the Tribulation Temple," *Bibliotheca Sacra* (Jan. 1972), 79.

27 John F. Walvoord, *Israel in Prophecy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1962), p. 125; cf. Charles L. Feinberg, "The Rebuilding of the Temple," *Prophecy in the Making*, ed. Carl F. H. Henry (Carol Stream, IL: InterVarsity, 1971).

28 John F. Walvoord, *The Rapture Question* (Rev. ed.; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1979). Samuele Bacchiocchi, *The Advent Hope for Human Hopelessness* (Berrien Springs, MI: Biblical Perspectives, 1986), pp. 213-62, provides an evaluation and critique of futurist-dispensationalism. His arguments against the "rapture" theory include: (1) The terminology for the Second Coming of Christ in such passages as 1 Thess 3:13; 2 Thess 2:8; 1 Cor 1:7; 1 Tim 6:14 and Matt 24:27, 37, 39 provide evidence for a single, one-stage and not a two-stage Second Coming. (2) Paul in 1 Thess 4:15-17 describes the Lord as descending "from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God," which are paralleled in Matt 24:31 and 1 Cor 15:52, and demonstrated that there is no "secret rapture." (3) In Matt 24:31 the rapture is placed after the tribulation and not before and protection is granted in the tribulation (Rev 3:10). (4) The book of Revelation gives no evidence for a pretribulation rapture, but a posttribulation return of the Lord (pp. 246-51).

29 See J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1969), pp. 156-217.

30 See particularly the definitions provided in the dissertations of Samuel Nunez, *"The Vision of Daniel 8: Interpretations from 1700-1900"* (Ph. D. diss., Andrews University, 1987), 10-11; Gerhard Pfandl, *"The Latter Days and the Time of the End in the Book of Daniel,"* (Ph. D. diss., Andrews University, 1990), 5-6, published as *The The Time of the End on the Book of Daniel* "Adventist Theological Society Dissertation Series" (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventist Theological Society Publications, 1992).

31 For the purpose of this study it will not be necessary to distinguish between "futurists" and "dispensationalists" (see Pfandl, 7-8), because the latter are futurist in outlook.

32 Crutchfield, p. 244 [see below note 45], states, "The bulk of end-time events is still ahead of us as it was future to those of the Biblical period." Darby, *Writings, 2:Prophetic No. 1*, p. 279 had himself stated, "The greater part of the prophecies, and, in a certain sense, we may say, all the prophecies, will have their accomplishment at the expiration of the dispensation in which we are."

33 C. C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1965), pp. 156-76.

34 See Charles L. Feinberg, *Israel At the Center of History and Revelation* (Portland,OR: Multnomah Press, 1980); Walvoord, *Israel and Prophecy* reprinted in *The Nations, Israel and the Church in Prophecy*, pp. 15-133, and many others.

35 Walvoord, *The Nations, Israel and the Church in Prophecy*, pp. 103-20, with emphasis on the section "The Nations in Prophecy."

36 Pentecost, pp. 340-58, with earlier literature; Paul Lee Tan, *The Interpretation of Prophecy* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1974), p. 349; Hal Lindsey, *The Rapture: Truth or Consequences* (New York, 1983).

37 This designation is used by Arnold D. Ehlert, *A Bibliographic History of Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1965), p. 5, who provides a bibliographical study of earlier writers who depict a "history of the subject of ages and dispensations." Ehlert seeks to show that dispensationalism is old indeed. Nevertheless, "modern dispensationalism" seems to be unique. Simply to find pre-Darby writers who have dispensations does not make them into dispensationalists. See the incisive critique by Vern S. Poythress, *Understanding Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987), pp. 9-11.

38 John N. Darby, *The Collected Writings of John Nelson Darby*, ed. W. Kelly. 34 vols. (reprint; Sunbury, PA; Believers Bookshelf, 1971).

39 W. G. Turner, *John Nelson Darby* (London: Hammond, 1944), pp. 13-15; C. B. Bass, *Backgrounds to Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1960), pp. 48-99.

40 H. Pickering, *Chief Men Among the Brethren* (2nd ed.; London: Pickering and Inglis, 1931); W. Blair Neatby, *The History of the Plymouth Brethren* (2nd ed.; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1902).

41 Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Dispensationalsism* (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1936); idem, *Systematic Theology*. 8 vols. (Dallas Seminary Press, 1947); idem, *Major Bible Themes*, rev. by John F. Walvoord (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1974).

