



---

# JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

---

Volume 3, Number 2 . . . . . Autumn 1992

## ARTICLES

- Salvation and the Adventist Faith and Mission . . . . . 5  
*Mario Veloso*
- Salvation in Scripture . . . . . 17  
*Gerhard F. Hasel*
- Salvation by Sacrificial Substitution . . . . . 49  
*Angel Manuel Rodriguez*
- Salvation and Obedience . . . . . 78  
*Jack J. Blanco*
- Health and Salvation . . . . . 94  
*Mervyn G. Hardinge*
- The Pilgrimage of a Believer . . . . . 111  
*E. Edward Zinke*
- Pauline Cosmology: Relic or Relevant? . . . . . 123  
*Bruce Norman*

## SERMON

- What is the Gospel? (Galatians 1:6-10). . . . . 139  
*C. Raymond Holmes*

## FEATURES

- The President's Page . . . . . 1  
*C. Raymond Holmes*
- The Forerunner . . . . . 146  
*Leo R. Van Dolson*

JOURNAL OF THE  
ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Volume 3, Number 2, Autumn 1992

Editor: Leo R. Van Dolson  
Associate Editor: Frank Holbrook

Editorial Executive Committee

C. Raymond Holmes, Chairman; Jack J. Blanco, Richard M. Davidson, Norman R. Gulley, Gerhard F. Hasel, Frank B. Holbrook, Gordon M. Hyde, C. Mervyn Maxwell, Ronald M. Springett, Leo R. Van Dolson, Mervyn Warren, Francis W. Wernick, Randall W. Younker, E. Edward Zinke.

Editorial Resource Board

Warren Ashworth, Samuele Bacchiocchi, Douglas Bennett, Jack J. Blanco, Thomas H. Blincoe, Paul Buchheim, Arthur Chadwick, Harold Coffin, P. Gerard Damsteegt, Laurel Damsteegt, Richard M. Davidson, Roy Gane, Norman R. Gulley, Gerhard F. Hasel, Frank B. Holbrook, C. Raymond Holmes, Hans K. LaRondelle, Leon I. Mashchak, C. Mervyn Maxwell, P. David Merling, Daegeuk Nam, James J. North Jr., Gerhard Pfandl, Siegfried H. Roeske, Angel Rodriguez, Ronald M. Springett, Loron Wade, Mervyn Warren, Pierre Winandy, Randall W. Younker, E. Edward Zinke.

Advisory Board

Bernell Baldwin, Marjorie Baldwin, Wallace Blair, Elsie Blair, Thomas H. Blincoe, Carol Buchheim, JoAnn Davidson, D. A. Delafield, Herbert E. Douglass, William Fagal, John Fowler, Erwin Gane, Rosalie Haffner Lee, Leslie Hardinge, Darrell Huenegardt, Gordon M. Hyde, John Loor, John McFarlane, Ellsworth McKee, Sharon McKee, Cyril Miller, David Newman, Jacob Nortey, Enoch Oliveira, Robert Peck, Paul Robberson, Al Sines, Jane Sines, J. Robert Spangler, Joel O. Tompkins, Mario Veloso, Velile Wakaba, Lewis Walton, Jo Ellen Walton, Francis W. Wernick, Izak van Zyl.

The JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY is published twice yearly by the Adventist Theological Society. Home office: P. O. Box 551, Collegedale, Tennessee 37315. Direct all correspondence to P. O. Box 86, Berrien Springs, Michigan 49103.

The JOURNAL is sent free to members of the Society whose dues are not in arrears.

The regular annual subscription price for non-members is US\$12.50 to addresses in the USA and US\$14.50 to addresses elsewhere.

The student and retiree subscription price for non-members is US\$10.00 in the USA and US\$12.00 elsewhere.

The single copy price is US\$6.00.

All items not copyrighted by their authors are copyright © 1992 by the Adventist Theological Society.

Opinions expressed in the JOURNAL are not necessarily those of the Society. The validity and accuracy of quoted material included in articles are the responsibility of the authors of the articles.

## THE PRESIDENT'S PAGE

### A Message from the ATS President

#### C. Raymond Holmes

First a word about this issue of the *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society (JATS)*, and then a word about the next annual international convention.

1. The *Adventist Theological Society (ATS)* is pleased to place in your hands this special edition. Together with the previous edition, Vol. 3, No. 1, the focus is on the great and broad Biblical doctrine of salvation and features papers presented at the International Convention of ATS held at Loma Linda, California, in April 1992. Both issues explore the way of salvation in Scripture. As planning for the 1992 Convention progressed it was felt that perhaps the time has come to talk about salvation, how to get saved and stay saved.

The previous edition contained articles such as "Salvation and Forgiveness" by Richard M. Davidson, "Salvation and the Atonement" by Hans K. LaRondelle, "A Love Affair with the Law" by Siegfried Herman A. Roeske, "A Look at the Larger View of Calvary" by Norman R. Gulley, and "Salvation and the Sanctuary" by George W. Reid.

In this edition Mario Veloso reminds us that salvation is not just personal, it involves mission in the time of the end. This obligates the Seventh-day Adventist Church to preach the pre-Advent judgment as well as Calvary. Gerhard Hasel discusses the human need for salvation in relation to the fall of man and the necessity for a substitutionary Savior, and critiques the moral influence theory of atonement. Angel M. Rodriguez enlarges on the subject of salvation by sacrificial substitution as it is taught harmoniously in both Old and New Testaments. He concludes that Christ's substitutionary sacrifice was more than simply a revelation of love, He took our place and was made sin for us (2 Cor 5:19-20).

The relationship between salvation and obedience is the focus

of Jack Blanco's article. One who is saved by Christ is set free to obey Christ by the power of Christ. Mervyn G. Hardinge reminds us that while good health will not assure us of salvation, it will help us to think more clearly and hear the Word of God more surely. The Good News concerning atonement and salvation empowers the Good Life. E. Edward Zinke shares his personal intellectual journey through human reason, through the historical-critical approach to Scripture, neo-orthodoxy, and humanism, to righteousness by grace through faith in Christ and a renewed understanding of *sola scriptura*. Leo R. Van Dolson tells us that our Lord Jesus Christ is not only our substitutionary Savior but our Forerunner, Mediator, Advocate, and Intercessor in the heavenly sanctuary where the work of atonement and salvation is being completed prior to the return of our Lord.

As Herman Melville put it, "the pulpit is ever this earth's foremost part; all the rest comes in its rear; the pulpit leads the world. From thence it is the storm of God's quick wrath is first descried, and the bow must bear the earliest brunt. From thence it is the God of breezes fair or foul is first invoked for favorable winds. Yes, the world's a ship on its passage out, and not a voyage complete; and the pulpit is its prow." So the sermon in this issue puts the whole matter of salvation into the pulpit where it rightfully belongs.

These two issues of *JATS* are commended to your prayerful study. May they be used by the Holy Spirit to build faith in, and revival of submission to, the historic Adventist understanding of the way of salvation.

2. The 1993 International Convention of ATS will convene April 15-16-17 in Berrien Springs, Michigan, developing the theme "Seventh-day Adventist Theological Methodology." What is unique about the way Adventists go about the theological enterprise? Have we been drifting from our own great theological heritage, or are we still on course? Presentations will focus on practical application of Adventist theological thought to the life of discipleship.

The Thursday evening and Friday sessions will meet in the University Towers on the campus of Andrews University, and the Sabbath session will meet at the Village Church. Preaching during the Sabbath worship service will be Elder Robert Carter, President

of the Lake Union Conference. More details, including lodging information, will appear in the spring edition of the *Newsletter*. I would like to extend my personal invitation to ATS members, and others, to attend.

The annual business meeting of ATS will be held on Sunday morning. A major item on the agenda will be the amendments to the Constitution, a copy of which was mailed to the membership with the last *Newsletter*. As this will be an important business session, members are urged to stay by.

For some time repeated requests have been made by various entities and sources for *JATS* to be published also in several other major languages. These urgent requests could not fall on deaf ears. ATS is, therefore, giving consideration to preparing some issues of *JATS* in other languages.

May the Lord richly bless the global strategy of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and ATS as it seeks to serve the Church in the completion of its mission.

Yours, in the service of the Master,  
C. Raymond Holmes

#### DEAR READER:

Many readers may see this *Journal* for the first time. You will belong to this group, if you are not a member of the *Adventist Theological Society (ATS)* or a subscriber of the *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society (JATS)* (please consider becoming a subscriber, using the form on the last page of this issue). This is your free, complimentary copy. (Should you receive more than one copy, please give the extra copy to a friend).

We sincerely hope that you will enjoy reading this issue of *JATS*, find a spiritual blessing in its pages, have your faith strengthened as a committed believer in our Lord Jesus Christ, and share the Good News of salvation in and through Jesus Christ in this end-time of the world with others.

*ATS* was established in 1988 by Adventist Bible teachers and other Adventist thought leaders as a "centrist" professional society. Members of *ATS* come from all walks of life such as teachers and students, laymembers, local elders and SS teachers, church pastors and administrators, physicians, dentists and other professionals, scientists and researchers, homemakers and retirees, indeed a true cross-section of the Adventist Church. Membership in *ATS* is by application or invitation, followed by endorse-

ment and a signed membership affirmation, and subsequent committee action. *ATS* invites you to consider membership (please use the form on the last page of this issue).

*ATS* affirms the centrality of the cross of Jesus Christ, reaffirms the surety of the Bible as the Word of God, confirms the Spirit of Prophecy as God's gift to the remnant, attempts to research revealed truth to its full depth, investigates new questions, evaluates innovative approaches to truth from the perspective of confidence in divine revelation, provides dialogue and fellowship in matters of faith, upholds principles of sound interpretation of Scripture, prays for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in our time, upholds Adventist church leadership in prayer and with personal effort, and supports the SDA Church with their tithes and gifts, and their influence.

*ATS* projects include two annual conventions. Previous international conventions were held at the Mid-America Union Conference headquarters in Lincoln, NE (1989), prior to the General Conference in Indianapolis, IN (1990), at Southwestern Adventist College in Keene, TX (1991), in Loma Linda, CA (1992) and the next International *ATS* Convention will be held at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI (April 15-17, 1993). Among the speakers were, and will continue to be, the finest Adventist thought leaders from General conference and Union and local conference levels as well as from various Adventist institutions of higher learning.

*ATS* donors have provided \$38,000 to assist in the purchase and construction of a new SDA Theological Seminary near Prague, Czechoslovakia, \$3,000 for three CD-ROM computer kits which include all published E. G. White writings for our seminaries in Russia, Romania and Nigeria, West-Africa, and scholarship funds for qualified students to engage in doctoral studies in religion. Aside from publishing *JATS* twice each year as well as newsletters, *ATS* has published three books so far (see the advertisements at the end of this issue) in three different series which have been inaugurated within the last year. You are invited to participate in our projects. All gifts are tax-deductible under IRS regulations, because *ATS* is a duly registered non-profit entity.

*ATS* seeks to follow the Spirit of Prophecy counsel to "pull together." The platform for this pulling together to the center of the Adventist message and mission is Scripture as the Word of God in its entirety, supported by the writings of the Spirit of Prophecy, the "lesser light" that illumines the greater one.

Let us continue to be united in our biblical faith, the Three Angels' message and mission with our dedicated leaders for the glory and honor of our Lord, the soon-coming Savior.

*Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 3/2 (1992):5-16.  
Article copyright © 1992 by Mario Veloso.

## SALVATION AND THE ADVENTIST FAITH AND MISSION\*

By Mario Veloso

Associate Secretary

General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

Since I will speak about the Adventist understanding of salvation, faith, and mission, I will select eschatological texts in the books of Daniel and Revelation, where the church of the end is clearly referred to. Our subject will be reviewed under three headings: (1) Salvation in the time of the end. (2) Salvation and faith in the end time. And (3) Salvation and mission in the time of the end.

### Salvation in the Time of the End

The major texts for our study are Revelation 12 where salvation means victory over the dragon in the great satanic war against Christ and his followers; Revelation 7 where salvation means victory over the wind-war that blows over the earth after the sixth seal; and Revelation 19 where salvation means victory over the great harlot which the Lord our God will judge and condemn in the pre-advent judgment.

**Victory Over the Dragon.** In Revelation 12 we find the account of the great controversy between Michael and the dragon, between the Son of God and Satan. The war broke out in heaven,<sup>1</sup> then continued on earth<sup>2</sup> against the woman-church. Finally, the dragon makes war with the remnant.<sup>3</sup>

In the middle of the war, a loud voice from heaven says: "Now

the salvation . . . [has] come.”<sup>4</sup> The word “now” refers to the center of time. This is the present of salvation, the cross and the death of the Lamb. The word “salvation” here means victory. The victory over Satan and his war. The expression “has come” is also important. In the original language, the verb that conveys the concept that salvation is not only a hope for the future; but rather a reality already introduced in our present lives. Salvation has already come. It has arrived and is still here.

The victory of God and Christ over Satan on the cross has already arrived. The victory of the persecuted church has already come. The victory of the brethren, those who are accused day and night by Satan—should I also say that among them are those accused by magazines, by cassettes, by videotapes, by sermons, by who knows what and how—has already come. The victory of the remnant has already come and is a present reality.

What are the consequences of an already present salvation in the life of those who overcome by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and who “[do] not love their life even to death?”<sup>5</sup> It is full assurance of salvation. It is joy, the great joy of victory. “For this reason, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them.”<sup>6</sup> “Those who dwell in heaven” (Rev 12:12) are the followers of Christ, the worshipers of God, those whose names are written in the Book of Life.<sup>7</sup> Opposed to them are those “who dwell on the earth,” the worshipers of the dragon and the beast.<sup>8</sup>

The followers of the dragon are great fighters, but there will be no victory and no joy for them. “Woe to the earth and the sea; because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has only a short time.”<sup>9</sup> He has a short time because this is the time of the end. The time of our victory by the blood of the Lamb.

**Victory Over Tribulation.** In Revelation 7, salvation means victory over the wind-war held by the four angels. It blows over the earth before the seventh seal.<sup>10</sup> Satanic ruin and destruction, satanic malignity, malicious designs, and “the fierce winds of human passion, all the elements of strife”<sup>11</sup> will be let loose against humanity, but the people of God will be saved.

The means of their victory is the seal of the living God,<sup>12</sup> and the blood of the Lamb.<sup>13</sup> Sealed with the Sabbath of God, the

144,000 and a great multitude, clothed in white robes and cleansed by the blood of the Lamb, stand before God’s throne and before the Lamb. They have palms of victory in their hands and cry out with a loud voice: “Our God, who sits upon the throne, has the power to save his people, and so does the Lamb.”<sup>14</sup>

Those saints came through the great tribulation<sup>15</sup> with tears in their eyes.”<sup>16</sup> Persecution, criticism, and destruction of their prestige, character, reputation, and bodies did not prevent them from washing their robes in the blood of the Lamb.

Now is the time for all of us to wash our robes in the blood of the Lamb, because the victory over the wind-war of satanic and human passions and persecution has already come.

**Victory Over the Great Harlot.** In Revelation 19 salvation means victory over the great harlot. The saved multitude in heaven, shouts: “Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God!”<sup>17</sup> Why? Because “He has judged the great harlot who was corrupting the earth with her immorality, and He has avenged the blood of His bond-servants on her.”<sup>18</sup>

This judgment comes after the message of the angel with a loud voice in Revelation 18<sup>19</sup> and before the second coming of the King of Kings on a white horse.<sup>20</sup> The “great harlot” is a picture of the “united apostate religions at the close of time.”<sup>21</sup> They call themselves believers, but they are not. They are fighting against the true Christians, the remnant, trying to make them participants in their apostasy. But they will not succeed. The same judgment that decrees condemnation for the great harlot proclaims salvation for those who are under the power of God,<sup>22</sup> because the victory has already come. “And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sits on the throne, saying, ‘Amen! Hallelujah!’”<sup>23</sup>

In the last days of the great controversy we have to face the Devil himself, the wind-war of Satanic malignity and human aggressive passions, and the war of doctrinal immorality championed by the great harlot. All the forces of apostasy, from within and from without, will be, and they already are at work against the Remnant of the church. But we, Seventh-day Adventists, should be united, in Christ and His remnant church.

“Are you saved?” is the battle word of today’s war. The answer

is clear: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all."<sup>24</sup> Why am I saved? Because "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us,"<sup>25</sup> and because the victory has already come.

How are we saved? Through the death of Jesus Christ. For God appointed us "to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us."<sup>26</sup> We did not die for our sins. Paul writes to the Romans: "It is Christ that died."<sup>27</sup> Jesus did not die for his own sins; He had no sin. Jesus died in our place, a vicarious death. He was a "ransom" for us<sup>28</sup> and "gave Himself a ransom for all."<sup>29</sup>

In the worst fighting of this war we must be sure of our salvation. We must press together in genuine love, in true faith, in pure doctrine, in Christ and in His remnant church. Sometimes it seems that Satan is overcoming us as individuals. But never forget: the victory has already come. Sometimes it seems that Satan is overcoming the church and is about to destroy her; but never forget: The victory has already come. Not because of the good works we do, but because of the blood of the Lamb, the victory is assured.

What is the meaning of salvation in this context of war and end time? It means strength, power, and the coming of the kingdom of our God.<sup>30</sup> It means overcoming by the blood of the Lamb and by the missionary testimony. It means not loving one's own life, but loving the life of Christ and rejoicing for His victory in the cross.<sup>31</sup> It means not responding to Satan's furious attacks in his way of making war against the Remnant, but by keeping the commandments of God and having the testimony of Jesus Christ.<sup>32</sup>

### Salvation and Faith in the End Time

Salvation and faith are so intimately bound together that they cannot be separated. To experience one of them without the other, is impossible. But today many Christians wrongly understand justification, obedience, mission, worship, salvation, as though each were independent from the others.

Many praise justification but downplay obedience. They exalt worship but neglect mission. And even worse, with regard to salvation they are more concerned about themselves than about God. They cannot understand the Christian experience of salvation

beyond the self. Of course, they would not call it selfish, but rather, self-esteem, or self-realization, or self-affirmation, or self-assurance.

I am not saying that the assurance of salvation, and spiritual affirmation, and the sense of realization and personal worth are wrong. On the contrary, in victory over Satan we have to experience all of them. What I am saying is that a self-centered understanding of salvation is wrong. It is wrong faith, wrong doctrine, wrong piety, and wrong mission. In a self-centered religion, faith is feeling, doctrine is humanism, piety is mysticism, and mission is fighting against the church, its leaders and mission. This fighting is not in line with God's salvation, but with Satan's war against the Remnant.

Salvation is not a matter of feelings, it is received by faith. But today faith is easily forged as feelings. Paul defines justification by faith as reconciliation with God,<sup>33</sup> but today it often means feeling "OK" about oneself. Obedience is fulfilling God's commandments, but today it means attaining personal fulfillment.

In Scripture, giving for mission or participating in mission-outreach is the result of one's dedication to God, but today for some it is the consequence of how one feels toward the church and especially toward some leaders of the church, on all levels of leadership. If I believe that some leaders are doing what I consider to be wrong, I then may conclude that I should refuse to participate in mission activities, and my money goes to somebody else, even my tithe which in reality is not mine but God's.

In Scripture, worship is what I bring of myself to God as a response for what He is and has done for me through creation and redemption. But today, it is understood as what I can get from the service and the pastor.