42 Published first in Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1970.

43 So claimed by Hal Lindsay in his subsequent book, *The 1980's: Countdown to Armageddon* (Toronto/New York, 1981), pp. 4, 11.

44 For sober reactions and critiques of Lindsey's futurism, see George C. Miladin, *Is This Really the End? A Reformed Analysis of 'The Late Great Planet Earth'* (Cherry Hill, NJ: Mack Publ. Co., 1972); T. Boersma, *Is the Bible a Jigsaw Puzzle... An Evaluation of Hal Lindsey's Writing* (St. Catherines, Canada, 1978); Cornelius Vanderwaal, *Hal Lindsey and Biblical Prophecy* (St. Catherines, Canada, 1978); Samuele Bacchiocchi, *Hal Lindsey's Prophetic Jigsaw Puzzle. Five Predictions that Failed* (Berrien Springs, MI: Biblical Perspectives, 1985).

45 The seven dispensations in their classical form are those of "innocency" (Gen 1:26-3:24), "conscience" (Gen 4:1-7:24), "human government" (Gen 8:1-11:26), "promise" (Gen 11:27-Ex 18), "law" (Ex 19:1-Acts 1:26), "grace" (Acts 2:1-Rev 19:21) and "kingdom" (Rev 20:1-6) according to Larry V. Crutchfield, *"The Doctrine of Ages and Dispensations as Found in the Published Works of John Nelson Darby (1800-1882)"* (Ph. D. Diss., Drew University, 1985), pp. 58-68.

46 C. I. Scofield, *Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth* (Fincastle, VA: Scripture Truth Book Co., n.d.), pp.12-16.

47 See Crutchfield, pp. 48-56, upon whom I depend heavily in this section.

48 Crutchfield, pp. 68-71.

49 Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, pp. 44-45; similarly John F. Walvoord, "Dispensational Premillennialism," *Christianity Today* 15 (September, 1958), p. 13; Lewis Sperry Chafer, "Dispensationalism," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 93 (1936): 448.

50 Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, p. 159.

51 Crutchfield, p. 49.

52 See Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, pp. 133-40.

53 Ibid., p. 136.

54 For a penetrating analysis and critique of the origins and changes in the rapture theory, see Dave MacPherson, *The Great Rapture Hoax* (Fletcher, N.C.: New Puritan Library, 1983). For an adjusted view of the post-mid-week rapture, see now Marvin Rosenthal, *The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church* (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 1990).

55 Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, p. 159.
56 Crutchfield, p. 71.
57 Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, pp. 156-161.
58 Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 4:47-53.
59 J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things To Come. A Study in Biblical Eschatology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1969), pp. 201-202.
60 Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, p. 158.
61 Ibid., p. 546.
62 Ibid., p. 140.
63 For a critique of the "secret rapture," see Ladd, *The Blessed Hope*, pp. 89-104; Oswald T. Allis, *Prophecy and the Church* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publ. Co., 1977), pp. 181-91.
64 See Gerhard von Rad, "Israel," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 3:356-59; R. Mayer, "Israel, Jew, Hebrew, Jacob, Judah," *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, 2:304-16.
65 Hans K. LaRondelle, *The Israel of God in Prophecy* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1983), p. 82.
66 H.J. Zobel, *"yisra'el," Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, eds. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 6:401.
67 Ibid.
68 A. R. Hulst, *"'am/goj Volk," Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament*, eds. E. Jenni and C. Westermann (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag/Munich: Kaiser, 1976), 2:312-14.
69 N. A. Dahl, *Das Volk Gottes* (Oslo, 1941), p. 19.
70 Hulst, p. 315.
71 R. E. Clements, *"gôy," Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975), 2:427.
72 E. A. Speiser, "'People' and 'Nation' of Israel," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 79 (1960): 160-170.
73 LaRondelle, pp. 83-85.
74 See on the conditionality of the Abrahamic covenant as regards the human partner, Gerhard F. Hasel, *Covenant in Blood* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1982), pp. 52-62; Bruce K. Waltke, "The Phenomenon of Conditionality within Unconditional Covenants," *Israel's Apostasy and Restoration. Essays in Honor of Roland K. Harrison*, ed. Avraham Gileadi (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), pp. 123-139; Ronald Youngblood, "The Abrahamic Covenant: Conditional or Unconditional?" *The Living and Active Word of God: Studies in Honor of Samuel J. Schultz*, eds, Morris Inch and Ronald Youngblood (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1983), pp. 31-46; Oswald T. Allis, *God Spake by Moses* (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1958), p. 72.
75 Those who wish to claim that Abraham did not have his faith reckoned as righteousness by God but that Abraham "considered the promise of seed[s] justice" (see M. Oeming, "Ist Genesis 15, 6 ein Beleg für die Anrechnung des Glaubens?" *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 95 [1983]: 182-197, who was opposed by Bo Johnson, "Who Reckoned Righteousness to Whom?" *Svensk Exegetisk Årsbok* 51 [1986]: 108-115) have difficulty with the Hebrew syntax and the New Testament (see Rom 4:3 where God is the subject of the second clause).
76 Zobel, *"yisra'el,"* 401.
77 Ibid.