Salvation is what Christ obtained for me and in my place on the cross, but today some think that it came through my actual personal participation in His death. Paul says that "[O]ne died for all, therefore all died."<sup>34</sup> But Paul clarifies this in the next sentence "and He died for all"—not together with all—"that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf."<sup>35</sup> Our death is not to pay for our sins but to enable us to live for Christ.

This is also the language of Romans 6 where Paul speaks about dying with Christ through baptism, not on the cross. "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life."<sup>36</sup> In baptism "our old man is crucified with him."<sup>37</sup> Then Paul's conclusion is "if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him."<sup>38</sup>

The baptismal death is not *for* sin, because it was Christ who died *for* our sins, but *to* sin. Being dead to sin we are alive "to God," and sin will not "reign" in our bodies any more.<sup>39</sup> All this is possible only by faith in Jesus Christ.

Faith is not feeling. Faith is intimacy with God. This is why Paul defines justification by faith—the beginning of Christian experience—as "reconciliation."<sup>40</sup> Sin made human beings enemies of God. Because of Christ's sacrifice and by the work of the Holy Spirit we believe, and this faith is restored intimacy with God. It is not the mystic experience that seeks to find God in the intimacy of self. To the contrary, it is the close affection brought by God-achieved reconciliation.

Through faith we become intimate with God, and from this intimacy derives the whole Christian experience. Justification is by faith, obedience is by faith, mission is by faith, worship is by faith, salvation is by faith.

Nothing in our Christian experience is defined by whether we are the ones who do the works of salvation or whether it is God who does them. It is defined rather by whether we are prodigal sons and daughters having returned home in restored intimacy with the Father, or whether we are still alone fighting for our own feelings in a far away country, as the prodigal son, or even at the Father's home, like his brother.

### Salvation and Mission in the Time of the End

Our battle should not be to defend our feelings, but to fulfill the mission of the church. What is our mission? The natural tendency is to define the mission of the eschatological church with texts that describe the historical mission of the Christian Church,

Matthew 28:18-20 for example. But to be more specific, we should define it with eschatological texts such as Daniel 11 and 12, Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21, Revelation 10 and 14. From these biblical passages we find that the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is at least three things.

**Our Mission: To Share Insights, Understanding, and Righteousness (Dan 11, 12).** In the time of the end—a time of trouble such as never was, a time of deliverance for God's people—the people of God are described as "Those. . . who are wise," (RSV) "those who turn" (RSV) people, and "those who shall make many understand."<sup>41</sup> They "shall shine like the brightness of the firmament" and "turn many to righteousness."<sup>42</sup>

The people of God are teachers ["they that be teachers," KJV, margin], converters ["they that turn many to righteousness"], and instructors ["shall instruct many"].<sup>43</sup> Every one of these words conveys the idea of sharing. The mission of the Adventist church is to share insights, understanding, and righteousness. *Righteousness by faith, insights of the future through the knowledge of prophecy, and understanding of revealed doctrines, in the context of the time of the end.*<sup>44</sup>

**Our Mission: To Prophecy Again (Rev 10).** In this chapter we find the origin of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The church would come into existence out of a particular experience related to the opening of the "little book," the book of Daniel certain of its aspects were to be closed "until the time of the end."<sup>45</sup> Its opening happened when the seventh angel was "about to sound" its trumpet<sup>46</sup> and the mystery of God was ready to be finished.

What is the mystery of God? It is a secret, unknown for humanity except as God reveals it through His prophets and messengers, particularly His plans for the time of the end and His plan of salvation, the gospel. Daniel said to Nebuchadnezzar: "There is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will take place in the latter days."<sup>47</sup> And Paul declares: "I became a minister . . . to make the word of God fully known, the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now made manifest revealed to His saints . . . the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory,"<sup>48</sup> and "the mystery of the gospel."<sup>49</sup>

Prophecy and gospel are blended together in the “mystery of God” referred to in Revelation 10:7. Prophecies would be fulfilled and the preaching of the gospel would be finished. This is why the mission of the church of the end time is defined by the verb “to prophesy.” “You must prophesy again.”

**Our Mission: To Preach the Gospel (Rev 14).** We must preach the gospel, of justification by faith with an insight into the final events. It includes particularly the present time of the judgment, the fall of Babylon, and God’s “indignation” with those who worship the beast and its image, and receive its mark.<sup>50</sup>

The Seventh-day Adventist Church was not called to fulfill its mission in the context of salvation by works (fourth century state Christianity), neither in the context of the sixteenth century Reformation, fighting against good works as the means to attain salvation. We cannot properly fulfill our mission unless we preach the entire gospel in the context of God’s pre-Advent judgment in progress, in the context of a Babylon already fallen and in the context of God’s “indignation” with those who worship the beast and its image, and receive its mark. In short, in the context of all three angels’ messages.

The end of the world is coming and our preaching must acknowledge its reality. Not in a negative, distressing way; but proclaiming this end of the world as the beginning of the Kingdom of God, because we preach the “gospel of the kingdom.”<sup>51</sup>

Even though the people of our time very much love soft words, soft music, soft drink, and soft soap, we cannot preach a soft gospel. We must preach “the everlasting gospel.”<sup>52</sup> This gospel produces a people with the patience of the saints, a people who keep the commandments of God, a people that have the faith of Jesus,<sup>53</sup> and a people that have the testimony of Jesus Christ.<sup>54</sup> It is a strong, powerful gospel. A gospel of living faith. This is the gospel we believe in, and preach about.

About this gospel Paul said: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith’.”<sup>55</sup>

When we speak about preaching the gospel and its results, we

are talking about the power of God in action and about God’s righteousness in its most astonishing disclosure—that is, in the life of a just person who actually lives by faith. This is the way John the Revelator describes the end time people of God, the Remnant—a people of faith.

This faith is at the same time both subjective and objective. I feel it, but I feel something that is produced by Christ. It is “the faith of Jesus.” John says: “Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.”<sup>56</sup>

It is not only a matter of feeling well. It is also a matter of keeping the faith. When we fulfill our mission, we have to go far beyond our own feelings; we have to include also the teachings of the gospel. That is why, in describing this kind of believer, John puts together the commandments and faith as a unit controlled by the same verb—“to keep.” We are called and empowered by the gospel to keep the commandments of God and to keep the faith of Jesus. The everlasting gospel never separates faith from commandments or teachings, doctrines, and beliefs. We have to keep them all. Our mission includes all of them.

What does “keeping” mean? The original text uses a word with several meanings. None of them is legalistic or self-centered. Let me explain only two nuances to clarify this point.

First, “keeping” means “to watch over” in a protective sense. Imagine a mother with two children, one four years old and the other six. She works very hard in her eight-hour-a-day job. Now she is at home. Resting? That would be what she deserves, but she is working in the kitchen, preparing supper for the family. Her husband is not home yet. She puts the children nearby so they can play. While she works, she also keeps an eye on them. If there is an unusual noise, she immediately checks on the children. If there is no noise at all, only a long, quiet silence, she goes immediately to see them.

Our mother is keeping her children—protectively watching over them. Is she doing it because somebody is forcing her to do it? Is she doing it to be considered a good mother? Certainly not. She is doing it because of her love for the children. We keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus with the love of a



concerned and dedicated mother. We fulfill our mission with the dedication and faithfulness of a loving mother. Let no one tell me that this is a legalistic teaching or has the intention of attaining salvation by works.

Second, "keeping" means "to hold in custody." See now another scenario. Let us recall former times when there were no banks to put one's valuables in safety. Everyone had to keep them at home. When a person needed to travel, he chose either to take his valuables with him or leave them in the custody of a friend. There were robbers on the roads. If he left them with a friend, the friend put the valuables together with his own goods. He might even incur some extra expense to increase their security.

When the traveler returned, he would visit his friend to take back his valuables. The friend kept everything safe and nothing was lost. Can you imagine such a friend telling the traveler, "Since I had a burdensome responsibility and incurred extra expense as a result of helping you, part of the worth of your treasure is mine? It is the product of my own work."

No, he would never say that! He would not even think that way! Instead he receives his traveler friend with joy, knowing that all his work to keep his friend's treasure safe would not increase by a penny his own personal worth. The only thing that really increased was his friendship with the returned traveler friend.

This is how we keep God's commandments and the faith of Jesus—His teachings and doctrines. And this is the way we fulfill our mission: with the love of a concerned mother, with the dedication of a loyal friend. We don't do it to be good or to earn anything. We do it purely out of faith. Not an only-feelings-faith, but a faith which forms a personal intimacy with God and Christ through the Holy Spirit, a faith which is feelings and doctrines, a faith that takes us to every nation, and to every tribe, and to every tongue, and to every people of the whole earth to fulfill our mission.

Our mission cannot be separated from the experience of salvation and the keeping of the faith. It is a mission that shares prophetic knowledge, doctrinal understandings, insights in righteousness, and the everlasting gospel in the context of the end time, the judgment, the falling of Babylon and God's rejection of those who worship the beast and the false prophet.

Our mission is the way we respond to the war that Satan is fighting against the Remnant. We fulfill our mission out of our intimacy of faith with God and Christ. We fulfill our mission with total assurance of salvation.

Yes, we must have the assurance of salvation, but not because we keep the commandments of God, which we should surely do. We must have the assurance of salvation, but not because we have the testimony of Jesus or the Spirit of Prophecy, which we have and should follow. We must have the assurance of salvation only because "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come."<sup>57</sup> We must have the assurance of salvation only, and let me repeat it, only because the victory through the blood of the Lamb has already come. It is out of this experience of salvation that we fulfill our mission to "every nation, tribe, tongue, and people."<sup>58</sup>

### Endnotes

\*This was Dr. Veloso's Keynote Address delivered on April 16, 1992, at the International Adventist Theological Society Convention, Loma Linda, California. This convention was dedicated to the theme of "Salvation." It was slightly revised for publication.

- 1 Revelation 12:7.
- 2 Revelation 12:6, 13.
- 3 Revelation 12:17.
- 4 Revelation 12:10, NASB.
- 5 Revelation 12:11, NASB.
- 6 Revelation 12:12, NASB.
- 7 Revelation 13:8.
- 8 Revelation 13:4, 8, 14; see also 3:10; 6:10; 8:13; 11:10; 17:2, 8.
- 9 Revelation 12:12, NASB.
- 10 Revelation 7:1.
- 11 Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1911), p. 614.
- 12 Revelation 7:2.
- 13 Revelation 7:14.
- 14 Revelation 7:10, author's free translation.
- 15 Revelation 7:14.
- 16 Revelation 7:17.
- 17 Revelation 19:1, NASB.
- 18 Revelation 19:2, NASB.
- 19 Revelation 18:1.
- 20 Revelation 19:11-16.
- 21 *SDA Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7 (Washington, D.C: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1957), p. 852.

- 22 Revelation 19:2.  
 23 Revelation 19:4, NASB.  
 24 1 Timothy 1:15, NASB.  
 25 Romans 5:8, NASB.  
 26 1 Thessalonians 5:9, 10, KJV.  
 27 Romans 8:34, KJV.  
 28 Greek, *lutron*, Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45.  
 29 Greek, *antlutron*, 1 Timothy 2:6, KJV.  
 30 Revelation 12:10.  
 31 Revelation 12:11, 12.  
 32 Revelation 12:17.  
 33 Romans 5:1, 10.  
 34 2 Corinthians 5:14, NASB.  
 35 2 Corinthians 5:15, NASB.  
 36 Romans 6:3, 4, RSV.  
 37 Romans 6:6, KJV.  
 38 Romans 6:8, NASB.  
 39 Romans 6:11, 12.  
 40 Romans 5:1, 10.  
 41 Daniel 11:33; 12:3, RSV.  
 42 Daniel 12:1-3, RSV.  
 43 Daniel 12:3; 11:33, KJV.  
 44 Daniel 12:4.  
 45 Daniel 12:4.  
 46 Revelation 10:7, NASB.  
 47 Daniel 2:28, NASB.  
 48 Colossians 1:25-27, RSV.  
 49 Ephesians 6:19, RSV.  
 50 Revelation 14:6-11.  
 51 Matthew 24:14; Mark 13:10; Luke 21:31.  
 52 Revelation 14:6.  
 53 Revelation 14:12.  
 54 Revelation 12:17.  
 55 Romans 1:16, 17, NKJV.  
 56 Revelation 14:12, NKJV.  
 57 Revelation 12:10, NKJV.  
 58 Revelation 14:6, NKJV.

*Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 3/2 (1992):17-48.  
 Article copyright © 1992 by Gerhard F. Hasel.

## SALVATION IN SCRIPTURE\*

Gerhard F. Hasel

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Andrews University

### Introduction

The topic, "Salvation in Scripture," is extensive, covering nearly every page of the Word of God. It has far richer dimensions than we can imagine. Whenever we plumb the depths of this topic, we are renewed by the marvel of God's redeeming grace and His superabundant mercy.

I will not attempt to address the topic from existential, philosophical, or religious perspectives. That is outside the purview of this study. Scripture itself shall shine forth in its own beauty.

In Scripture the saving activity of God is manifested in known and specific places, from known and actual threats, at known and predicted times, and deriving from a known, loving and self-revealing God. He solves—in ways consistent with Himself and the plan devised in the triune Godhead—the known and real predicament of sin which originated with Satan and was entered into by mankind. Since space in a short essay is restricted, we make no attempt to be exhaustive. We present our topic under the headings: the "breadth of salvation," the "need of salvation" and the "way of salvation" as the Word of God highlights them.

We have to admit that from the biblical perspective it is impossible to define the breadth and depth and height of such a vast topic as salvation. Nevertheless, we need to make an attempt at defining the word "salvation."

The word "salvation" itself is derived from the Greek nouns *soteria* and *soterion*, both of which are rendered into English as

“salvation.” There is also the noun *soter*, belonging to the same word-group and meaning “savior.” These three nouns derive from the Greek word *sozo*, “to save.”<sup>1</sup>

The biblical concepts of salvation are expressed by means of more than a dozen additional Hebrew and Greek terms which do not need to be recited here.<sup>2</sup> They express ideas such as redemption, deliverance, reconciliation, restoration, vindication, rescue from distress, setting free, justification, life, and the like. We realize that the breadth of the salvation theme is more than hinted at when we begin to contemplate any one of the ideas expressed by these clusters of terms.

### The Breadth of Salvation

Salvation is a truth that relates to every other major truth in the Bible. Even when the terminology of salvation is not invoked, nearly every page of the Bible touches on the salvation theme.

Salvation is rooted and grounded in the Scriptural view of the Creator and creation. It reverses the fall of humankind and settles the sin problem. It is basic to the sanctuary (tabernacle/temple) in its functions and meaning. It gives meaning to the sacrificial system which God instituted and the atonement it provided in pre-New Testament times. Salvation involves God on the levels of Redeemer, Savior and Lord of life. It opposes self-salvation in any form and bases the covenant that God made with mankind on a sure footing. It provides the triune Godhead with the means of demonstrating divine love in its most complete form.

Salvation provides for humans release from guilt, peace of mind, forgiveness of sin, and new life in the here and now. It is the supreme demonstration of divine mercy and grace. It makes possible the way to be safe in Christ for the present and to look forward to a bright future. It reaches its final goal in the Second Coming of Christ and the earth recreated.

All institutions, practices and ideas contained in the Old and New Testaments originate in the saving acts of God. None of them was imagined, devised, or invented by human beings. Human invention is indeed known in the Bible, but time and again it is characteristic of man-made accommodation to heathen practices and foreign influences, issuing in tragic idolatry.

Every institution, figure and symbol mentioned in the Old Testament finds its fulfillment in Christ's birth, life, death, resurrection and heavenly ministry. Christ's vicarious and substitutionary death is central to the plan of salvation. He is our Substitute. His earthly life from His incarnation to His death, followed by His triumphant resurrection and His continuous heavenly ministry which entered into its final phase in 1844—all foretold by prophetic oracle—are vital aspects in the total view of salvation. These, and other majestic aspects of the divine salvific plan, are all part of the grand presentation of the biblical history of salvation into which we as believers are integrated and which climaxes in the triumphant return of Jesus, our Lord.

There will come a time at the conclusion of the millennium, as predicted in Scripture, when an eternity without tears, pain, suffering, and death will be secured for all the redeemed. Then sin will finally be eradicated by Him who was its Conqueror on the cross. Immortal life in full communion with the loving Father and the self-giving Son of God will be the happy state of all who have been saved by grace and have followed and obeyed the divine law which God gave as an expression of His love for the benefit of humankind.

### The Need of Salvation

Is there any need for salvation? While this question sounds preposterous or presumptuous to the believer, it raises issues that have concerned theologians, philosophers, and other deep thinkers from as far back as the beginning of history. The whole issue of salvation as a subject presupposes that something has gone wrong, and that humanity is in need of some unusual assistance to bring it out of its predicament on personal and corporate levels. Naturally, many different responses have been provided, some even denying any need. Some of these call for our attention.

### Reincarnation and Salvation

“New age” thinking is part of our society. Asian religions are penetrating many parts of the world as never witnessed in this century before. Parapsychology and renewed interest in the supernatural are in the forefront of much modern thought as not witnessed in this century before.

It is typical for non-Christian religions to see no need for salvation as understood in Christian teaching. Instead, they teach the reincarnation of the soul.

In most Asian religions humans are integrated into a world order that is cyclical and repetitive. This world order is a cycle of never ending repetitions of life cycles with a transmigration of the soul. In the teaching of these religions the soul never dies. Life is said to spiral to ever greater heights of existence, ending finally in a union with divinity.

Alternatively, in some forms of Asian religious thought, life is seen in pessimistic terms. Man never reaches the blessed state of union with divinity, despite all human efforts and man-made attempts. But although the immortal soul may not reach its highest levels of existence, it still engages in transmigrations from one being to another.

The concept of reincarnation or rebirth, usually associated with Asian religions, has gained massive popularity in the world today. While the idea of reincarnation originated at about 1,000 B.C. in northern India, in the United States and other Western countries, which find themselves in a post-Christian or secular humanistic setting, the belief in reincarnation has reached unprecedented popularity. Reincarnation is particularly promoted in the New Age Movement and is passed along with the resurgence of various forms of Asian religion.

Basic to all forms of reincarnation is the notion that humans are able to engage in an improvement of their previous existences without any divine support. The ideas of self-fulfillment, self-help and especially self-salvation are essential. There is no need of a savior, and no need for anyone, divine or human, to be the substitute for one's guilt and sin. The immortal soul<sup>3</sup> stands in no need of salvation.

In reincarnation thought humans pass from one previous existence to another and to successive ones without end. If the life of a given person was moral and upright, then the reincarnated life moves up on the ladder to a higher form of human existence in the next life and so on. "The ultimate objective of all reincarnation is to fuse with 'ultimate reality,' to merge with God, to become God."<sup>4</sup>

While reincarnation had an eastern origin, it was already

known among the ancient Greek philosophers. It became part of the Platonic philosophical tradition which in turn had a great influence on Western thought. "Plato, in the 5th-4th century B.C., believed in an immortal soul that participates in frequent reincarnations."<sup>5</sup> This supposed that the souls of human beings (and also of animals) had a prior existence before they were born into mortal bodies.