78 F. I. Anderson and D. N. Freedman, *Amos. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* "Anchor Bible, vol. 24a" (New York: Doubleday, 1989), pp. 130-32.
79 Ibid., p. 403.
80 Ibid., p. 404.
81 Gerhard F. Hasel, "Remnant," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 4:132.
82 Ibid., 4:133; idem, *The Remnant. The History and Theology of the Remnant Idea from Genesis to Isaiah* (3rd ed.; Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1980), pp. 170-215.
83 Hasel, "Remnant," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 4:133.
84 LaRondelle, pp. 90-91.
85 Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, p. 138.
86 For a full study of Israel and its implications, see the excellent work cited previously by Hans K. LaRondelle, *The Israel of God in Prophecy. Principles of Prophetic Interpretation* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1983).
87 Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, p. 138.
88 LaRondelle, pp. 98-99.
89 Poythress, *Understanding Dispensationalists*, p. 69.
90 See G. Friedrich, *"Epangelia," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1965), 2:584.
91 Ibid.
92 Ibid.
93 Ibid., p. 127.
94 LaRondelle, pp. 110-111.
95 Joachim Rhode, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Galater* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1989), p. 278 (emphasis mine).
96 Samuele Bacchiocchi, *The Advent Hope for Human Hopelessness* (Berrien Springs, MI: Biblical Perspectives, 1986), pp. 228-29.
97 Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 3:105-107; Pentecost, p. 298: John F. Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1959), pp. 171-73, and others.
98 That this term includes both Jew and Gentiles is held among many others also by John Calvin and K. Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 416, who take "all Israel" as the Church.
99 Hasel, "Remnant," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 4:134.
100 It had even been claimed that Paul argues for a "special way" of salvation for Jews who are saved without faith in Jesus Christ. The whole argument of Paul and his insistence on faith in Jesus Christ counters such a view. God has only one way of salvation for all of humankind.
101 See also William Sanford La Sor, *Israel. A Biblical View* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976), pp. 83-108.
102 Poythress, p. 129.
103 A more extensive analysis is provided by LaRondelle in his book, *The Israel of God in Prophecy*, from whom we have extensively benefitted in this section as well as in the following.
104 John F. Walvoord, "Israel's Restoration," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 102 (1945),

405-16; idem, "Israel in Prophecy," in *The Nations, Israel and the Church in Prophecy*, pp. 15-138.

[105] Walvoord, "Israel in Prophecy," in *The Nation, Israel and the Church in Prophecy*, p. 78.

[106] Pentecost, *Things to Come*, p. 60.

[107] Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, p. 158.

[108] Ibid.

[109] Herman Hoyt, ""Dispensational Premillennialism," *The Meaning of the Millennium*, ed. Robert G. Clouse (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1977), p. 66.

[110] Poythress, *Understanding Dispensationalists*, pp. 87-110. See also Bacchiocchi, *Advent Hope*, pp. 220-25, and particularly Daniel P. Fuller, *Gospel and Law: Contrast or Continuum? The Hermeneutics of Dispensationalism and Covenant Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980).

[111] See also Gen 13:14-15; 13:17; 15:7-21; 17:8; 26:3-4; 28:4, 13; 35:12; 48:4; 50:24; Exod 13:5, 11; 32:13; 33:1; Num 11:12; 14:16, 23; 32:11; Deut 1:8, 35; 4:31; 6:10, 18, 23. There are thirteen additional promises to the land in the OT outside the Pentateuch.

[112] *The New Scofield Bible*, pp. 20, 1318.

[113] Pentecost, *Things to Come*, p. 98.

[114] See Gerhard F. Hasel, *Understanding the Living Word of God* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1980), pp. 66-82.

[115] Bacchiocchi, *The Advent Hope*, p. 221.