It is acknowledged today that belief in the preexistence of souls in Jewish and early Christian literature "exhibited influences from Platonic thought."<sup>6</sup>

It may be of interest to learn that reincarnation teaching emerged in the 18th century Western thought. In the 19th century the Asian-oriented and occult movement known as Theosophy, founded by Madame H. P. Blavatsky (1831-1891), promoted the teaching of reincarnation.<sup>7</sup> That theosophic thought is very much alive in our century is proven by Aldous Huxley's book, *The Perennial Philosophy* (1946) and by the incorporation of much theosophic thought into the current New Age Movement.

Basic to all views of reincarnation is "a monistic [that is, the view that reality is constituted of one principle], mystical, occult world view that promotes the essential divinity of humanity, [and] denies the notion of a sovereign personal God, . . ."<sup>8</sup> God is perceived—as in much modern liberal theology—as "ultimate reality."<sup>9</sup> Reincarnation offers the ultimate goal: absorption of the soul with deity.

The belief of reincarnation stands in contradiction to the biblical doctrine of salvation. Biblical Christianity is opposed to the reincarnational way of reality. By contrast Christianity asserts that humanity has fallen into sin and is unable to help itself, that there is, therefore, the need for salvation, that God provides atonement for sin, that forgiveness for sin brings freedom from guilt, and that the gift of justification by grace through faith is freely provided by Jesus Christ.

Reincarnationists do not need the once-for-all substitutionary death of Jesus Christ, the God-man, nor the mediating of His merits in the heavenly sanctuary as man's Mediator and High Priest. Reincarnationists do not need to inherit the everlasting kingdom.

They have a counterfeit way of viewing reality with an eternal soul which is contradicted by biblical revelation.

The disavowal of reincarnation on the part of the Christian is rooted in the biblical assertion that "it is appointed for men to die once, and after this comes judgment" (Heb 9:27, NASB). This means that the life lived as a human being is to be a moral life under the lordship of Jesus Christ. After death comes no reincarnation but a just divine judgment.

### The Fall and Salvation

**Origin of Sin.** We started with the question, Is there any need for salvation? We have observed that there are religions and philosophies without any need for salvation, at least any need which man cannot remedy. In contrast to these systems biblical revelation provides a radically different view of reality, of the state of humanity, and of the solutions to the human predicament.

God had created humankind in His own image and placed the first pair at the head of the created order (Gen 1:26-28). Mankind was created as the crown of creation and placed in a unique relationship to the loving Creator. Once man had been created God pronounced His creation to be "very good" (Gen 1:31).

Unspeakable tragedy beset this "very good" creation. It came from the Spoiler. Satan tempted Adam and Eve through a surrogate. Tragically, they fell into sin, rebelling against their benevolent Creator. With the fall of the first human pair, who had been created sinless and who had been warned not to eat the forbidden fruit, sin entered into this world (Gen 3), transforming humans and leaving its mark as well on the earthly creation. The animal world changed and the ground was cursed. For their own benefit Adam and Eve had to leave the garden in Eden.

The first pair had been given the freedom of choice. Ellen G. White states: "[God] did not deprive them of the power of eating the forbidden fruit. He left them as free moral agents to believe His word, obey His commandments, and live, or believe the tempter, disobey, and perish."<sup>10</sup> They chose the way of independence, disobedience, alienation, sin and death.

**Elements of Sin.** The narrative of the fall (Gen 3) leaves no doubt that all the essential elements of sin are present in this rich

chapter, without the use of any major biblical term for sin. Sin intruded our world through a deception perpetrated by Satan, employing the medium of the serpent. "Sin comes into the world not by a series of individual falls but by the one historical fall"<sup>11</sup> of Adam and Eve. With this act of rebellion at the beginning sin became a reality that "embraces all people without exception."<sup>12</sup>

In Genesis 3 sin is depicted basically as rebellion against God and His rulership as is shown in Adam and Eve's deliberate decision to go against the will of their Creator. Therefore, sin may be properly defined as disobedience to God's law, since the first pair refused to obey the divinely given commandment not to eat from a specified tree. Sin involves pride in that the first humans wished to be like God, to make their own moral choices on their own terms.

Sin shows up as distrust. Our first parents believed the voice that claimed their Maker had selfish reasons for not allowing them to know the difference between good and evil. The root of sin is covetousness and pride in that Adam and Eve allowed their minds to think they needed to know all that God knew. It is tinctured with discontent, because Adam and Eve were not satisfied with their assigned place as vicegerents over the earth and all that it contains.

God is not the originator of sin. He is not responsible for sin. Sin originated with Satan in heaven before man's creation.<sup>13</sup> "The one who practices sin is of the devil" (1 John 3:8, NASB).

Biblical root ideas that depict sin are rebellion against God, separation from God, disobedience to divine laws, pride of self, covetousness over against God, distrust in God, discontent, and the like. All of this is present in Genesis 3, the chapter that recounts the fall.

Sin is not simply a disease. A disease can be healed; and does not need a Savior. A disease needs a physician and medicine. A disease can be caused by viruses and other agents, but the figure does not imply what Scripture depicts time and again as the cause of sin. Thus, sin is more than a disease. Sin surely may cause disease, but it is wrongly defined as a disease.

Moreover, sin is not merely a frame of mind, but it surely has framed our mind. Sin is not just an attitude, but it has clearly determined our attitude. Sin is a violation of God's revealed will and word.

Anyone who has a soft view of sin, minimizing its dreadfulness, its perversion of things divine, and its pervasiveness will also have a soft view of salvation. Where there is a limited understanding of sin, there will be a limited understanding of salvation. When sin is comprehended in its monstrous evil dimensions, then and then alone can salvation be seen in its fullest and most glorious dimensions as it operates to solve all aspects of the human dilemma. Salvation will ultimately result in the destruction of sin and its power over human beings.

Sin touches every aspect of human life and existence. It is not simply a lack of something or a deficiency of some sort. Sin is more than a failure. Sin is rebellion against anything that derives from God. Sin is as far distant from God as is the east from the west.

**Terminology for Sin.** We are wise to refer briefly to the three major terms for sin in the Old Testament. The Hebrew term *cht'*, "to miss (a goal or mark), to be at fault, to offend, to be mistaken, to be found deficient or lacking, to be guilty, to sin,"<sup>14</sup> is the most widely employed root word for sin.

The second Hebrew root word for sin is *psh'*, "to rebel, to revolt."<sup>15</sup> It is often rendered "to transgress." The word-group which derives from this root is employed more than 135 times. It means transgression in the sense of "rebellious acts."

The third major Hebrew term for sin is the noun *'awôn*, "offense, iniquity, error," and reflects in its 231 usages an "activity that is crooked or wrong."<sup>16</sup>

There are another twenty or so Hebrew words used for sin in addition to these three major words and the groups of terms that derive from them.<sup>17</sup> These clusters of terms and their relations reveal that sin is not cast into the context of disease or the like in the Old Testament.

The New Testament writers used words for "sin" also in the sense of an "activity or stance which is opposed to God."<sup>18</sup> The major Greek term in the New Testament is *hamartia*. With its cognates it means "sin, sinners, to sin." Sin is separation from God. Sin, in the sense of alienation, is not comprehensive enough. Sin is also "lawlessness" (Greek *anomia*) as is maintained in 1 John 3:4.

There are about eight additional Greek terms which define sin in the New Testament such as *paraptoma*, "trespass;" *parabasis*,

"transgression;" *parakoe*, "disobedience;" *adikia*, "unrighteousness;" *asebeia*, "impiety, ungodliness;" *kakia*, "wickedness;" *poneros*, "evil;" and *opheiletes*, "offender."<sup>19</sup> It is striking that no term identifies sin with disease.

**All Have Sinned.** The consistent picture of the Bible is sin's universal extent. Adam and Eve became sinners through the historical act and fact of the fall. Through their rebellious act sin has come to all humans. In the letter to the Roman it is asserted: "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23, KJV). Scripture affirms, ". . . through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned" (Rom 5:12, NASB). The result of sin is death.

**Natural World Affected by Sin.** The effects of sin are not restricted to humanity. The entire natural world was touched. This picture is present in Genesis 3 in which the disobedience and rebellion of humans is shown to have fractured the created order and disrupted nature. The entire narrative from Genesis 3-11 recounts the growth of sin which finally led God to destroy mankind and the marred antediluvian world (Gen 6-9). Inspiration states: "The creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, . . . the creation itself will also be set free from its slavery to corruption . . . for we know that the whole creation groans and suffers . . ." (Rom 8:20-22, NASB). Even the natural creation waits for salvation and freedom from sin.

Inasmuch as sin has disrupted not only the individual but also mankind's relationship with God, with each other, and with the created world, there is great need for salvation from sin's pervasive domination. Divine salvation overcomes these sin-produced fractures, ruptures, disruptions, alienations and estrangements.

Thus, sin has both anthropological dimensions—dealing with the fallen, sinful, guilt-ridden state of mankind—and cosmological dimensions—dealing with a corrupted, suffering, agonizing world that is hurting from the increasing effects of sin.

The dimensions of sin and its results are universal and comprehensive. The dimensions of salvation, however, are even more so. We have seen time and again that salvation is no narrow concept; it is comprehensive and all-inclusive and superabundant.

### The Way of Salvation

Let us reflect on major aspects of the way of salvation itself as revealed in Scripture. When we speak of salvation in a general religious sense we must recall that the great religions of the past and present either do not have a concept of salvation or perceive salvation in ways that are opposed in the Bible. We will see that there is no other way to be saved except through Jesus Christ. "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12, NRSV).<sup>20</sup> Before we pursue this subject in some detail we will do well to address the issue of universalism.

### Universalism

Students of ancient Near Eastern religions are aware that Egypt, the very nation out of which God called the enslaved Israelites, did not have a concept of salvation. The ancient Egyptians did not even have a word for "salvation."<sup>21</sup> The Egyptians, whose pharaoh resisted so tenaciously the release of the Israelites, believed that humans are integrated in the existing world order itself.<sup>22</sup> At death the person becomes a star which joins the polar stars, in order to exist forever.<sup>23</sup> In ancient Egypt there was a universalism of after-life for all. Thus, universalism of future life is as old as ancient Egypt. Is there anything new under the sun?

We turn from the past pagan religion of the Egyptians to living religions in the world today. Whether eastern or non-eastern, most of them believe (in one form or another) that salvation is "the ultimate destiny of all humans (or of all living beings)."<sup>24</sup> We will return to this theme again, but let us pursue for the moment the concept of universal salvation which holds that all humans will be saved.

Belief in the universal salvation of all souls may be nearly as old as Christianity itself. Universal salvation of all humans has been associated with early Gnostic teachers, a heretical sect of the latter part of the 1st century A.D.

In Christianity the first clearly universalistic writings date from the early Greek Church fathers, most notably Clement of Alexandria, his student Origen, and Gregory of Nyssa. Origen held that even the devil may finally be saved. Origen's theology was

declared heretical in the fifth Ecumenical Council of A.D. 553. In medieval times universalism was hardly known or taught.

Martin Luther and John Calvin, the great Protestant reformers of the 16th century, roundly rejected the final salvation of all human beings. But some Anabaptists such as Hans Denck and Hans Hut promoted the teaching, but it did not become a major doctrine in later Anabaptist theology.

The teaching of the universal salvation of humans continued to be revived here and there during the 17th to the 19th centuries. Several universalist groups developed, particularly in England and the United States. By the time the 20th century arrived, universalism had become "a liberal faith."<sup>25</sup> It is manifested in the Unitarian Universalist tradition<sup>26</sup> and in other entities.

It may be a surprise to some that the Swiss theologian Karl Barth (1886-1968), a leader of the so-called liberal "dialectical theology" and the major proponent of neoorthodoxy<sup>27</sup> is credited with holding and promoting universal salvation for all human beings. "Although he did not teach final salvation directly, certain passages in his massive *Church Dogmatics* stress the irresistible triumph of God's grace. Barth was led in this direction," states D. B. Eller, "by the doctrine of double predestination. In Christ, the representative of all men, adoption and reprobation merge [argues Barth]. There are not two groups—one saved and the other damned. Mortal man may still be sinner, but the election of Christ demands a final judgment of salvation."<sup>28</sup>

Universalism has much appeal at present, even among certain otherwise respected theologians.<sup>29</sup> Biblical Christianity has to ask the question whether it is a Biblical teaching that all human being will in the end be saved.

Some churches believe that there is a "second chance" either during the millennium or at some other time. But does Scripture really teach that all human beings will be saved at some time or another?

### Scriptural Salvation

We must turn our attention now to the Bible in order to capture its view of salvation. We will first attempt to examine the

Pentateuch, the five books of Moses, to discover major biblical outlines of salvation.

### The Promised Savior (Gen 3:15)

The very chapter that recounts the fall of humankind in Genesis 3 contains the first promise of salvation. Genesis 3:15 reads within the context of the divine judgment upon the serpent,

And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel" (NASB).

This text has been called by the Church the "protevangelium," or the "first gospel," the "first good news."<sup>30</sup> It is the Magna Charta of salvation. This, however, is not the meaning which modern liberal, critical scholars cull from the text. There is considerable debate among historical-critical scholars as to its exact meaning, but they are agreed in rejecting the Messianic and prophetic nature of the promise of Genesis 3:15.<sup>31</sup>

Liberal, that is, historical-critical scholars prefer an interpretation that is etiological in nature. Genesis 3:15 is to explain some reality in the experience of human beings. This means that this text is non-Messianic; it has nothing to do with the Messiah or the like. Instead the "enmity" between the serpent and the woman merely describes etiological the origin of an alleged perpetual antagonism between humans and snakes!<sup>32</sup>

Many interpreters, on the other hand, understand this text to be Messianic in import and intention.<sup>33</sup> It had been supposed that only Christians understood this text to be Messianic. But this view can no longer be supported. It may be an exciting discovery that this first prediction in the Bible was understood Messianically even before the New Testament came into existence! The first translation of the Old Testament, known as the Septuagint (LXX, 3rd-2nd century B.C.), rendered this prediction in a Messianic sense.<sup>34</sup>

The Hebrew pronoun *hû'* is usually rendered "it" in English translations,<sup>35</sup> although there are some translations which render it with "he" (cf. NASB). The Septuagint translators rendered the Hebrew *hû'* with "he" (*autós* in Greek) even though the term refers back to the neuter noun "seed" (Greek, *spérma*) a situation which

would normally call for the neuter "it" (Greek, *autó*). This is the only time in the entire book of Genesis where the Septuagint translators render *hû'* in this manner. Evidently the Septuagint translators understood Genesis 3:15 to be Messianic in nature.<sup>36</sup>

If Genesis 3:15 is Messianic in its original intent,<sup>37</sup> then we have here a statement, the first statement in the Bible, of the Savior to come. The prediction that the "serpent" would bruise Him on the heel, that is, bruise the "seed of the woman," the Messiah that was to come and was to be born of a woman, indicates that He would be the Victor in the battle with Satan. Although hurt, the Messiah would ultimately destroy Satan, because He crushes the serpent's head.

Jesus is bitten in the heel with the deadly bite of the Serpent, Satan. The Savior dies in place of sinners, achieving salvation for humankind. And in so doing He crushes the Serpent's head. (The Hebrew has here the masculine singular suffix "you" [NASB], indicating that the serpent is not understood collectively). This gospel of salvation is provided as a prediction from the mouth of God Himself and presented to the first human pair in the garden in Eden after they had fallen into sin.

Genesis 3:15 reveals the central point of the plan of salvation: the substitutionary death of the Messiah who was to come. He would die in behalf of and for man; He would die in the place of man; He would die so that man through His death could have salvation and new life. There is but one possible way of salvation and that is through the One who is the "seed of the woman."

The view that the death of Christ is merely and only an example for man is not in harmony with the plain teaching of Scripture. The position that Christ is but a representative for man misses the most essential aspect of salvation as depicted throughout the Bible. Such limitations, based on a singular emphasis of Christ as representative of man, belittle Christ's achievements.

### Salvation by Substitution

The Bible teaches time and again that salvation is achieved by substitution. While we cannot give a comprehensive exposition of salvific substitution in the Bible, few major aspects must be noted.<sup>38</sup>

**The Sacrifice of Isaac (Gen 22:1-19).** Our attention goes first to



one of the greatest passages of world literature as revealed and preserved by God in Genesis 22.

The Lord gave a mind-boggling command to Abraham, "Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, . . . and offer him . . . as a burnt offering . . ." (Gen 22:2, NASB).

After three agonizing days and a final "good by," at the very point when Abraham seized the knife, the divine voice came again, stopping the father from executing what had already taken place proleptically in his heart. As Abraham looked up, he saw a ram caught in the thicket by its horns. Then the text reads, "He took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering *in the place of* his son" (vs. 13, NASB). The ram died as a substitute for his son. It was slain "in place of"<sup>39</sup> his son. It was slain so that the son could live.

"The victim was a substitute,"<sup>40</sup> pointing forward to the great Substitute to come. Paul seems to refer to this experience in Genesis when he writes that God, the Father, "did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us" (Rom 8:32, NRSV).<sup>41</sup>

**Sacrificial Laying on of Hands.** Detailed instruction for the burnt offering in connection with the laying on of hands is provided in Leviticus 1. The burnt offering was the basic offering in the Hebrew sacrificial system. The substitutionary idea is clearly expressed in the instruction: "And he shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, that it may be accepted *for him* to make atonement on his behalf" (Lev 1:4, NASB). The two little words "for him" render the Hebrew text in a literal fashion.<sup>42</sup> The words "for him," also rendered "on his behalf,"<sup>43</sup> present themselves as a clear indication of substitution in the regulations of the daily sacrifices in the book of Leviticus.

We may recognize also that in the laying on of hands<sup>44</sup> on the head of the sacrificial victim the offerer indicates that it is his substitute.<sup>45</sup> "The idea that comes to expression in the laying on of hands is thus that of substitution (see Lev 16:21-22; 24:14 . . .)."<sup>46</sup> While there are alternative suggestions, there are numerous scholars to the present who maintain that there is substitution intended in the gesture of laying on of hands on the sacrificial victim.<sup>47</sup> A. Rodriguez has concluded from his investigation of sacrifices and the idea of substitution that "in the expiatory sacrifices the idea of

transfer of sin is basic, and that it is always accompanied by the idea of sacrificial substitution."<sup>48</sup>

We must note that the sacrificial services instituted by God in the Hebrew cultic system, and particularly the sacrificial animal which died as a substitute for the offerer, could not be an adequate substitute. Sacrificial animals were but powerful pointers to the real, future Sacrifice that was to come to bring atonement once-and-for-all for the sins of humanity. "Now once at the consummation He [Christ] has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Heb 9:26, NASB).

**The Suffering Servant's Vicarious Death (Isa 53).** The book of Isaiah has a passage on the Suffering Servant (Isa 52:13-53:12) in which the Servant functions as a vicarious substitute.<sup>49</sup> It is clearly expressed in Isaiah 53:6: "But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him" (NASB). One of the famous commentators of our time has stated quite unabashedly that the revolutionary new idea is that "the substitutionary or atoning power of human suffering is discovered in a . . . human being whose deforming affliction brings to him rejection and abhorrence."<sup>50</sup> Scripture certainly informs us in this chapter that it is a human Servant that is to suffer in behalf of humankind and in their stead. Verse 5 reads that He was crushed "for our iniquities" with the result that "by His scourging we are healed" (vs. 5d, NASB). In verse 11 the NRSV reads faithfully reflecting the Hebrew text, "The righteous one, my servant, shall make many righteous and he shall bear their iniquities." Christ is the Sin-bearer.