[116] Gerhard F. Hasel, "Fulfillments of Prophecy," *The Seventy Weeks, Leviticus, and the Nature of Prophecy*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook "Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, Vol. 3" (Washington: Biblical Research Institute, 1986), pp. 288-322.

[117] Hasel, *Covenant in Blood*, pp. 38-41.

[118] Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 138.

[119] See above note 113.

[120] Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 476.

[121] For other examples, see LaRondelle, pp. 23-34.

[122] Pentecost, *Things to Come*, p. 112. See also Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, p. 80.

[123] We follow here the suggestions of R. A. Carlson, *David and the Chosen King* (Uppsala: Almquist and Wiksell, 1964), pp. 111-14.

[124] Frank Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), p. 232, believes that this conditionality is an early form of the Nathan oracle. John Bright, *Covenant and Promise. The Prophetic Understanding of the Future in Pre-Exilic Israel* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), p. 64, states that "the continuance of the dynasty [of David] is made subject to conditions!"

[125] See Waltke, pp. 131, 132; David Noel Freedman, "Divine Commitment and Human Obligation: The Covenant Theme," *Interpretation* 18 (1964): 426; Avraham Gileadi, "The Davidic Covenant: A Theological Basis for Corporate Protection," *Israel's Apostasy and Restoration. Essays in Honor of Roland K. Harrison*, ed. Avraham Gileadi (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), pp. 161, 162.

[126] LaRondelle, p. 138.

[127] H. H. Schmid, "'æræṣ Erde, Land," *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament*, 1:228-36; M. Ottosson, "'erets," *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, eds. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 1:393-405.

[128] In the following I largely follow the points made by Poythress, pp. 120-21.

[129] Poythress, p. 123.

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Heralds of Hope (Titus 2:11-15)

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Contemporary Attitude: Cynicism

The contemporary attitude which provides the background for this sermon is cynicism: defined as a sneering disbelief in sincerity, in the straight line, the possibility of undeviating adherence to truth and doctrine, the "unreligion of the age. . . a systematic hunting down of all settled convictions."[1] Cynicism is a symptom of the anxiety of emptiness, dread of the "abyss of nothingness."[2] A cynic is a chronic critic. Cynicism laps at faith like waves on a seashore, eroding hope.

I begin by telling two stories separated by 25 years of time, but united by the loss of faith in the imminent return of Jesus that they illustrate.

The first took place during Advent season, the four Sundays preceding Christmas, in my first year of ministry in the Lutheran Church. Even though they precede the celebration of Christ's birth, the historic pericope lessons focus on His second Advent.

So I preached a series of sermons on the second coming of the Lord. Following the last one a lady shook my hand with tears rolling down her face, and said, "Oh, thank you pastor! We haven't heard anything about the second coming of Jesus for years!"

It made me glad to know that a starving soul was fed with spiritual bread. I was happy and satisfied, feeling I had fulfilled my calling as a herald of hope.

Twenty five years later, as a Seventh-day Adventist minister and Seminary professor, I heard an Adventist educator say that because of the "delay" in Christ's return, we can no longer live on the edge of the second Advent. It is too emotionally and psychologically wearing. He was applauded by his audience!

It made me sad, and I wondered about the "Adventist" Church I had joined. You see the second coming of the Lord has always been the climax of personal and world history for me, one of the appeals of Adventism. Faith in the imminent and visible return of Jesus had eroded in my former Church to the point where believers heard little or nothing about it anymore, but their hearts yearned to hear it again! Replaced theologically with realized eschatology, the preaching of Christ's visible return virtually disappeared.

Is faith in His soon return eroding among us as well? Are there those among us too, who yearn to hear it preached again? Who will not hear it unless we believe the Bible and preach the Bible, rather than the opinions and philosophies of human kind.

What shall become of us? Are we doomed to become professional mourners, lamenting a demised faith? Or shall we again be the kind of heralds of hope that brought this movement into existence? What shall become of us, and what message we shall preach, is not determined by the circumstances of history or culture, but by the decisions we make about the Bible and its message.

An Apostolic Appeal to Adventists

Hidden in the little New Testament letter called TITUS is what appears to be a summary of the Adventist understanding of salvation. This short passage is a portrait of what should occupy the SDA Church, its leaders, pastors, and lay members, during the interim.

> For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good. These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you (Titus 2:11-15).