The Old Testament pointed forward to the Lamb to come that would be led to the slaughter in behalf and in place of the sinner. In Isaiah 53:5 the reader is told that the Servant "was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities . . . And by His scourgings we are healed" (NASB).

The last phrase is particularly interesting. This phrase needs to be rendered with precision on the basis of the original text, "In exchange for<sup>51</sup> his stripes [Hebrew *bchbrtw*] we were healed."<sup>52</sup> There is no doubt here on the basis of the sentence structure that substitution is intended. The Servant is to suffer vicariously so that "we" sinners "in exchange for" or "at the cost of" his stripes/wounds are healed.

Thus, Isaiah 53:5 contains full-dimensional salvation from Him who bore our punishment vicariously so that "we" are freed from the punishment and wrath of God. "He bore the suffering in their place."<sup>53</sup> The healing "we" experience is the salvation from the pain, suffering, misery, anguish, alienation, separation and the like caused by sin ("transgressions" and "iniquities").

We have not exhausted the full dimensions of salvation through the Servant of the Lord in Isaiah 53. There is much more in Isaiah 53 that deserves our attention.<sup>54</sup> But the picture of substitution and vicarious suffering is already established and abundantly clear. Through the Servant of the Lord there will be salvation, and through none other. John 1:29 rings in our ears, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!" (KJV).

These are but a few indicators of the Old Testament teaching of salvation as achieved by substitution. Man is unable to save himself. In biblical faith there can be no self-induced salvation; no salvation can be achieved by man on his own. Salvation is a gift of God, bestowed upon man by One who is the full and complete Substitute for him.

**Jesus' Death a Ransom for Many.** Our Lord explains that the Son of Man will "give his life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45, NRSV).<sup>55</sup> Our first interest concerns the expression "for many." It is an expression used in the New Testament in connection with the saving work of Jesus Christ (cf. Mark 10:45/Matt 20:28; Mark 14:24/Matt 26:28; Rom 5:15, 16; Heb 9:28). The statement "for many" in the salvific activity of Christ expresses inclusively that Jesus saving work includes all, the entire human family.<sup>56</sup> It is generally agreed that Mark 10:45 (and 14:24) is based on Isaiah 53.<sup>57</sup> Isaiah 53 speaks five times of the "many" and forms the background also of this saying from Jesus in Mark 10:45. "The idea of ransom (*lutron*) alludes to the offering for sin in Isaiah 53:10, . . ."<sup>58</sup>

What does the word "ransom" mean in this key word of Jesus? Much has been written on this word.<sup>59</sup> "Ransom" was a word used for the price paid to free a prisoner of war or a slave or someone under the sentence of death."<sup>60</sup> The context of this saying of Jesus

reveals that Jesus pays the price of salvation from sin and the way of life rooted in sin.

In Mark 10:45 Jesus makes clear beyond the shadow of a doubt that he takes the role of the Servant of Isaiah 53, and that he explains the meaning of his death. His death has to be understood as a ransom-price which he paid "for many" in the sense of all humanity.

F. Büchsel shows that the word "for" (Greek, *anti*) in the phrase "for many" (Mark 10:45) refers to substitution. He states that "*anti* means 'for' in the sense of 'in place of' rather than 'to the advantage of'."<sup>61</sup> Thus, the word "for" (*anti*) has here "substitutionary force."<sup>62</sup> It is argued that "even if the *anti* be translated 'to the advantage of,' the death of Jesus means that there happens to Him what would have happened to the many. Hence He takes their place."<sup>63</sup> Evidently Jesus Himself teaches that He would die a substitutionary death, that He would die in place of humankind, paying the price that no human could pay for his or her sin. Christ's death in place of humankind is vicarious, substitutionary, voluntary, and all-encompassing.

**Jesus' Blood of the Covenant.** Shortly before the crucifixion, Jesus explained even more explicitly the meaning of His death. In the institution of the Lord's Supper, Jesus said, "This is my blood of the covenant,"<sup>64</sup> which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matt 26:28, NRSV). This saying is also found in Mark 14:24.

Once more Jesus used the word "many" in the same inclusive sense of the totality of all mankind that embraces many individuals.<sup>65</sup> It has the same intention as in Mark 14:24.

The word "for" in Mark 14:24 is the Greek term *hupér*, meaning "on behalf of" when followed as it is in this text (cf. 1 Cor 11:24; Luke 22:20) by a genitive.<sup>66</sup> The word "for" in Matthew 26:28 translates the preposition *perí* which is said to be synonymous to *hupér* in meaning.<sup>67</sup> The usage of the other preposition (*peri*) for the word "for" in the Gospel of Matthew may be caused by its reflection to the wording of the Servant of the Lord in Isaiah 53:4<sup>68</sup> where it is stated in the Septuagint that He suffered pain "for" us.

What does Jesus Christ say regarding what He does in behalf of or in place of the "many"? He states, "My blood . . . poured out

for many for the forgiveness of sins." In a substitutionary fashion our Lord shed His blood in order that mankind can gain forgiveness of sins. What a mind-boggling revelation? By the shedding of blood, by His own death, in behalf for and in place of sinners, our Lord has made expiation for sin so that the sins of repentant sinners may be forgiven. Every time a follower of Jesus partakes of the Lord's Supper he/she is reminded that sins are forgiven by no other means than by Jesus' sacrificial death in which He chose to shed His blood in our behalf. "Without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins" (Heb 9:22, RSV).

In view of this clear expression of the way of salvation, how is it possible for some preachers, theologians, and others to claim that the shedding of blood was not needed for salvation? The salvific purpose of blood has its greatest significance in relation to communicating the soteriological purpose of the death of Jesus Christ. Such expressions as the "blood of Christ" (1 Cor 10:16; Eph 2:13; Heb 9:14), "Jesus Christ . . . His blood" (1 Pet 1:2), the "blood of Jesus" (1 John 1:7; Heb 10:19), the "blood of the Lord" (1 Cor 11:27) and the "blood of the Lamb" (Rev 7:14; 12:11) express the violent death of the Savior. We can hardly conceive that this interest in the "blood of Jesus Christ" is focussed on the material substance of His blood. The emphasis rests forcefully on His shed and poured out blood in the sense of the giving up of His life on the one hand and the violent taking of His life by crucifixion on the other.

The "blood of Christ" which was thus shed—the life was thus given—assures the gift of the "new covenant" recorded in Jeremiah 31:31-34 where the Lord promised to write His law on the hearts of human beings and to forgive their sins. Substitution in the Bible means that Jesus dies in the place of human sinners, so that they go free from the condemnation and guilt of sin and its results. But saved and forgiven sinners do not simply go free to live and to do as they wish. Human beings who are saved by Jesus' own death are summoned to join Jesus, to live with Jesus, to be part of His family and to live in harmony with His law of liberty. The glory of salvation in the Bible is linked to the blood of Christ and to holy living. The saved are set free and empowered to do the will of the Master by the enabling power of the Holy Spirit. He writes His law on their

hearts, enabling them to be genuine new covenant believers and doers.

**Other NT Passages.** The message of Christ death "for our sins" is pervasive in the writings of Paul. He affirms that Jesus "was handed over to death for our trespasses and he was raised for our justification" (Rom 4:25, NRSV). He explains that God did not withhold his Son but "gave him up for all of us" (Rom 8:32, NRSV) and gratefully acknowledged that Christ chose to "[give] himself up for me" (Gal 2:20, NRSV). This theme is even more pronounced in Ephesians: "Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" (Eph 5:2, NRSV).

The Pauline emphasis is that Jesus Christ takes the place of every sacrifice of the Old Testament. For example: "For our paschal lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed" (1 Cor 5:7, NRSV). Christ's death was the death of the true paschal lamb, an antitypical Passover sacrifice, through which we may have life. His death is also seen as a new covenant sacrifice in 1 Corinthians 11:25.<sup>69</sup> In some passages Christ's death is presented as an expiatory sacrifice (Rom 8:3, 4; 2 Cor 5:21) which means that He is the antitype of the "sin offering" (Hebrew, *chattat*, Lev 4:3, 14).<sup>70</sup> He is also the Day of Atonement sacrifice as Romans 3:25 seems to imply.<sup>71</sup> Here Christ Jesus is "put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood" (Rom 3:25, NRSV). The new rendering, "sacrifice of atonement," stands for the Greek term *hilasterion*, often rendered as "propitiation" (NASB, etc.).<sup>72</sup>

These passages, to which many others could be added, communicate that Jesus Christ has accomplished an atoning work "for us." In Christ all the Old Testament cultic sacrifices have found their fulfillment. He is the Passover sacrifice, the sin offering, the new covenant sacrifice and the Day of Atonement sacrifice. Thus all Old Testament cultic celebrations are superseded, the Old Testament sanctuary/temple services have been fulfilled, and Christ is now able to engage in His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary as Mediator, Priest and High Priest "for us" (Heb 9:24; 1 Tim 2:5).

### Salvation and Atonement

Few teachings of Christian faith have caused greater diversity, even contradiction, than that of atonement. Over the centuries famous theologians have developed various theories of atonement.

These will not have the focus of our discussion at this time. We will first review some key points of salvation in the biblical record. We will then relate this biblical view to one of the most widely held atonement theory held today.

### Salvation Through Jesus Christ Alone

**God Provides Salvation.** There is a comprehensive sentence about salvation in Psalm 35:3: "I am your salvation" (NASB) as it is literally translated. The Psalm reveals in this proclamation of salvation<sup>73</sup> that the great "I Am" is the One from whom salvation (Hebrew, *yeshu'ah*) derives.<sup>74</sup> This Old Testament "I am" (Hebrew, *'ant*) saying is identical in meaning with Jonah's confession in the belly of the great fish where, at the end of his rope, he cried out, "Salvation is from the LORD" (Jonah 2:9, NASB). The noun in Jonah 2:9 is *yeshû'atah* and is properly translated as "salvation,"<sup>75</sup> although some soften its meaning in English.<sup>76</sup> Jonah expresses the idea that the Lord is the *source* of salvation, and that He has the *strength* of salvation, and that He is the only One who can *grant* salvation.<sup>77</sup>

**Jesus Christ: Humanity's Only Savior and Redeemer.** Every foreshadowing, every type, every prophecy, every promise made in the Old Testament about the Messiah-Savior to come is affirmed in Jesus Christ and His saving work. In fact it was none other than Christ Himself who showed the wavering and wondering disciples all things about Himself. On the way to Emmaus Jesus Christ, the risen Lord, showed His disciples "beginning with Moses and with all the prophets . . . the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures" (Luke 24:27, NASB).

Jesus proclaims, "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6, KJV; cf. Isa 43:11). Thus, there is only one single way to reach God. While it may be true that all roads lead to Rome, there is but one way that leads to Heaven. It is the small and narrow way, the way Jesus our Lord has walked. But in the larger sense He Himself is the Way of God.

In the same passage (John 14:6) Jesus make one of his great "I Am" (Greek, *ego eimi*) statements of self-revelation: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me" (NASB). There is but one way for humans to the

Father, and it is "through" Christ. Whoever goes another way misses the goal which is sought: Jesus is the only way to God, because He is the supreme Revealer and Savior in whom the truth and the life, the reality of God in man, has taken shape in His saving grace.<sup>78</sup>

There is an exclusivity in the self-claim by Jesus that He is "the Way." If He is "the Way," then it has to be concluded that there is no other way. Jesus is "the Way" to the Father. Jesus is the way to salvation.

Jesus is the only Way by which we can be received into Heaven when He returns in the Parousia, with all His holy angels (Matt 24:30, 31). We have to think of the affirmation in John 14 where Jesus says, "in my Father's house are many dwelling places" (vs. 2, NASB). These words are definitely eschatological, looking forward to the Second Coming. Verse 3 reads, "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself" (NASB).

**No Other Name.** Our final attention must be devoted to a major statement from the apostle Peter: "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12, NASB). It has been recognized that "salvation could not be gained through Judaism but only through Jesus."<sup>79</sup>

Peter speaks of a *sola Christi*, "Christ alone." Peter's statement sums up the whole message of the Bible. Here is the way another well known commentator puts it, "And from the once despised but now glorified Jesus, and from Him alone, could true salvation come—not merely healing from a physical affliction, . . . but from the spiritual disease of sin and deliverance from the coming judgment as well . . . No such deliverance could be hoped for from any other quarter or by the power of any other name: the name of Jesus, . . ."<sup>80</sup>

The only conclusion to be drawn is that Peter "makes an absolute and universal claim for the Christian message of salvation."<sup>81</sup> This salvation includes both physical and spiritual salvation.<sup>82</sup>

The word "must" in the last phrase ("By which [name] we must be saved") is very specific in the Greek language, *dei*, "must."<sup>83</sup> The phrase does not say that "we can be saved." This would imply

that humans have the innate or inherent ability to achieve salvation. Neither does the phrase say that we “may be saved.” That would communicate uncertainty. The text is specific, definitive and exclusive. “The word *must* reveals a divine necessity which God has established, according to his plan and decree, to save us through the person and work of Jesus Christ.”<sup>84</sup> The word “must” as it relates to salvation expresses in a most forceful way the divine intention to save mankind in this and in no other way. Humanity “has no recourse to salvation other than through the Son of God.”<sup>85</sup> Jesus Christ is the only, the unique Savior. Scripture maintains that there is no salvation outside of Jesus Christ.

#### Salvation and the Moral Influence Theory

There is one theory of the atonement (among the many) which has gained a very wide following in certain circles—and to some degree even among some Adventists—in a variety of forms. It is known in the history of Christian thought as the “moral influence theory.” Historically, it goes back centuries to Peter Abelard (1079-1142). Some people refer to it as the “subjective view” of the atonement.<sup>86</sup>

**Origin.** Peter Abelard has been depicted as a precursor of modern free thought with a “spirit [that] was essentially critical.”<sup>87</sup> He approached faith with new methods and “sought to understand faith by the use of reason.”<sup>88</sup> With his emphasis on reason it is no surprise that his views on the Trinity were not acceptable. They were condemned at the Council of Soissons in A.D. 1121 because of their affinity with Sabellianism, an antitrinitarian theory. Twenty years later several of his propositions selected from his works were condemned at the Council of Sens (A.D. 1141).

**The Theory’s Appeal.** The “moral influence theory” in its various shapes has great appeal. Professor Leon Morris notes that its attraction is “especially among scholars of the liberal school.”<sup>89</sup>

The theory is built on the love of God as the overarching theme. It holds that “when we look at the cross we see the greatness of the divine love. This delivers us from fear and kindles in us an answering love. We respond to love with love and no longer live in selfishness and sin.”<sup>90</sup> The drawing power in this theory is love.

Love is made the principle thought regarding God and Christ. The believer is seen as a friend of God and no longer as a “servant.”

There are various ways of expressing the essential idea of the “moral influence theory.” But in whatever way it is expressed, it typically denies the atonement, the substitutionary death of Christ, the idea of His death constituting a sacrifice in behalf and in place of mankind, and the like. Often these biblical pictures are viewed as primitive ideas from the past that many Bible writers still held, but which we moderns can now shed in our advanced age.

The essence of the “moral influence theory” is the manifestation of love in the death of Christ that moves the sinner to repentance and faith as well as higher moral achievements. “If God will do all that for us, we say, then we ought not continue in sin. So we repent and turn from it and are saved by becoming better people. The thrust in all this is on personal experience.”<sup>91</sup> This subjective aspect is important and has its place in a full view of the atonement.

Regardless what shape the “moral influence theory” takes, however, the death of Christ has no effect outside the person who responds to it. This is the reason why the “moral influence theory” is considered to be subjective in nature.

**Evaluation of the Theory.** There are various basic problems with this widely held theory in its various forms. We cannot discuss all difficulties, but some points that pertain to the subject of salvation in Scripture need to have our attention.

1. There is such an emphasis on love, on a particular kind of love, that there is no longer any room for the Biblical concept of judgment, destruction of the sinner, and the wrath of God.<sup>92</sup>

The theme of the wrath of God is denied its proper place by the adherents of this theory. This theme needs careful study throughout Scripture, but we can only make brief reference to it here. The “wrath of God” (Rom 1:18; Eph 5:6; Col 3:6) can hardly be dismissed as a reflection of primitive thinking, an accommodation of God, an outdated view of God, or even extra-biblical thinking that crept into the Bible.

The first Christian heretic, Marcion (2nd century), wanted to reshape the entire Bible into a shortened form consisting of a few New Testament books, because he wished to exclude all the books that depicted a God of wrath. Ever since, Christians have had to

confront—from time to time—heretical notions that would shape the Bible according to special interests, impressions, notions, biases and philosophical concerns.

But the wrath of God is an extensive theme of the Bible and cannot be eliminated from its portrayal of God in the salvation and atonement process.<sup>93</sup> It simply will not do to assign it to a more primitive or to an older form of understanding and presenting God which is superseded by a picture that only knows a God who loves. Such simplistic attempts are many and continue into the present. They are not faithful to the biblical testimony at hand.

In the Bible divine wrath is hardly a mere figure of speech which expresses human emotions which are ascribed to God. If the picture of the wrath (not anger) of God is indeed a reality in the being of God, there is, however, no evidence that it will be expressed in eternity. It is precipitated by sin. "If there were no sin there would be no wrath."<sup>94</sup>

The Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ makes it clear that there is a separation of mankind into two groups. The fall has made all humanity into "children of wrath" (Eph 2:3), or sinners. But repentant sinners are freed from the wrath of God when they accept the divine salvation Christ achieved on the cross (1 Thess 1:10; 5:9; Rom 5:9). They are forgiven sinners and function as redeemed believers no more under God's wrath.

The second group consists of the impenitent who remain under the wrath of God as "children of wrath" because they despise the divine kindness of salvation (Rom 2:4, 5, 8; 9:22, 23) and remain "disobedient" (Eph 5:6; Col 3:6). This language is not primitive or antiquated. It truly reflects the two groups of human beings.

There will be a time "when the wrath to come" (1 Thess 1:10) will be manifested in the eschatological judgment on impenitent sinners. The "wrath to come" is not an impersonal process of cause and effect whereby sinners, left to themselves, so it is claimed by supporters of the "moral influence theory," come to self-destruction.<sup>95</sup> To the contrary, the New Testament fully describes God exercising His control in the end by destroying Satan and the wicked who have followed him.

The manifestation of God's wrath is not the "irrational passion of anger,"<sup>96</sup> nor is it vindictive. But it is God's expression of

His holy judgment on sin, its power and ugliness. This destruction is the "alien" act of God (Isa 28:21). A God who does not deal with the sin problem and its final eradication is a failure.

God's wrath is to be understood in relationship to his love and holiness. Both love and holiness are essential characteristics of His being. Therefore, wrath is the expression of God toward that which is opposed to His love and holiness. Unless wrath is a part of God's reality, there is no need for atonement and substitution and the cross the way the Bible presents it. This is why liberal theology has changed and reinterpreted all of these essential biblical ideas, emptying them of their essential contents as biblical revelation presents them.

2. The New Testament concept of "propitiation" as expressed by the Greek *hilaskomai* word-group goes beyond love to another dimension of the atonement achieved by God through Christ, namely divine wrath (Rom 3:25; 1 John 2:2; 4:10). The love of God certainly shines through the sacrifice of Christ on the cross at every stage. It surely speaks of love to arouse love in the believers.<sup>97</sup> It has been shown, however, that the "propitiation" word-group includes that idea of averting the "wrath of God."<sup>98</sup> This "is not the pagan idea that an angry god may be appeased by sacrifice: for God himself provides the means of propitiation and justification."<sup>99</sup>

3. The entire biblical concept of an objective, substitutionary death of Christ in behalf of man argues against the "moral influence theory" and its adequacy for explaining what was achieved in the sacrificial death of Christ. Christ died on the cross for more reasons than just to be an example. "If Christ was not actually doing something by his death, then we are confronted with a piece of showmanship, nothing more."<sup>100</sup>

Christ really died in the place of and in behalf of sinners regardless of how sinners relate to it. In Mark 14:24 Jesus provides the words of institution of the Lord's Supper by saying, "This is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many" (NRSV). This text has been analyzed previously, and we have seen its importance for the idea of substitution. It has been shown that "Jesus expresses with the phrase ["for many"] that he understands himself as the one who dies the substitutionary death of the Servant of God [of Isa 53]."<sup>101</sup>

The passage in Matthew 20:28 speaks of "the Son of Man [who] came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many" (NRSV). The substitutionary death concept is present once again<sup>102</sup> as we had seen above in the ransom idea. The "many" refer once more to the whole of humankind without limitation<sup>103</sup> as is also the case in Isaiah 53:12 which is referred to also in John 1:29. Christ died for all ("many" in its technical sense) but unfortunately only a "few" accept what He did for them.

4. If Christ died on the cross as merely an example or representative so that man may emulate His love (as held by those who hold in some form or another to the "moral influence theory"), then the entire biblical idea of an objective death of Christ, needed to solve the sin problem, is nullified. The real essence of the death of Christ is His vicarious and substitutionary work as the very God-man, living the obedient life we ought to live and dying the death as the penalty for sin we ought to die. His achievements in His life and death are ours by faith in Him. Christ did what no human being could ever do.

### Conclusions

Genuine Bible-believing Christians stay faithful to the total teachings of the Bible which are in all their variety and richness harmonious and fully inspired. They will vigorously resist the temptation at reductionism. They will refuse any reinterpretation of biblical evidence on salvation. No one can improve on what God has revealed through His servants, the prophets, and by Christ in the Word of God.

A comprehensive and full biblical picture of salvation and atonement of which we could give only glimpses in this essay contains (1) an objective atonement achieved by God in Christ's sacrificial death on the cross in which (2) He vicariously died in behalf of all humankind as (3) our Substitute, in our place, (4) through which He propitiated by His blood Divine justice—something no human could ever achieve by himself and live on. (5) Christ provided the supreme demonstration of the love of God which fills us with gratitude and wonder at His mercy and grace. (6) Christ also provided through His substitutionary sacrifice the means for humankind to live in harmony with God and fellow human beings.

Christ—by means of his life, death and resurrection—created the possibility for humans to live victoriously in freedom from sin in submission to our loving God under the power of the Holy Spirit. In Christ's ongoing heavenly ministry our High Priest continues to forgive us when we fall into sin, confess and repent. He does so on the basis of His blood that He shed for us on Calvary. Thus, there is no need for any believer to be disheartened, but all of us can rejoice in Christ for the "better hope" that He has brought about and through which "we draw near to God" (Heb 7:19, NASB). When God's true children are judged in the pre-Advent judgment, they will not experience divine wrath but divine vindication because of what Christ has achieved in the past and in their lives. They rely in everything on Christ and the Power through which He was able to achieve.

Praise be to God our Father who has given His only begotten Son in behalf of us and for us, so that we, all of us, have the privilege to be in possession of salvation in Jesus through His blood. We praise also Jesus Christ through whose name we "must be saved," since "there is salvation in no one else" (Acts 4:12, NASB). All glory belongs to Him. We rejoice in our God and in our Lord Jesus Christ and in the Holy Spirit who applies the provisions of salvation daily anew to us. Maranatha!

### Endnotes

\*This was Dr. Hasel's Presidential Address delivered on April 17, 1992, at the International Adventist Theological Society Convention, Loma Linda, California. It was slightly revised for publication.

1 J. Schneider and C. Brown, "Redemption," *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. C. Brown (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1978), 3:216.

2 G. G. O'Collins, "Salvation," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 5:907, 910; J. F. A. Sawyer, *The Semantics of Biblical Research: New Methods of Defining Hebrew Words for Salvation* (London: SCM Press, 1972).

3 Oscar Cullmann, *Immortality of the Soul and Resurrection of the Dead* (London, 1958); K. Stendahl, ed., *Immortality and Resurrection* (New York, 1965).

4 R. M. Enroth, "Reincarnation," *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1985), p. 926.

5 "Reincarnation," *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica: Macropaedia* 15th ed. (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1980), 8:488.

6 S. Kent Brown, "Souls, Preexistence of," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 6:161.

7 C. T. J., "Theosophy," *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica: Macropaedia* (15th ed.; Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1980), 18:276-80.

8 Enroth, p. 926.

9 Typical for a giant among the liberal theologians of the twentieth century in conceptualizing God as "Ultimate Reality," is Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951-63).

10 Ellen G. White, *The Story of Redemption* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald Publ. Assoc., 1947), p. 37.

11 G. W. Bromiley, "Sin," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 4:519.

12 Ibid.

13 On the mystery of the origin of sin, see the excellent chapter in Ellen G. White, *The Story of Redemption*, pp. 13-19.

14 William L. Holladay, Jr., ed., *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971), p. 100.

15 Holladay, p. 300.

16 Holladay, p. 268.

17 See Robin C. Cover, "Sin, Sinners (OT)," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed., David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 6:32.

18 E. P. Sanders, "Sin, Sinners (NT)," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed., David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 6:40.

19 See W. Bauder, "Sin," *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1978), 3:573-578.

20 There is a pervasive trend in recent years to argue that salvation can be found in all the world's religions. Theologians among Catholics are Hans Küng of Germany and David Tracy of the USA. A recent book following this direction is by Francis A. Sullivan, S. J., *Salvation Outside the Church? Tracing the History of the Catholic Response* (New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1992). Among non-Catholics there are such names as Paul Knitter and John Hick. Recently the Canadian theologian (once a conservative evangelical but on the move to the left) Clark H. Pinnock holds in his new book, *A Wideness in God's Mercy: The Finality of Jesus Christ in a World of Religions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), that there are "holy pagans" who are saved without having knowledge of the divine revelation given in Scripture.

21 Günter Lanczkowski, "Heil und Erlösung. I. Religionsgeschichtlich," *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, ed. Gerhard Müller (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1985), 14:606.

22 See Siegfried Morenz, *Ägyptische Religion* (Stuttgart: J. C. B. Mohr, 1960); Helmer Ringgren, *Die Religionen des Alten Orients* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1987), pp. 11-63.

23 The following sentence is found in the Pyramid Texts 878: "You great one among the intransitory stars, you will not go down forever." Cited in Ringgren, p. 61.

24 Ninian Smart, "Soteriology," *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eliade (New York/London: Macmillan, 1987), 13:422.

25 D. B. Eller, "Universalism," *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1985), p. 1129.

26 The "Universalist Unitarian Association" was founded in 1961 and was made up of ca. 70,000 member in around 400 congregations.

27 Another key member of the 20th century theological movement known as neoorthodoxy is Emil Brunner (1889-1966).

28 Eller, p. 1129.

29 See above Pinnock's book, *A Wideness in God's Mercy*, in which he, while opening the door for "holy pagans" to be saved without knowledge of biblical revelation, argues against universalism.

30 E. W. Hengstenberg, *The Christology of the Old Testament* (reprint of the 1854 ed.; MacDill AFB, FL: MacDonald Publishing Company, n.d.), pp. 4-16.

31 For example, M. Görg, "Das Wort zur Schlange (Gen 3,14f.): Gedanken zum sogenannten Protevangelium," *Biblische Notizen* 19 (1982) 121-40; A. Szabo, "Nunquam Retrorsum: Zur Frage des Protevangeliums: Gen 3,15," *Judaica* 35 (1979) 120-24; Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1984), 258-61, with literature.

32 Westermann, p. 259.

33 See such commentators as H. C. Leupold, Derek Kidner, Gerhardus Vos, G. Ch. Aalders, H. G. A. Stigers, and V. P. Hamilton.

34 R. A. Martin, "The Earliest Messianic Interpretation of Genesis 3:15," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 84 (1965) pp. 425-27.

35 See M. Woudstra, "Recent Translations of Genesis 3:15," *Calvin Theological Journal* 6 (1971) pp. 194-203.

36 See above Martin and now also Walter C. Kaiser, *Toward and Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing Company, 1978), pp. 36-37.

37 We do not even need to follow William S. LaSor, "Prophecy, Inspiration, and *Sensus Plenior*," *Tyndale Bulletin* 29 (1978) pp. 49-60, esp. 56-57, who sees here a *sensus plenior* application.

38 See the excellent dissertation by Angel Rodriguez, *Substitution In the Hebrew Cultus* "Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series" (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1980) and his essay "Salvation by Sacrificial Substitution" in this issue of *JATS* 3/2 (1992). I have been much benefitted by these studies.

39 Some versions render the Hebrew *tachat*, "in place of" (so also L. Köhler and W. Baumgartner, *Hebräisches und Aramäisches Lexikon zum Alten Testament* [Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1990], 4:1587), with "instead of" (cf. NRSV) which may be somewhat less precise. Whether one or the other rendering is selected, the idea of substitution is present.

40 D. Kidner, *Genesis* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1967), 144.

41 So Claus Westermann, *Genesis* "BKAT I/16" (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1979), p. 447.

42 The Hebrew has the preposition *lō* which contains the personal pronominal suffix *ō*. This is literally rendered with "for him."

43 A. Noordtjij, *Leviticus* "Bible Student's Commentary" (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982), 32; G. J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus* "New International Commentary on the Old Testament" (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), p. 55.

44 The literature on the subject of laying on of hands in the OT is rich. The following recent publications provide a full view of current opinions, R. Péter, "L'imposition des mains dans l'Ancien Testament," *Vetus Testamentum* 27 (1977), 48-55; F. Stolz, "smk, stützen," *Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament*, eds. E. Jenni und C. Westermann (Zurich: Ev. Verlag, 1977), 2:160-62; B. J.



van der Merwe, "The Laying on of the Hands in the OT," *Die Ou Testamentiese Werksgemeenskap in Suid-Afrika* 5 (1962), pp. 34-43; M. C. Sansom, "Laying on of Hands in the OT," *Expository Times* 94 (1982/83), pp. 323-326; Bernd Janowski, *Sühne als Heilsgeschehen* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1982), 199-221; H.-J. Fabry, D. P. Wright and J. Milgrom, "samak," *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1986), 5:880-889; D. P. Wright, "The Gesture of Hand Placement in the Hebrew Bible and in Hittite Literature," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 106 (1986), pp. 433-446; idem, "Hands, Laying on," *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 3:47-48.

45 R. K. Harrison, *Leviticus. An Introduction and Commentary* "Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries" (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1980), p. 45.

46 Noordtjij, *Leviticus*, p. 33.

47 We wish to mention only the following without attempting to be exhaustive: Paul Volz, "Die Handauflegung beim Opfer," *Zeitschrift für alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 21 (1901), pp. 93-100; Kurt Elliger, *Leviticus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966), pp. 34, 37; Rolf Rendtorff, *Studien zur Geschichte des Opfers im Alten Testament* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1967), pp. 92-93, 214-216, 232; Klaus Koch, *Die israelische Sühneanschauung und ihre historischen Verwandlungen* (dissertation, University of Erlangen, 1956) and in many of his later publications; A. Medebielle, *L'expiation dans l'Ancien Testament* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute Press, 1924), pp. 147-158.

48 Rodriguez, *Substitution*, p. 224. See also his article in the this issue of *JATS*.

49 See Rodriguez, *Substitution*, pp. 276-302; idem, "Salvation by Sacrificial Substitution" where he refers to the soteriological dimension of substitution which calls for more than an animal.

50 Claus Westermann, *Das Buch Jesaja* "Das Alte Testament Deutsch" (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966), 212.

51 In the Hebrew language we have here a *beth pretii*, i.e. a *beth* which governs an exchange (cf. Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990], p. 197).

52 Following W. Zimmerli, "Zur Vorgeschichte von Jes. LIII," *Congress Volume Rome 1968* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1969), p. 238, as cited in Rodriguez, p. 281.

53 J. Ridderbos, *Isaiah* "Bible Student's Commentary" (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1985), p. 478.

54 See especially Rodriguez, *Substitution*, pp. 283-301.

55 See Hans LaRondelle, "Salvation and the Atonement," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 3/1 (Spring 1992), pp. 24, 25, for excellent ideas on this passage.

56 Oscar Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament* (London, 1959), p. 65.

57 R. H. Fuller, *The Foundation of New Testament Christology* (London, 1965), p. 153; Joachim Jeremias, *Neutestamentliche Theologie. Erster Teil: Die Verkündigung Jesu* (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1973), pp. 277-279.

58 George E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), p. 156.

59 See Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (3rd ed.; Grand

Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1965), pp. 52-55; idem, *The Cross in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1965), pp. 52-55 (with literature).

60 Leon Morris, *New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1986), p. 110.

61 F. Büchsel, "lútron," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. G. Kittel (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), 4:342.

62 Morris, *New Testament Theology*, p. 111.

63 Büchsel, "lútron," 4:343.

64 Other ancient manuscripts read "new covenant." The addition of the word "new" makes sense because whatever is instituted by Christ is new.

65 Joachim Jeremias, "pollot," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. G. Kittel (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 6:543.

66 C. F. D. Moule, *An Idiom-Book of New Testament Greek* (2nd ed.; Cambridge: At the University Press, 1960), p. 64; A. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1914), pp. 630-632.

67 Moule, p. 63.

68 Eduard Schweizer, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus* "Das Neue Testament Deutsch" (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1973), p. 321.

69 C. M. Tuckett, "Atonement in the NT," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1:519.

70 The LXX translates in Lev 4:3, 14 *peri hamartias* for the "sin offering" just as Romans 8:3 has *peri hamartias*. Both seem to be related to each other.

71 See Peter Stuhlmacher, *Reconciliation, Law and Righteousness. Essays in Biblical Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 94-109; Leonhard Goppelt, *Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), pp. 95-97; S. Lyonnet and L. Sabourin, *Sin, Redemption, and Sacrifice. A Biblical and Patristic Study* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1970), pp. 155-166.

72 For a lengthy discussion, see Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (3rd ed.; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1965), pp. 144-213.

73 H. J. Kraus, *Psalms 1-59* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1988), 393, follows Joachim Begrich, "Das priesterliche Heilsorakel," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 52 (1934), pp. 81-92, and considers this as a priestly oracle of salvation. However, it may be better to think of it as a divine self-revelation.

74 See F. F. Bruce, "'Our God and Saviour': A Recurring Biblical Pattern," *The Saviour God*, ed. S. G. F. Brandon (1963), pp. 54-65.

75 John E. Hartley, "yasha," *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, eds. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 1:414.

76 So the NRSV which follows the RSV in rendering this term as "deliverance."

77 Gerhard F. Hasel, *Jonah: Messenger of the Eleventh Hour* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1980), p. 41.

78 W. Michaelis, "hodos," *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1967), 5:78-84.

79 Johannes Munck, *The Acts of the Apostles* "Anchor Bible, 31" (Garden City: Doubleday, 1967), p. 34.

80 F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts* (London: Marshall, Scott & Morgan, 1968), pp. 100, 101.

81 Colin Brown, "Redemption," *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1978), 3:213.

82 C. K. Barrett, "Salvation Proclaimed: XII. Acts 4:8-12," *Expository Times* 94 (1982), pp. 68-71.

83 Walter Grundmann, "dei," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. G. Kittel (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), 2:24, notes that "dei has also a place in the description of God's saving action towards men."

84 Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Acts of the Apostles* "New Testament Commentary" (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1990), p. 165.

85 Kistemaker, p. 156.

86 Leon Morris, "Atonement, Theories of," *The Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. W. A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1984), p. 100.

87 Williston Walker, *A History of the Christian Church* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1959), p. 241.

88 Robert D. Linder, "Abelard (Abailard), Peter," *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Faith*, ed. J. D. Douglas (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1974), p. 3.

89 Morris, p. 100.

90 Morris, pp. 100, 101.

91 Morris, p. 101.

92 See Leon Morris, *The Atonement: Its Meaning and Significance* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1983), pp. 153-76.

93 Among the extensive literature, see Seth Erlandsson, "The Wrath of YHWH," *Tyndale Bulletin* 23 (1972), pp. 111-116; N. Fuglister, "Gott der Rache," *Experiment Christentum* 8 (1970), pp. 117-133; H. M. Haney, *The Wrath of God in the Former Prophets* (New York: Vantage, 1960); R. Hanson, "Wrath of God," *Expository Times* 58 (1946-47), pp. 216-218; W. H. Simpson, *Divine Wrath in the Eighth Century Prophets* (diss.; Boston University, 1968); R. V. G. Tasker, *The Biblical Doctrine of the Wrath of God* (London, 1951); Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*, pp. 147-154, 179-202.

94 Steven H. Travis, "Wrath of God (NT)," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 6:997.

95 See C. H. Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (London: Fontana Books, 1962), pp. 47-50.

96 Dodd, *Romans*, p. 50.

97 Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 19: "By pointing them [brethren] to the sacrifice Christ had made in their behalf, he thought to arouse their love."

98 Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*, pp. 179-202.

99 Travis, "Wrath of God (NT)," 6:997.

100 Morris, "Atonement, Theories of," p. 101.

101 Jeremias, *Neutestamentliche Theologie*, p. 277, (see note 103 below).

102 B. Klappert, "Lord's Supper," *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. C. Brown (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1976), 2:530.

103 J. Jeremias, *Neutestamentliche Theologie: 1. Teil: Die Verkündigung Jesu* (2nd ed.; Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1973), p. 278.

*Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 3/2 (1992):49-77.

Article copyright © 1992 by Angel Manuel Rodríguez.

## SALVATION BY SACRIFICIAL SUBSTITUTION

By Angel Manuel Rodríguez

Inter-American Division

General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

### Introduction

During the last ten years, scholarly interest in the OT sacrificial system has continued unabated. This has taken place, to a large extent, under the influence of the Jewish scholar Jacob Milgrom.<sup>1</sup> His studies on Leviticus have been innovative and challenging. He has broken new ground and raised new questions.

Several new commentaries on Leviticus have been published,<sup>2</sup> and I anticipate that more will be published within the next five years. A major study was published in 1982 on the verb *kipper*.<sup>3</sup> It promises to be very influential. Others have addressed the sociological importance of sacrifices, or their similarities with other ancient Near Eastern religions.<sup>4</sup> There continues to be a marked interest in the meaning of the sin-offering.<sup>5</sup>

Interestingly, most of the writers recognize that substitution is in some way operative in the Israelite sacrificial system. It is the idea of substitution that I would like to explore in this chapter. First I will go over some of the OT evidence, then I will examine the way this concept is used in the NT.

### Substitution in the Old Testament

The sacrificial system in Israel functioned within a specific historical period. Several important events happened which provide a valuable theological background for understanding the nature and function of sacrifices in Israel.