God's Grace and Salvation. "The grace of God" and "the glorious appearing" form the frame around this portrait, providing its boundaries and dimensions. "Grace" is not only God's favorable disposition toward sinners, toward the suffering. It goes beyond treating people with kindness and mercy. It is not just an attitude on God's part, it is His divine power made available to the believer for victory over sin and the imperfections of character. Its goal is to "redeem us from all wickedness and to purify . . . a people [who are] eager to do what is good."

Our Lord Jesus Christ has not only assumed responsibility for our past, but for our present and future as well. Grace provides power to fulfill God's purpose, both individually and corporately. "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor 12:9). The believer's heart is "strengthened by grace" (Heb 13:9). Taught to say "No!" to ungodliness and worldly passions.

Salvation means that the sinner is justified by grace through faith, and then by the same grace and through the same faith is sanctified, trained to live a self-controlled, Spirit-controlled life.

"The Glorious Appearing" Already Begun. Have you ever noticed people at an airport or train station being reunited after a long separation? The party waiting cannot stand still while the one arriving approaches. They begin to run toward each other.

"Parousia" (coming, advent) can mean that which is in the process of coming. We are not waiting for something that has not yet begun to happen. The wheels are already turning. The whole sweep of salvation history must be kept in view when we think about the "glorious appearing."

The glorious appearing began when God decided to save mankind, and it has been unfolding in prophetic fulfillment and rhythm, in the incarnation, in Calvary, in the resurrection, ascension, heavenly ministry of Christ, and the pre-Advent judgment. The climax, the culmination, the decisive moment, will be when we see Jesus. God has not changed His mind about the return of Jesus. He IS coming! He is COMING! He is on the way! The interim is only perceived as "delay."

The interim is not a delay in the sense of an indefinite postponement; everything will happen according to God's timetable. It

is not a period of anxiety and idleness, but of expectant, actively responsible waiting. While God's people are engaged in finishing the work of proclaiming the Gospel, He is not finished with His people yet. As Jesus our Lord is on the way, we too are on the way. Moving toward Him "with upright and godly lives," as He moves toward us.

Satan's War with the Church

But we have an antagonist who does not mind so much what we believe as long as we don't practice it. He is a master at misrepresentation, deception and distortion, and is pleased when we emulate him. He is identified in Revelation as "the dragon," "an enormous red dragon" (12:3), and is identified as "Satan, who leads the whole world astray" (12:9).

Satan's Strategy: Conflict. Satan wages war. His strategy is conflict. It started in heaven when "The dragon and his angels fought" with "Michael and his angels" (12:7). "He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him" (12:9). "He is filled with fury" (12:12b), and "pursued the woman" (12:13). "The dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring—those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus" [the remnant Church] (12:17).

The conflict began in heaven and continues on earth until Jesus comes, and "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet" (Rom 16:20). "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Eph 6:12).

Moral conflict. We could recite a sad litany of moral and ethical sins of the flesh that prevail in our society attributed to the dragon: drugs, fornication, adultery, homosexuality, AIDS, crime, etc. But how does the dragon make war with the human intellect? How does he pursue the theologian? Through the mind, of course. A fruitful field, especially if he manages to produce skepticism and cynicism about the glorious appearing.

Theological conflict. Could it be that ideas such as theological pluralism, historical-critical theology, adaptation hermeneutics, truth as confessional, the Bible a human witness rather than revelation, separation of Christ from biblical history, devaluation of the past (see Blanco, *JATS*, Vol 2, No 2, p.71), therapeutic as opposed to doctrinal preaching, are intellectual evidence of the dragon's furious pursuit of the church?

The Christian faith is not hostile to theology, only to theologians who think they are wiser than the inspired sages such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Paul, John the revelator. Wiser even than Jesus Himself. In an age of pluralism theology can be likened to a plastic bag designed to hold only fluid.

Varied Attacks on the Church. *Human reason exalted.* The strategic objective of our ferocious antagonist is to render the Church innocuous. He will use every means available to gain that objective. One of his tactics is to convince the intellect that it is wiser than inspired revelation. Speaking metaphorically, the tail of the dragon still sweeps stars from the sky (Rev 12:4).

Flesh Indulged. Another tactic is to persuade believers that while they may believe they are justified by faith, the flesh is overpowering, cannot be controlled, and may therefore be indulged. Which is why this passage is at odds with a contemporary culture that rejects all restraints and parameters (contemporary Americans "believe in the green light").[3] This text puts us under discipline. The discipline of grace, of the Spirit, of self-control.

Christian believers, empowered by grace, are able to say NO! to "ungodliness and worldly passions." They are empowered "to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age."