**Historical and Theological Contexts.** The historical context is

well known. The Israelites had been enslaved in Egypt for many years. Through Moses' leadership, the Lord brought them out of Egypt and guided, protected and provided for them in their journey through the desert. Once they reached Sinai, the covenant was instituted and a sanctuary was built for the Lord. It is then that God instructed Moses concerning the sacrificial system (Lev 1:1).

The theological context includes at least three main concepts: redemption, covenant, and sin. An act of redemption preceded the institutionalization of the sacrificial system. That redemption is described in Exodus as a military victory which resulted in the release or liberation of the Israelites. But it is also described as a religious experience. In this respect, the Passover plays a key role in the narrative.

**Redemption.** The tenth plague and the Passover are inseparable. With the tenth plague, Egypt is completely defeated. The death of the firstborn of the Egyptians is the death of Egypt as an enslaving power. The redemption of the firstborn of the Israelites is the redemption of Israel, the firstborn of the Lord (Exod 4:22). What is particularly significant here is that redemption was accomplished through sacrificial substitution.

The tenth plague is also a threat for the Israelites. Without the passover lamb, the firstborn of the Israelites would have perished together with the firstborn of the Egyptians. Among the Israelites, a lamb was slaughtered in order to preserve and to redeem the firstborn. A sacrificial victim died in place of the firstborn. Among the Egyptians, no substitute was available and, consequently, the firstborn of every family died.<sup>6</sup>

This is the first sacrifice offered by the Israelites as a people. It is their first collective experience of the redemptive power of sacrificial blood. There they become fully aware of the fact that their freedom was a costly one. The life of an innocent victim was taken as a substitutive sacrifice. It is with that understanding of the meaning of redemption that the Israelites met with God at Sinai.

**Covenant.** At Sinai, the Israelites become the people of God. The redemptive experience is now formalized through a covenant. God commits Himself to the Israelites and they commit themselves to the Lord. Israel now becomes, "my treasured possession," "a holy

nation" (Exod 19:6). Holiness on the part of Israel was indispensable because God was going to dwell among them. By dwelling with them, God was indicating that He was the God of Israel (Exod 29:44, 45).<sup>7</sup>

The covenant does not only formalize the relationship, it also defines it. It is a legal agreement binding on both parties. In the case of Israel, God determined the covenant stipulations and expected Israel to obey them. This obedience is the logical response of a redeemed people (Exod 20:1, 2). But that does not make it less legally binding. God's covenant with Israel is very similar to the treaties known in the ancient Near East and used between different nations.<sup>8</sup>

The covenant, at Sinai, defined how the relationship between God and Israel was to be maintained. The judicial element, which characterizes the covenant, "is manifested in the stipulations, which are the law of the nation," and any violation of the law is a crime against God because He is the lawgiver.<sup>9</sup> This legal context is extremely important in a proper understanding of the Israelite sacrificial system.

**Sin.** Sin within the covenant community was a serious matter, because it violated the covenant relationship and was offensive to God. The Sinai experience reveals the consequences of breaking the covenant and God's response to it. The worship of the golden calf put an end to the covenant relationship. As a result, God declared Israel not His people (Exod 32:7, 8) and was determined to "destroy them" (32:10).

In order to reestablish the covenant relationship, Moses functioned as a mediator between God and Israel. He knew that only through atonement would Israel be accepted by God. He said to the Israelites, "You have committed a great sin. But now I will go up to the Lord; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin" (Exod 32:30). The expiatory instrument he tried to use was his own relationship with the Lord. He was willing to be separated from God in order to restore Israel (32:32).<sup>10</sup> The offer was rejected by God who finally decided to reveal His loving mercy, "forgiving [*naša'*] wickedness [*āwôn*], rebellion [*pasha'*], and sin [*ḥaṭṭā'āh*]" (34:7). "To forgive" means literally, "to bear the wickedness," to assume responsibility

for sin. God forgives sin by assuming responsibility for it, by bearing it Himself.

The incident of the golden calf indicates that sin puts an end to the covenant relationship. The people and the individual are immediately liable to punishment, going toward extinction, unless divine forgiveness is granted.

The book of Leviticus does not modify in any way this understanding of sin and its consequences. When an Israelite violates the covenant, that is, sins by doing what "is forbidden in any of the things that the Lord commands" (4:2), he is in need of forgiveness. The sin could be unintentional or intentional.<sup>11</sup> Once the sin is committed, the individual is described as "bearing his sin" (*našáʿ awonô*) (5:1). That is to say, the person is legally culpable and will receive the consequences of his sin. In other cases, it is simply said, "he is guilty" (*'ášēm*) (5:2-4). The individual is in a state of alienation. The damaging consequences of his sin is about to reach him. He is legally guilty.

When the sin committed is related to the laws of cleanliness, the individual is considered to be impure. Impurity is associated in Leviticus with the realm of death.<sup>12</sup> The person who is impure has been transferred, so to speak, to the sphere of death. Consequently, he is separated from the community and the sanctuary. The individual's relationship with God and the community seems to come to an end. The covenant has been violated. The only hope for such a person is God's loving forgiveness.

### The Sacrificial System

**A Divine Gift.** The sacrificial system functions within a redemptive and legal frame of reference which takes any covenant violation very seriously. Within that context, forgiveness is indeed a manifestation of God's love. There is nothing one can do to deserve it or to obtain it. It reaches the individual always as a gift. We are touching here the very nature of the Israelite sacrificial system: it is a divine gift to the covenant people. The system becomes part of the covenant and through it the covenant relationship is preserved.

The priesthood itself is a gift from God to Aaron (Exod 28:1-3). The Levites, who were chosen to assist him, are a divine gift to Aaron (Num 8:19). But above all, the expiatory process is the gift

*par excellence*: "For the life of a creature is the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life" (Lev 17:11).

The expiatory function of blood is a gift of life from God to the people. Blood, by itself, cannot expiate sin. Expiation is always under divine control. Yet, God assigned an expiatory function to the blood which was brought to the altar, making available to the Israelites a way out of their guilt, impurity and sin-bearing state.

**Concept of Substitution.** Therefore, to the Israelite who violated the covenant, expiation was available through a sacrificial victim. The one who was in a state of guilt, liable to punishment and already in the realm of death, was allowed to bring a sacrifice. Once the sacrifice was offered and its blood ministered, he was forgiven by the Lord (for example, Lev 4:22-26, 27-31). The idea of substitution is already implicit in this understanding of the sacrificial system. The person who is heading toward extinction or who is already in the sphere of death is removed from it and integrated into the community and the worship of the Lord because an innocent victim is transferred to the sphere of death as his substitute.

It is this type of substitution that Leviticus 17:11 is describing for us. The key phrase in this verse is 11c: "It is the blood that makes atonement for one's life" (NIV). This sentence has been and continues to be a topic of scholarly discussion.<sup>13</sup> A concept which has contributed to misinterpretations is that life is thought to reside somehow in the blood. In the Bible, life and blood are equated. In fact, 17:11a should be translated, "For the life of the creature *is* the blood." It is important to keep that in mind as we read 11c. A literal translation of the Hebrew would be: "For/because it is the blood that expiates through/as/in exchange of the life/person."

The main exegetical problem is the phrase *bannepheš*. The preposition *beth* can be translated "through" (*beth* of instrumental), "as" (*beth* of identity) or "at the price of, in exchange for," (*beth* of price). Another problem is whether *nepheš* is referring to human or animal life. Most scholars reject the *beth* identity ("as") and accept the instrumental meaning. I have argued that this is a *beth* of price because blood and life are indistinguishable in biblical thinking (blood cannot expiate through life because it is life) and because the expiatory process is determined and controlled by God,

not by some intrinsic power present in the blood.<sup>14</sup> The passage should be translated, "For it is the blood that makes atonement in exchange for the person."<sup>15</sup>

**Theological Meaning.** The theological content of the passage is revealing. God has chosen blood to be an instrument of atonement because it is life. Since it is life, it belongs exclusively to Him and must be always returned to him. Never should it be "eaten." In the expiatory process, life is returned to God through the altar of sacrifices. That blood is expiatory because it is accepted by God in exchange for the life/blood of the repentant sinner. The life of the sacrificial victim takes the place of the life of the Israelite. Thus is the covenant relationship preserved or renewed.

Leviticus 17:11 provides a general principle for the interpretation of the meaning of the sacrificial system. Our interpretation is supported by the theological context of Leviticus which interprets the exodus from Egypt in terms of a redemptive substitutive sacrifice and takes sin within the covenant setting to be a serious offense against God.

**Sacrifice Without Blemish.** But sacrificial substitution is also expressed through the rituals performed when offering a sacrifice. We can only provide a summary here. The sacrificial animal was required to be in perfect health and without any defect (Lev 1:3, 10; 22:17-25). The sinner is a person who has corrupted himself (*šihēt*; Exod 32:7). The sacrificial victim, which will take his place, should not have any defect (*šihēt*; Lev 22:25).

**Laying on of Hands.** The meaning of the laying on of hands continues to be debated. More scholars are arguing now that there are really two rituals. In one case, two hands are used, in the other only one. When both hands are used, the concept of transference is present (Lev 16:21); but when only one hand is used, the animal is being identified as belonging to the offerer.<sup>16</sup> But this is far from certain. The passages in which a single hand is mentioned are prescriptive texts (e.g. Lev 1:4; 3:2, 8, 13). There is some evidence which suggests that in practice both hands were used in spite of the singular in the prescription (Num 27:18, 23; Deut 34:9).<sup>17</sup> It is therefore possible to argue that in the ritual of the laying on of hands, both hands were always used.

But even if in some cases one hand was used, that does not

necessarily mean that we must have two radically different meanings. The idea of transference through the laying on of hands is present in cultic (Lev 16:21) and non-cultic cases (Lev 24:14; Num 27:18-23; 8:10). There is no reason for denying it to the rest of the sacrificial cases.<sup>18</sup>

**Priestly Eating of Sin Offering.** That the sin of the repentant sinner is transferred to the sacrificial victim is indicated by the fact that when the priest eats of the sacrificial flesh, he "bears sin" (Lev 10:17). Moses said to Aaron that the flesh of the sin-offering "was given to you to bear the sin of the community, to make atonement for them." In this context, "to bear sin" expresses purpose.<sup>19</sup> When the blood is not taken to the sanctuary, the priest eats some of the flesh of the victim. This means that the sacrificial victim was bearing the sin of the repentant Israelite. It was transferred to the victim through the laying on of hands. The animal received the sin and its consequences and died in place of the individual.

**Significance of Ministered Blood.** But that was not the end of sin. Through the blood manipulation, it was transferred to the sanctuary. Here we must remember that blood/life belongs to God. Through the blood manipulation, the priest is returning it to God. That blood is an instrument in the expiatory process because it is taking the place of the life of the repentant sinner. Through it, sin is being transferred to the sanctuary.<sup>20</sup>

**Day of Atonement Theodicy.** Once a year, during the Day of Atonement, the sanctuary is purified. The Day of Atonement could be called a theodicy. On that day, it became clear that sin and God were radically different, having nothing in common. During the daily sacrifices, sin and impurity were brought into contact with holiness in order to expiate the sins of Israel. This encounter, by its very nature, escapes rational analysis, not because it is necessarily illogical, but because it transcends human logic by taking us deep into the mystery of atonement. The holy came into contact with the impure and yet remained holy; life and death confronted each other. Through this impenetrable encounter, forgiveness came into existence.

Nevertheless, God's confrontation with sin must come to an end. He must be seen the way He is, apart from sin. On the Day of Atonement, sin is removed from His presence and returned to its

place of origin. The soteriological significance of the sacrificial system reached its highest typical zenith during the Day of Atonement.

However, the soteriological dimension of the sacrificial system with animals had some limitations. It is those limitations that Isaiah 52:3-53:12 removes. In order to restore man to full and permanent harmony with God, more than animal sacrifices were needed. In fact, the sacrificial system pointed to the figure of the Servant of the Lord, the perfect sacrifice provided by God to bring in eternal salvation. He is the perfect lamb who "took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows;" "he was pierced for our transgressions . . . crushed for our iniquities. . . by his wounds we were healed" (53:5, 6). He is the perfect substitute: "My righteous Servant will justify many and will bear their iniquities" (53:11); "he poured out his life unto death and was numbered with the transgressors" (53:11).

In this messianic prophecy, we have reached the soteriological zenith of the OT; we are at the threshold of the New.

**Conclusion.** This brief summary of the soteriological significance of sacrificial substitution in the OT suggests that substitution is not only redemptive but also the indispensable ingredient in the preservation of a proper covenant relationship with the Lord.

Breaking the covenant is indeed life-threatening. Outside the covenant, death seems to rule. Sacrificial substitution is not man's attempt to pacify an angry God. It is rather a loving God who, although taking sin seriously, is willing to forgive repentant sinners. He accomplished this by providing a sacrificial substitute to whom sin was transferred and in whom death was actualized. In that process, He Himself came into contact with sin and impurity without compromising His holiness. That contact came to an end each year during the Day of Atonement.

We begin to grasp the full implications of sacrificial substitution in the OT only when we look at the inscrutable figure of the *'Ebed Yahweh* (Servant of Yahweh) in Isaiah. He is the perfect substitute.

#### Substitution in the New Testament

Sacrificial terminology is applied throughout the NT to

Christ's death. There is a conscious effort to describe it as a sacrifice. This interpretation seems, in fact, to have been the prevailing one in the apostolic church. One gets the distinct impression that the biblical writers used that terminology realistically. When they describe Christ's death as a sacrifice, that is exactly what they mean.<sup>21</sup> The "matrix within which that language works" is the OT.<sup>22</sup> Of course, there is a significant change: the victim is not an animal now, but the Son of God.<sup>23</sup>

The NT writers used several different images to interpret the significance of Christ's death (for example, redemption, reconciliation, and justification).<sup>24</sup> But all of them are based on the realistic understanding of Christ's death as a sacrifice. It is this underlying theological perception which provides meaning, unity and value to those images.<sup>25</sup>

I will summarize briefly the use of sacrificial terminology in the NT. Then I will explore the role of sacrificial language in relation to the concepts of redemption, reconciliation and justification.

#### Sacrificial Language in the NT

**Synoptic Gospels.** In the Gospels, the Lord's Supper provided the setting for one of the most important statements on Christ's death as a sacrificial victim (Matt 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:15-20). In the three Gospels, the cup is a symbol of Jesus' blood which is going to be poured out (*ekcheō/ekchunō*) for man. The language is sacrificial.<sup>26</sup> Jesus' sacrifice initiates the new covenant and brings in forgiveness of sin (Matt 26:28). It is an expiatory sacrifice offered "for" (*peri*; Matt 26:28; *hupér*, Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20) "many." It deals with the problem of sin through forgiveness and by reestablishing or instituting the new covenant.<sup>27</sup>

It is usually accepted that in the Lord's Supper sayings there is an influence of Isaiah 53.<sup>28</sup> This would mean that Christ's death is seen as the fulfillment of the Messianic Suffering Servant prophecy. Even Luke, who does not stress the atoning significance of Jesus' death,<sup>29</sup> finds in Jesus' experience a fulfillment of that Messianic prophecy. According to him, Jesus "was reckoned with transgressors" (22:37; Isa 53:12). In Luke 23:47, Jesus is called "a righteous man (*dikaïos*)." Hence, according to Luke, the righteous one was counted as a transgressor. It is difficult to deny that Luke

saw in Jesus' experience the fulfillment of Isaiah 53. Implicit is the idea that he died, like the Servant, in place of others. His death was not the death of a martyr, but of the Messiah.<sup>30</sup>

**Acts.** Acts also shows that Luke understood the death of Jesus to be a fulfillment of Isaiah 53 (Acts 8:30-35). It is true that we do not have here an explicit interpretation of Jesus' death as a substitutive sacrifice,<sup>31</sup> but the probability is there. The Servant Christology was well known by Luke (3:16-21; 4:17-21).<sup>32</sup> Sacrificial terminology is found in Acts 20:28: The Church was bought "through his own blood."<sup>33</sup> Redemption and sacrifice are brought together here.

**John's Gospel.** John uses sacrificial terminology when referring to Jesus' death. In what is probably a clear reference to Isaiah 53, John the Baptist identifies Jesus as "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (1:29). This may be a reference to the passover lamb or to sacrificial victims in general. In 19:14 is said that Jesus died when the passover lamb was being sacrificed, making a connection between both lambs. There are other passages which suggest that John saw Jesus' death as the fulfillment of the passover sacrifice (19:29; 19:36).<sup>34</sup>

**Paul's Epistles.** In Romans 3:25, Paul says, "God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood," (NIV); 5:9 states, "we have now been justified by his blood" (NIV). As we will show below, this sacrificial terminology describes Christ's death as a substitute for man. In Romans 8:3, Christ's sacrifice is called "a sin-offering" (*perí hamartías*).<sup>35</sup> What we cannot do, God did for us through the sin offering He Himself provided.

In 1 Corinthians 5:7, Paul writes, "Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed" (NIV). He also quotes Jesus' words during the Last Supper: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood" (1 Cor 11:25, NIV). The sacrificial meaning is retained. The idea of substitution is present in 2 Corinthians 5:21 and Galatians 3:13 (more on these verses below). According to Ephesians, "we have redemption through his blood" (Eph 1:7, NIV), and that same blood created peace between Jews and Gentiles (Eph 2:13). In Ephesians 5:2, Christ's love moved Him to give Himself up "for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" (NIV). Reconciliation is through

Christ's blood (Col 1:20). In this particular case the apostle is talking about cosmic reconciliation.

**Peter's First Epistle.** Peter's soteriology is based also on sacrificial concepts. According to him, we were redeemed "with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect" (1 Pet 1:18, 19, NIV). To that he adds, "Christ died for sins once and for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God" (1 Pet 3:18). The messianic prophecy of Isaiah 53, Peter indicates, was fulfilled in Christ's death: "He bore our sins in his body on the tree" (1 Pet 2:21-24, NIV).<sup>36</sup>

**John's First Epistle.** 1 John 1:7 describes Christ's blood, (= sacrifice) as the means by which we are purified "from all sin." Christ is our expiatory sacrifice (*hilasmós*), 1 John 2:2; 4:10. The term *hilasmós* belongs to the *híleōs* ("gracious, merciful") word-group. To this group belongs the verb *hiláskomai* ("propitiate, expiate"), the noun *hilasmós* ("propitiation, sacrifice") and *hilastērion* ("means of propitiation/expiation").

Much has been written about this word-group.<sup>37</sup> The fundamental question is whether it contains the idea of propitiation or expiation. It is undeniable that in the LXX and in non-biblical Greek, it is associated with propitiation. But propitiation requires that the object of the sacrifice be God, that is, we propitiate Him; but that is never the case in the Bible. The sacrifice is offered to cleanse us, to reestablish our broken relationship with the Lord. In that case, it means expiation.

But, as we will try to demonstrate below, the sacrifice of Christ and its benefits are also discussed in context where God's wrath or judgment is operative. This is particularly the case in Romans 3:25. The word *hilastērion* is taken by me to mean "expiatory sacrifice." Through it, God's condemnation of sin falls, not on man, but on Christ. If the translation "propitiation" is to be retained, it must be made clear that God propitiates Himself, moved by His own love and not by man. That love expresses itself in the fact that God provided a substitute who died in place of us.

**Revelation.** In Revelation, the blood of the Lamb (*'arnion*) has a very important function (5:6, 8, 12). Through it, redemption was accomplished (5:9); it has cleansing power (7:14), and it was through this sacrifice that the evil powers were defeated (6:9-13).

At Christ's coming, He will defeat them once and for all (17:14). Meanwhile, the believer can also overcome the Dragon through the blood of the Lamb (12:11; 1:5). Christ's sacrifice is described in Revelation as a victory over the evil forces. He defeated them through death. Even the so-called "classic theory" of atonement presupposes a sacrificial understanding of Christ's death.<sup>38</sup>

Although sacrificial terminology is not applied to Christ's death in every book of the NT, its interpretation as a sacrificial offering seems to be presupposed. This interpretation, as M. Hengel has shown, goes back to Jesus Himself.<sup>39</sup> The apostles just followed the teachings of their Master. Since the sacrificial language is taken from the OT, it is right to conclude that Christ's sacrificial death shares the same meaning as the sacrifices of the OT. That is confirmed by evidence in the NT which, when analyzed more carefully, reveals that Christ's death was a substitutive sacrifice.

### Redemption

Jesus' death is interpreted by different NT writers as an act of redemption. The concept of redemption is present throughout, from Matthew (20:28) to Revelation (5:9). The word-group is a rich one. The noun *lútron* designates the instrument of redemption and is usually translated "ransom," that is, what is paid in order to be free or redeemed, the price of redemption.<sup>40</sup> *'Antílutron* is probably an emphatic form of *lútron* which seems to stress the idea of full price.<sup>41</sup> *Lútrōsis* and *'apolútrōsis* are synonyms, "redemption," "deliverance," or "release."<sup>42</sup> The agent of redemption is called *lutrōtēs*, "redeemer, liberator" (Acts 7:35). *Lutrōō* is the verb: "to free by ransom."<sup>43</sup> This verb is used in the NT only in the middle voice, "to release by payment of a ransom, to redeem."

This word-group was widely used in the market place during the NT period. The terminology designates the redemption of prisoners of war and slaves through a ransom.<sup>44</sup> In the LXX, we find, in addition, references to redemption or deliverance from dangers, problems, and sufferings.<sup>45</sup> It is certainly difficult to deny that the *lútron* word-group designates fundamentally a "change of ownership as a result of payment of a price."<sup>46</sup>

In the NT the *lútron* word-group is used to indicate the end result and/or the process of redemption. When the end result is

stressed, the idea of a ransom, a payment, is not explicitly stated. In such cases, the result of redemption is "deliverance, salvation" (Luke 1:68; 2:38; 24:21). This is also the case when redemption is described as an eschatological expectation: The future "redemption of our bodies" (Rom 8:23); "the day of redemption" (Eph 4:30; cf. Luke 21:28; Eph 1:4). In such contexts, redemption is a synonym for salvation because the biblical writer is interested in how it affects us and not so much in the process through which it was obtained.<sup>47</sup>

There are a series of passages in the NT in which the *lútron* word-group is used to express not just the end result of redemption, but also the means and the process itself. In those cases, sacrificial terminology and ideology are used. Let us look at some of them.

**Ephesians 1:7.** *In him we have redemption [apolutrōsis] through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace. . . (NIV).*

The context discusses God's "glorious grace" which we have received "freely" in Christ. That grace manifested itself in an act of redemption. The mention of "blood" (*haima*) introduces a sacrificial understanding of Christ's death. Redemption is accomplished here through Christ's atoning death.<sup>48</sup> This redemption is further defined as "forgiveness [*aphesis*] of sins." Atonement and forgiveness are brought together here in the same fashion as in Leviticus 4. In Leviticus, the sacrificial victim was offered and then, it is stated, "and they [the Israelites] will be forgiven" [LXX *'aphiēmi*] (Lev 4:20, 26, 30).<sup>49</sup> Redemption is deliverance from sin. This is accomplished through the blood of Christ. What the believer received freely was very costly to God. The blood of Jesus was the price paid for our redemption.<sup>50</sup> His substitutive sacrifice brought deliverance from sin to the believer.

**1 Peter 1:18, 19.** *For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed [lutrōō] from the empty way of life. . . , but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect (NIV).*

This passage contains several important ideas.

1. What Peter is about to say is something his readers know already. Its content belongs to the traditional Christian interpretation of Christ's death.<sup>51</sup>



2. Redemption (*lutróō*) is accomplished here through the payment of a ransom. This is indicated by the context. There is first a negative statement followed by a positive one. The price paid was not gold or silver. Such payment cannot be given for the redemption of man because they are corruptible, they are perishable.<sup>52</sup> The real price was the “precious [*tímios*] blood of Christ.” The word *tímios* does not mean just “precious,” but also “costly.” The price paid to redeem the believers was a high one.

3. Redemption is accomplished here through the sacrificial death of Christ. Peter makes it clear that the expression “blood of Christ” had a sacrificial meaning in the early apostolic doctrine of atonement. Christ is a sacrificial victim, a lamb (*’amnós*) without blemish (*’ámōmos*) or defect. The reference is not just to the pass-over lamb but to sacrificial victims in general (Exod 29:30; Lev 12:6).<sup>53</sup> A possible reference to Isaiah 53:7 should not be excluded.<sup>54</sup>

The contrast between the blood/life of Christ and gold and silver suggests that, for the redemption of humankind, life had to be given. Life was given in place of life. That was the price paid. This understanding of Christ’s death goes back to Jesus himself.<sup>55</sup>

**Mark 10:45.** *For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life [psuchē] as a ransom [lútron] for [anti] many (NIV).*

Much has been written about this verse.<sup>56</sup> The debate has centered mainly on issues raised by tradition criticism (Is this an original saying of Jesus?) and the question of its possible connection with Isaiah 53. There is general agreement among scholars that we have here Jesus’ *ipsissima vox* (the very word of Jesus). Although the influence of Isaiah 53 has been strongly denied by some, it has been recently defended on two grounds. First, there is a linguistic connection between it and Isaiah 53:11, 12 (LXX). There are three words in Mark 10:45 found in Isaiah: (*para*)*didonai* (“to give”), *psuchē ’autoú* (“his life”), and *polloí* (“many”). This is enough to argue for the dependence of the one on the other.<sup>57</sup> Secondly, there is also a conceptual connection. In both passages, the idea of substitution is present. The Servant suffers and dies vicariously and so does the Son of Man.<sup>58</sup>

The preposition “for” (*’anti*) is very important in this case. It means “in place of, instead of.”<sup>59</sup> The idea of substitution is clearly

expressed. And “even if the *’anti* be translated ‘to the advantage of,’ the death of Jesus means that what happens to Him what would have had to happen to the many. Hence, He takes their place.”<sup>60</sup> The interpretation of atonement as an interchange is also excluded by Mark 10:45. Christ is not simply sharing our experience; He is taking our place so that we can live.<sup>61</sup> Notice that what He gives is “his life.” Life and blood are equated in cultic theology. The ransom price, the *lútron* given, is Christ’s own life.

That life is given in place of the life of the “many.” Implicit is the idea that their life is in jeopardy. Unless something happens, the “many” will perish. Christ was willing to pay the price for their liberation from death. He surrendered His own life as a substitutive ransom for them.<sup>62</sup> In Mark 8:37, in the context of the announcement of his own death, Jesus raised the rhetorical question, “What can a man give in exchange for his life?” The answer to that question is found in Mark 10:45.<sup>63</sup>

The same idea is expressed in 1 Timothy 2:6: Christ gave “himself as a ransom [*’anti-lútron*] for [*hupér*] all men.” In this case, the preposition *’anti* was prefixed to the noun *lútron* and the noun is followed by the preposition *hupér* (“for, on behalf of”). Christ is a ransom paid not just for our benefit but particularly in our place. “The prepositional prefix emphasizes the notion of substitution.”<sup>64</sup>

**Galatians 3:13.** *Christ redeemed [’exagorázō] us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us (NIV).*

A new word is introduced here to express the concept of redemption. The verb *’exagorázō* means “to redeem, to purchase,” and is used in Greek legal contexts to refer to the manumission of slaves.<sup>65</sup> Here in Galatians, the verb is used to refer to redemption from the curse of the law. The passage expresses several important ideas.

First, the Christians were formerly under the curse of the law. That curse falls “on those who rely on their own fulfillment of the law’s demands and on those who fail to keep the whole law” (see Gal 3:10).<sup>66</sup> The result of the curse is death. For Paul, “the whole world is a prisoner of sin” (Gal 3:22, NIV), and the law is the gatekeeper. Therefore all are “under the law (*hupó nómon*),” (see verse 3:22).

Secondly, the claim of the law, its curse, is upheld by Paul. That

curse is ordained by God and "truly corresponds to His holy will toward sinners."<sup>67</sup> We are facing here "a judicial action of God,"<sup>68</sup> the validity of which is not questioned or rejected. The curse of the law occupies a legal place in human experience because of the universality of sin.

Thirdly, the claim of the law is satisfied. The curse cannot be canceled or neutralized. Neither can it be ignored. What the law requires must be accomplished. According to Paul, the claim of the law, its curse, was fully satisfied in the death of Christ. He "became" the cursed One. The implication, obviously, is that the curse of the law had no claim on Him. Yet, He accepted it.

Fourthly, through Christ's vicarious death, we were redeemed from the curse of the law. He became a curse "for us" (*hupér*). The preposition *hupér* expresses here the idea of substitution.<sup>69</sup> The concept of substitution is present in the text. Christ's soteriological act is sacrificial because He died. It is also vicarious because "he took upon himself the mortal curse."<sup>70</sup> Therefore, the phrase "becoming a curse for us" "presupposes sacrificial ideas."<sup>71</sup> Christ becomes the recipient of the curse and dies, obtaining freedom and life for us. It is wrong to argue that "Christ has set men free from the curse because the judgement of the Law has been overruled."<sup>72</sup> What Paul says is that the curse was actualized in Christ.

Galatians 3:13 is an important passage in understanding Paul's concept of redemption and atonement. It clearly indicates that man is alienated from God and under the curse of the law. This curse does not act independently of God. It is rather an expression of the divine will and, therefore, is a right attitude toward sinners. Man's deliverance from that state is accomplished only through the substitutionary death of Christ, which is also an act of redemption. In this soteriological process, "justice is not thrust aside, but justice is satisfied."<sup>73</sup>

The verb *'agorázō* ("to buy") is applied to Christians in several places. They belong to God because they "were bought with a price" (1 Cor 6:19, 20; 7:23; cf. 2 Pet 2:1). The price paid is mentioned in Revelation 5:9: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain [*spházō*] and with your blood you purchased men for God" (NIV). Christ's death is described here as a sacrificial one.<sup>74</sup> In the previous verses, He is called "the Lamb"

(5:6). The lamb was slain as a sacrificial victim and the blood was used to pay for the redemption of man. It is certainly wrong to limit the meaning of the verb *'agorázō* to the concept of acquisition.<sup>75</sup> In Revelation 5:9, the price is indicated through the phrase *èn tō haimati* ("with the blood"). The preposition *'en* stands here for the dative of price and should be translated "at the price of [his blood]."<sup>76</sup>

Christ's death is interpreted by the NT writers as an act of redemption. A price was paid for the salvation of man. In order for them to express the costliness of redemption, it was necessary to combine it with the sacrificial understanding of Christ's death. The price paid was extremely high: the life of Christ. Life was given in place of life. The cursed ones were redeemed by Him who became the cursed one. The NT does not raise the question: to whom was the ransom given? If someone is to be identified, it would be God.<sup>77</sup>

### Reconciliation

The interpretation of the death of Christ in terms of reconciliation is taken from social interaction, interhuman relations. It has been called "a metaphor from diplomacy."<sup>78</sup> Reconciliation is fundamentally "the restoration of a good relationship between enemies."<sup>79</sup> In that process, a mediator is usually indispensable.

For our purpose, only two verbs are important in the New Testament. *Katallássō* is used six times in the NT (Rom 5:10 [2x]; 1 Cor 7:11; 2 Cor 5:18, 19, and 20). It means "to reconcile." The verb *'apokatallássō* is just a synonym, "to reconcile." It is used only three times in the NT (Eph 2:16; Col 1:20, 22). The noun *katallagē* means "reconciliation" and is used four times (Rom 5:11; 11:15; 2 Cor 5:18 and 19). This terminology is used exclusively by Paul. The two most important passages are Romans 5:10, 11 and 2 Corinthians 5:18-21.

In 2 Corinthians 5:18-21, Paul has combined pastoral concerns with theological matters. Theology must determine human behavior. Paul is defending his apostolic ministry. He is concerned that the rejection of his function as an ambassador of God may also result in the rejection of his message of reconciliation.<sup>80</sup> This provides him with the opportunity to define the Christian meaning of reconciliation.

Several significant statements are made in 2 Corinthians 5:18-

21. The most obvious one is that reconciliation originates in God and is initiated by Him. He "reconciled us to himself." He is always the subject and never the object of reconciliation.<sup>81</sup> Secondly, reconciliation was mediated through the person of Christ: "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself." The preposition "in" (*'en*) is probably instrumental,<sup>82</sup> although the locative meaning is also possible. By mentioning the need of the mediatorial presence of Christ, the distance between God and the world is emphasized. Thirdly, reconciliation means "not counting [*logizomai*] men's sins against them." This is a juridical statement. *Logizomai* means "to take into account, to credit, to place to one's account." To credit man for his own sins is to perpetuate his alienation from God. Man's existential problem is beyond his own solution. God, then, decided to hold nothing against him in order to put an end to enmity and bring in reconciliation. Man's accountability for his own sins is eliminated.

What we have just said suggests that reconciliation takes place in God's loving heart before it can be experienced by man. Deep inside the divine being, a decision was made: God will "not count men's sins against them." Because of that decision, there is no longer a barrier "to the restoration of friendly relations."<sup>83</sup> We would have to conclude that when Paul says, "God was reconciling the world to Himself" he "means that God was putting away His own condemnation and wrath" against a sinful world.<sup>84</sup>

Until now, Paul has not clearly stated *how* God was able to reconcile the world to Himself. We know only two important things. First, this was done through Christ and, secondly, reconciliation consists of "not counting" sin against sinful human beings. The implication would be that God seems to be morally indifferent. Therefore, Paul defines more fully what he means when stating that Christ is the instrument of reconciliation. This he does 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."

In this verse, a Christological statement—Christ's sinless nature—is used as the foundation for a soteriological one: "God made him sin." Christ had no experiential or practical knowledge of sin. Yet, he was treated like a sinner. It is extremely difficult to avoid the conclusion that Paul is dealing here with the ideas of transfer

of sin and substitution. "It is only as sinless that Christ can, in Paul's view, bear the sins of others."<sup>85</sup> The sin that was "not counted" to the world is now counted against Christ.

We detect here an echo of Isaiah 53:6, 10, and 12.<sup>86</sup> Sacrificial concepts are presupposed here. In fact, the word "sin" (*hamartia*) has been interpreted by some as a reference to the "sin offering" in the OT.<sup>87</sup> According to this interpretation, God offered Christ as a sin offering to expiate the sins of the world. It is rather difficult to be certain that the reference is to the sin offering. Nevertheless, the basic soteriological significance of the passage is not affected either way. The context indicates that God dealt with the sin problem in Christ.

This is not just representation, as some want us to believe,<sup>88</sup> but substitution. It is because our sin was imputed to the Mediator that they are not counted against us.<sup>89</sup> God is not morally indifferent; He Himself in Christ assumed responsibility for the sins of the world by transferring them to Him as our substitute.<sup>90</sup> In fact, verse 14 states, "For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for [*hupér*] all, and therefore all died." The preposition *hupér* is used here with substitutionary force.<sup>91</sup>

The same message is found in Romans 5:10-11. In this case, man's condition before reconciliation is described as "enmity" ("When we were God's enemies"). The word *'echthros* has an active and a passive meaning. In the active, it means "the enemy, the opponent;" in the passive, "hated."<sup>92</sup> In this passage, the active meaning would deny any level of hostility on God's part toward man, while the passive would suggest an original negative disposition on God's part. Some have opted for the active meaning.<sup>93</sup> It would probably be better to accept that both ideas are present here.<sup>94</sup>

In other words, "The enmity which is removed in the act of reconciliation is both sinful man's hostility to God. . . and also God's hostility to sinful man" (*cf.* Rom 11:28).<sup>95</sup> This is supported by Paul's discussion on the condition of man in the previous chapters of Romans. There, he describes man as being under the wrath of God because of his sinfulness and rebellion. Indeed, "the essential features of man's state prior to reconciliation are his entanglement in self-seeking which cannot fulfill the divine command of love

(Rom 8:7c) and his consequent standing under the divine displeasure (Rom 8:8), wrath and judgement."<sup>96</sup>

It was, then, necessary for God to take the initiative, to put aside his rightful hostility toward sinful man in order to bring in a new state of reconciliation and peace. This was possible "through the death of his son." The blood of the son is mentioned in verse 9. We are, therefore, dealing here with a sacrificial understanding of the cross. There is implicitly here a substitutionary understanding of Christ's death. Reconciliation is a possibility because in His person, God's hostility toward sinful man was fully realized. It is also there that our enmity comes to an end.

Reconciliation and sacrifice are inseparable. From the very beginning, as soon as man rebelled against God, He lovingly sought to preserve His relationship with sinful humanity. God decided to reestablish that relationship to its Edenic state. Moved only by His love, He determined to preserve the relationship by not counting man's sin against him but rather against His own Son. Man's sin was transferred to Him who died as our substitute. According to Revelation 13:8, he is "the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world" (NIV).

### Justification

Justification is an image, used to interpret the significance of Christ's death, taken from the law courts. The two passages we have just discussed (2 Cor 5:18-21; Rom 5:10-11) bring together reconciliation and justification by faith. They are almost synonyms. Yet, they express different ideas. What makes it possible to bring them together is the fact that both are actions of God made possible through the sacrificial death of Christ.

According to Romans 5:9, "we have been justified by [*en*] his blood." Justification is a reality only because Christ died as a sacrificial victim for us.

In any interpretation of the sacrificial death of Christ and its relationship with justification by faith, Romans 3:21-26 must play a significant role. We do not have the time and space to analyze this important passage.<sup>97</sup> I will only share with you my conclusions.

In the interpretation of Romans 3:21-26, we should keep in mind its context. Paul has argued that Gentiles and Jews are

exposed to God's judgment. The whole world is alienated from God. The world is "held accountable to God" (3:19, NIV). The word translated "to be accountable" (*hupódikos*) means "answerable to." Here in Romans, it pictures humankind "standing at God's bar, their guilt proven beyond all possibility of doubt, awaiting God's sentence of condemnation."<sup>98</sup> Paul is going to argue that "now" God, through Christ's expiatory sacrifice, has declared man innocent, righteous before Him (3:21-24). God has revealed that righteousness through the Christ event, and it is available to every one who believes in Him. This new righteousness is free.

Next, Paul proceeds to answer the question: how is it possible for God to justify freely those who believe? The answer is, through Christ's redemptive work. "By this redemption in the Cross there is solved the problem of how God can forgive without implying that sin and righteousness do not matter."<sup>99</sup>

This redemption was possible because God provided Christ as an expiatory sacrifice. The word *hilastērion* is referring here not to the mercy seat (the cover of the ark of the covenant) but to an instrument of expiation.<sup>100</sup> The phrase "in his blood" clarifies even more that Paul is giving to Christ's death a sacrificial meaning. By it, Paul is most probably indicating the price of our redemption and it could be translated "at the price of his blood."<sup>101</sup>

This redemptive sacrifice provides the ground for God's acquittal of repentant sinners. It was necessary because mankind was facing God's judgment and wrath. But the purpose of that sacrifice was larger than that. By dealing with man's sin in the person of his sacrificial substitute, God showed that He does not take sin lightly. His justice was not compromised. If He, in His patience, tolerated sin before Christ's death, now, because of this expiatory sacrifice, we know His real attitude toward sin. He is righteous in the way He has dealt and is now dealing with man's sins. Soteriology, as well as theodicy, are beautifully combined in this important passage.