You have heard the common response to this good news: "But that's not the real world." But for believers the kingdom of God *IS* the real world, and God is teaching and training them to live in that real world! He is redeeming His people "from all wickedness" not just by declaring them righteous because of Calvary, but by empowering them by grace to live righteously in practice. Adventists call this imputed and imparted righteousness. "Now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light" (Eph 5:8). "Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness" (5:11).

Role of Christian Discipline. These spiritual characteristics cannot be produced without the pain of discipline, for they are ferociously resisted by the fallen nature. Discipline, the spouse of

growth and character development, is seen by contemporary culture as a great evil. But the Word of God says,

> Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness (Hebrews 12:7-11).

To come under discipline does not "meet my need" for liberation, say those who understand "liberation" as absolute freedom. Even here one can wrongly appeal to the Bible, which says that if Christ made us free, we are free indeed. Understood as freedom from all law, from all restraints, from all divine demands and expectations—no wonder the mind of the human theologian invented the idea of realized eschatology!

But the dragon must be resisted. Michael and his angels engaged in combat with him and the dragon lost for "he was not strong enough" (Rev 12:8), heaven was cleansed. Michael took the initiative and so must God's people! Weapons: "belt of truth," "breastplate of righteousness," "gospel of peace," "shield of faith," "helmet of salvation," "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God," and "pray in the Spirit" (Eph 6:14ff).

Are we giving up the fight? Are we actually surrendering to a defeated enemy? "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony" (Rev 12:11).

Role of Christian Hope. Hope, too, is a formidable weapon in this contest. Seventh-day Adventists are HERALDS OF HOPE!

Hope is the positive mode of waiting for the future. It is the opposite of anxiety, a negative mode of waiting for the future. Because anxiety is intolerable, it is repressed and diverted. Looking into the abyss cannot be endured, so time is filled with the most exciting impressions possible.

Happiness in the present is produced by hope regarding the future. Without such hope there is only asphyxiating unpredictability. When we do not know, there is anxiety. Faith needs hope like the body needs oxygen. The biblical message of the "glorious appearing" is plunged, by divine grace, into the boiling cauldron of mankind's anxiety! The last word of the Savior heard by the world is not "Why have you forsaken me" (Matt 27:46)?— Rather, it is "Yes, I am coming soon" (Rev 22:20). He is on the way!

Speaking from within his own evangelical tradition, Helmut Theilicke said: "We do not know what is coming, but we know who is coming."[4] That's a half truth as far as we are concerned. We know both the Who and the what! Because we know Who is coming we are not anxious about what will come.

Hope is sustained by the power of grace to forgive and make new. The power of the coming Christ is revealed in the power of the indwelling Christ—"Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col 1:27).

"The Things You Should Teach"

"These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you." Encourage the faithful and rebuke the unfaithful in the authority of the Word of God! Though we may be despised by Satan and the unbelieving world, we must not let them sway us, deter us, from believing and preaching the blessed hope!

We are not living on the edge of the second advent, we are living in the midst of its fulfillment! Our confession of faith is "MARANATHA!" Salvation is completed by Christ's return. It concludes what began in the mind of God. The remnant is the seed of the future. Therefore, it is imperative that the faith of the remnant concerning the prophetic unfolding of the future be firm and unwavering.

We are not waiting for Godot! Samuel Becket's play ends with Godot nowhere in sight, and without the assurance he even exists. "I am coming soon!" is not an ambiguous announcement. We have a Lord who speaks! "What He says will happen is in the process of happening because the Word He speaks is a creative word and brings into being what is declared."[5] The light of His coming will drive us from our hiding places into the world as light reflectors and as salt. To speak the language of hope.

We have the rare privilege of addressing the world with words that reveal divine truth and the reality of our belief that all is not lost. Jesus is coming! And He will make all things right just as He

will make all things new. We may live in the same world of anxiety but we need not share in the same gloom and cynicism. We are Christian realists who know only too well the situation in which the world exists, but who know also that Jesus is near. We are upward lookers! Such hope demonstrates itself in a missionary outlook on life.

Ours is a delirious expectation! To share it and express it is to speak in the language of hope. Jesus will have the last Word!

Endnotes

1 Philip Rieff, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), p. 13.

2 Helmut Thielicke, *Nihilism* (New York: Harper and Row, 1961), p. 117.

3 Rieff, p. 27.

4 Thielicke, p. 147.

5 C. Raymond Holmes, *The Last Word* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1987), p. 17.