As a summary of the contribution of Romans 3:21-26 to our understanding of Christ's death as a sacrifice, we could say:

1. *Christ's expiatory sacrifice is a divine gift.* It is God who "presented" or "exhibited" Christ as a sacrificial offering. Man cannot make any contribution to the expiatory process, he cannot provide his own sacrifice.<sup>102</sup> We find here a typological fulfillment

of Leviticus 17:11. The old as well as the new expiatory system is a gift from God.

2. *Christ's expiatory sacrifice is a salvific event.* Through this sacrifice, man has been liberated from his sin and its consequence. Because of redemption, God can declare man righteous. This sacrifice has changed man's situation from one of alienation and enslavement to one of fellowship and freedom.<sup>103</sup>

3. *Christ's expiatory sacrifice provides meaning to the concepts of justification and redemption.* Paul establishes a close connection between sacrifice, justification, and redemption. The basic concept is the one of sacrifice. Without this sacrifice, redemption and justification were impossible. In Romans 3:21-26, justification is related to cultic terminology. In the OT, the vocabulary of justice, justification is not limited to the legal sphere. This terminology is also important in the cult. The declaration of justice was pronounced also in the temple (Ps 24:3-6; 15:1, 2). Legal and cultic concepts, forensic and soteriological convictions, found common ground in the sacrificial system.

4. *Christ's expiatory sacrifice was substitutive.* Paul makes clear that man was enslaved by sin, totally alienated from God, unable to appeal his case, waiting for his sentence. He also says that God pronounced the sentence, not against man, but against Christ Jesus. The death sentence was executed in the Son, who died in place of man, making it possible to redeem and declare man righteous.

5. *Christ's expiatory sacrifice is a revelation.* Paul emphasizes that through Christ's sacrifice, God has revealed Himself to be righteous. He has revealed His true attitude toward sin and the sinner. On the one hand, He revealed His justice by condemning the sinner; on the other, He has revealed His mercy by redeeming and justifying him. Christ's substitutive sacrifice is the revelation of God's salvific and punitive justice.

Conclusion. The death of Christ as a substitutive sacrifice is of foundational value in NT soteriology. It is this concept which provides theological unity and consistency to the main interpretations of Christ's death. The application of sacrificial language to Jesus' death is not just an accident and "did not arise on the periphery of Christological development."<sup>104</sup> It belongs to the very

roots of Christology and soteriology and goes back to Jesus himself.<sup>105</sup>

Martin Hengel has shown that in the Greek and Roman world, the idea of a person dying on behalf of friends, the city, or the good of the community, was very common.<sup>106</sup> In some cases, that death was understood as an expiatory sacrifice offered to propitiate the anger of the gods.<sup>107</sup> The differences between this type of sacrificial death and Christ's death are, as he himself suggests, very significant. For one, Christ's expiatory death is of a universal nature. He died "for all human guilt."<sup>108</sup> I would add that His death was not just representative but substitutive. He died in place of sinful man. God's loving grace was given "not as a result of the heroic action of a particular man, but by God himself, through Jesus the Son who was delivered over to death."<sup>109</sup> It is totally unnecessary for man to attempt to pacify God. And finally, Christ's substitutive death is an eschatological event which took place "in the phase of the imminent judgement of the world."<sup>110</sup>

Once the sacrifice was offered, Christ ascended to heaven to intercede on behalf of his people. After the antitypical Day of Atonement is over his contact with sin will come to an end. It is to this experience that Hebrew 9:28 is referring: Christ was sacrificed to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, apart from sin, to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

### General Conclusion

There is a theological unity and continuity between the OT understanding of sacrificial substitution and the NT description of Christ's death as a substitutive sacrifice. In fact, the connection is in terms of type-antitype. Yet, the underlying theological concepts remain the same. Redemption and forgiveness are God's actions. He initiates it, moved by His loving concern for man. In that process, sin is taken very seriously and defined as offensive to God. Through sacrificial substitution, God is able to reveal His hatred toward sin and His merciful love toward sinful man.

Any attempt to define the meaning of the cross exclusively in terms of a revelation of love, that is, without taking into consideration sacrificial substitution, is not only one-sided but also unfaithful to the soteriological message of the Bible. Christ's death "must

benefit us if it is to reveal love for us. It will not do to say that it benefits us because, or in the sense that, it reveals love. That would be to argue in circle."<sup>11</sup> Christ's death is indeed the greatest revelation of God's love *because* in it "God was reconciling the world to Himself. . . not counting men's sins against them," but rather making "him who had no sin to be sin for us" (2 Cor 5:19, 20, NIV).

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> For a list of his many publications, see Angel M. Rodriguez, *Substitution in the Hebrew Cultus* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1979), pp. 329-30.

<sup>2</sup> Bernard J. Bamberger, *Leviticus* (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregation, 1979); Gordon J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1979); R. K. Harrison, *Leviticus* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1980); G. A. F. Knight, *Leviticus* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1981); A. Noordtjij, *Leviticus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982); Baruch A. Levine, *Leviticus* (New York: Jewish Publication Society, 1989); and R. Laird Harris, "Leviticus," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 2, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990).

<sup>3</sup> Bernd Janowski, *Sühne als Heilsgeschehen: Studien zur Sühnetheologie der Priesterschrift und zur Wurzel KPR im Alten Orient und im Alten Testament* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1982).

<sup>4</sup> Gary A. Anderson, *Sacrifices and Offerings in Ancient Israel: Studies in Their Social and Political Importance* (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1987); and David P. Wright, *The Disposal of Impurity: Elimination Rites in the Bible and in Hittite and Mesopotamian Literature* (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1987).

<sup>5</sup> Jacob Milgrom, "The Graduated HATTAT of Leviticus 5:1-13," *JAOS* 103 (1983):249-54; N. Kiuchi, *The Purification Offering in the Priestly Literature* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987); Noam Zohar, "Repentance and Purification: The Significance and Semantics of HATTAT in the Pentateuch," *JBL* 107 (1988):609-18; Alfred Marx, "Sacrifice pour les péchés ou rite de passage? Quelques réflexions sur la fonction du HATTAT," *RB* 96 (1989):27-48; Jacob Milgrom, "The Modus Operandi of the Haṭṭā't: A Rejoinder," *JBL* 109 (1990):111-13.

<sup>6</sup> See Rodriguez, *Substitutions*, pp. 270-76.

<sup>7</sup> On the theological implications of the Israelite sanctuary, see Rodriguez, "Sanctuary Theology in the Book of Exodus," *AUSS* 24 (1986):127-45.

<sup>8</sup> The amount of literature on this subject is enormous. For an introduction, see, J. A. Thompson, "Covenant (OT)," *ISBE* 1:790-93.

<sup>9</sup> Jeremiah Unterman, "Covenant," *HBD*, p. 191.

<sup>10</sup> For a different opinion, see Janowski, *Sühne*, pp. 142-44.

<sup>11</sup> Rodriguez, *Substitution*, pp. 83-100. I still believe that in Lev 5:1-13 we are dealing with intentional sins. For a different view, see Janowski, *Sühne*, pp. 255-56; and Kiuchi, *Purification*, pp. 29, 30. The problem continues to be the meaning of the phrase *ne'alam mimmennū* (NIV, "he is unaware of it"). The Biblical evidence indicates that the verb *'alam* does not mean "to be unaware" or "to forget." It means "to conceal."

<sup>12</sup> For a discussion on this subject, see Rodriguez, *Substitution*, p. 149; cf.

Jacob Milgrom, *Numbers* (New York: Jewish Publication Society, 1990), pp. 344-46.

<sup>13</sup> See Kiuchi, *Purification*, pp. 102-109; Wenham, *Leviticus*, p. 245; Levine, *Leviticus*, pp. 115-16; and my discussion in *Substitution*, pp. 244-57.

<sup>14</sup> *Substitution*, pp. 245-51. Kiuchi, *Purification*, p. 108, distinguishes *nephesh* from blood (*dam*) arguing that *nephesh* is "life-essence." This is a false distinction. He takes the *beth* to be instrumental and *nephesh* as referring to animal life. Yet, he argues that the idea of substitution is still present in the text (p. 106).

<sup>15</sup> Levine, *Leviticus*, pp. 115-16, also takes the *beth* as a *beth* of price.

<sup>16</sup> David P. Wright, "The Gesture of Hand Placement in the Hebrew Bible and in Hittite Literature," *JAOS* (1986):433-46. Cf. Janowski, *Sühne*, pp. 209-16.

<sup>17</sup> Wright, "Gesture," p. 435, tries to solve the problem of Num. 27:18, 23, arguing that the singular *yadna* ("your hand") is "a defectively spelled dual." There is no textual evidence to support the scribal error.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Kiuchi, *Purification*, pp. 113-14. He argues that what is transferred is "guilt," not "sin." This seems to be a false distinction. "Sin" and "guilt" are inseparable in Hebrew thinking. To bear one is to bear the other.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>20</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the blood manipulation, see my *Substitution*, pp. 123-42.

<sup>21</sup> Thus also, S. W. Sykes, "Sacrifice in the NT and Christian Theology," in *Sacrifice*, eds. M. F. C. Bourdillon and Meyer Fortes (New York: Academic Press, 1980), p. 62.

<sup>22</sup> Colin Gunton, "Christ the Sacrifice: Aspects of the Language and Imagery of the Bible," in *The Glory of Christ in the NT: Studies in Christology*, eds. L. D. Hurst and N. T. Wright (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), p. 235.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> See, T. J. Goringe, "Title and Metaphor in Christology," *ET* 95 (1983-84):8-10.

<sup>25</sup> For a similar approach, see John R. W. Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), p. 168.

<sup>26</sup> *'Ekchunō* is a cultic term (see, Johannes Behm, "'Ekchéō," *TDNT* 2:467-68) as well as *haima* = "blood."

<sup>27</sup> On the function of forgiveness of sin in the ministry of Christ and its function in and Jesus understanding of his death as an atoning sacrifice, see Daniel J. Antwi, "Did Jesus consider His Death to be an atoning Sacrifice," *Interp* 45 (1991):17-27.

<sup>28</sup> See, R. T. France, *Jesus and the Old Testament* (London: Tyndale Press, 1971), pp. 121-22. For the influence of Isaiah 53 on the New Testament understanding of Christ's death see also, Oscar Cullmann, *The Christology of the NT* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963), pp. 51-82; W. Zimmerli and J. Jeremias, "Pais Theou," *TDNT* 5:654-717; Ettore Franco, "La morte del Servo Sofferent in Is. 53," in *Gesù e la sua morte* (Brescia: Paideia Editrice, 1984), pp. 219-36; Sydney H. T. Page, "The Suffering Servant Between the Testaments," *NTS* 31 (1985):481-97; and Guy Wagner, "Le scandale de la croix expliqué par le chant du Serviteur d'Esai 53," *Études Théologiques et Religieuses* 61 (1986):177-87.

<sup>29</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian* (Great Britain: Padernoster Press, 1970), p. 175. On the interpretation of Jesus' death in Luke-

Acts see, Dennis D. Sylva, ed. *Reimagining the Death of the Lukan Jesus* (Frankfurt: Verlag Anton Hain, 1990).

30 The martyr-prophet interpretation of the death of Jesus has been rightly criticized by Martin Hengel, *The Atonement* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), pp. 41, 49; and Robert J. Harris, "Luke 23:47 and the Lucan View of Jesus' Death," *JBL* 105 (1986):68-70.

31 D. A. S. Ravens, "St. Luke and Atonement," *ET* 97 (1986):291-94, argues that Luke's "way of thinking about atonement . . . is not confined to a sacrificial view of the death of Jesus." As a result, he downplays the significance of those passages.

32 See, F. F. Bruce, "The speeches in Acts - Thirty Years Later," in *Reconciliation and Hope* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1974), pp. 60-62.

33 The Greek is somewhat difficult. It suggests that the blood is God's own blood. But "his Own" can be a reference to Christ ("his Beloved"). See, Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek NT* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1971), pp. 480-82.

34 This has been argued by Bruce H. Grigsby, "The Cross as an Expiatory Sacrifice in the Fourth Gospel," *JSNT* 15 (1982):51-80.

35 See, among others, H. T. Wright, "The Meaning of *Peri Hamartias* in Romans 8:3," *Studia Biblica* 3 (1978):453-59; Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1980), p. 26; James D. G. Dunn, "Paul's Understanding of the Death of Jesus," in *Reconciliation*, p. 132; and Hengel, *Atonement*, p. 46.

36 Consult J. Ramsey Michaels, *Word Biblical Commentary: 1 Peter* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1988), pp. 136-37.

37 See, among others, C. H. Dodd, "*Hilaskesthai*, It's Cognates, Derivatives, and Synonyms in the Septuagint," *JTS* 32 (1931):pp. 352-60; Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1955)pp. 125-85; Friedrich Büchsel and Johannes Herrmann, "*Hileos*," *TDNT* 3:300-23;p David Hill, *Greek Words and Hebrew Meaning* (Cambridge: University Press, 1967), pp. 23-48; and K. Grayston, "*Hilaskesthai* and Related Words in LXX," *NTS* 27 (1981):640-56.

38 Gustaf Aulén, *Christus Victor* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1969), is aware of the fact that Christ's death as a sacrifice was practically always associated with the classic theory. But he argues that because God is the one who makes the sacrifice and who receives it, the Latin doctrine is excluded (pp. 31-34; 57-58; 116). He concludes that the idea of sacrifice is the "means whereby the Divine will-to-reconciliation realizes itself, and which also shows how much it costs God to effect Atonement" (p. 58).

39 Hengel, *Atonement*, p. 46.

40 Hill, *Greek Words*, p. 49; F. Büchsel, "*Lútron*," *TDNT* 4:340.

41 Collin Brown, "*Lutron*," *NIDNTT* 3:197.

42 *Ibid.*, p. 189.

43 Büchsel, *Lutróō*, p. 349.

44 eslas Spicq, "*Lútron*, *Lutróō*," in *Notes de lexicographie Néo-Testamentaire*, vol. 3 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1982), pp. 432-33.

45 *Ibid.*, p. 430. Cf. 2 Samuel 4:9; 1 Kings 1:29; Psalms 7:2, 25:22.

46 I. Howard Marshall, "The Development of the Concept of Redemption in the NT," in *Reconciliation*, p. 159.

47 Morris, *Cross*, overlooked this distinction and pressed some passages too much in order to find in them the idea of a payment (pp. 43, 44).

48 K. Kertelge, "*Apolutrōsis*," *EDNT* 1:139.

49 On '*aphiēmi*, consult Rudolf Bultmann, "*Aphiēmi*," *TDNT* 1:509-12; H. Vorländer, "*Aphiēmi*," *NIDNTT* 1:697-703; H. Leroy, "*Aphiēmi*," *EDNT* 1:181-83.

50 This is denied by some and accepted by others. For bibliographical references to both views, see Andrew T. Lincoln, *Word Biblical Commentary: Ephesians* (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1990), pp. 27-28. As we will show below, similar passages in the New Testament make it clear that Christ's blood was the ransom given for our salvation. In Colossians 1:14, a parallel to Ephesians 1:7, blood is not mentioned, but redemption is also brought within the realm of sacrificial ideas by referring to it as "forgiveness of sins."

51 See, for instance, F. W. Beare, *The First Epistle of Peter* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958), p. 77; and J. Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter*, p. 63.

52 Cf. Günther Harder, "*Phtheiro*," *TDNT* 9:102.

53 G. Dautzenberg, "*Amnós*," *EDNT* 1:71.

54 Michaels, *1 Peter*, p. 66.

55 Marcus Barth, *Was Christ's Death a Sacrifice?* (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1961), p. 4.

56 See Joachim Jeremias, "Das Lösegeld für Viele (Mark 10:45)," *Judaica* 3 (1947-48):249-64; C. K. Barrett, "The Background of Mark 10:45," in *NT Essays*, ed. A. J. B. Higgins, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1959) pp. 1-18; W. J. Moulder, "The OT Background and the Interpretation of Mark 10:45," *NTS* 24 (1977-78):120-27; and Peter Stuhlmacher, *Reconciliation, Law, and Righteousness: Essays in Biblical Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), pp. 16-29.

57 Stuhlmacher, *Reconciliation*, p. 19.

58 Hill, *Greek Words*, p. 79.

59 Büchsel, "*Antí*," *TDNT* 1:372-73; and Morris, *Cross*, pp. 30-32.

60 Büchsel, "*Lútron*," p. 343.

61 Morna D. Hooker, *From Adam to Christ: Essays on Paul* (Cambridge: University Press, 1990), pp. 26-41, interprets Paul's doctrine of atonement in terms of interchange. In this paper, I am arguing that substitution is a better concept than interchange when dealing with the atonement.

62 There is some discussion on the meaning of "many." In this passage it seems to have a collective or inclusive sense meaning "all." Consult J. Jeremias, "*Polloi*," *TDNT* 6:543-45; and F. Graber, "*Polloi*," *NIDNTT* 1:96-97.

63 Brown, "*Lútron*," p. 196.

64 Hill, *Greek Words*, pp. 76-77. Cf. Morris, *Cross*, p. 48.

65 D. H. Field, "*Agorázō*," *NIDNTT* 1:267.

66 Charles B. Cousar, *Galatians* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), p. 77.

67 Büchsel, "*Agorázō*," *TDNT* 1:126.

68 Büchsel, "*Katára*," *TDNT* 1:449

69 "In place of" is one of the possible meanings of *hupér*. See R. E. Davis, "Christ in Our Place - The Contribution of the Prepositions," *Tyndale Bulletin* 21 (1970):81-90; Harald, Reisenfeld, "*Hupér*," *TDNT* 8:509, who states, "The train of thought. . . shows that the meaning of *hupér hemon* is 'in our favor,' though intrinsically the concept of substitution might suggest that it also means in our place or stead."

70 Reisenfeld, "*Hupér*," p. 509.

- 71 Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), p. 150. Cf. Richard N. Longenecker, *Word Biblical Commentary: Galatians* (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1990), p. 121.
- 72 Hooker, *From Adam*, p. 15.
- 73 Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1975), p. 196.
- 74 The verb *spházō* is used in the LXX to designate the slaughtering of sacrificial animals. See, Otto Michel, "*Spházō*," *TDNT* 7:929-31.
- 75 Stanislas Lyonnet and Léopold Sabourin, *Sin, Redemption, and Sacrifice* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1970), pp. 104-19.
- 76 Consult, F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the NT and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 118. Cf. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Book of Revelation: Justice and Judgment* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), p. 74.
- 77 Mashall, "Development," p. 156. On this problem in the early church see, Robert H. Culpepper, *Interpreting the Atonement* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1966), pp. 73-77.
- 78 T. J. Gorringer, "Title and Metaphor in Christology," *Exp Times* 95 (1983-84):9.
- 79 H. G. Link, "Reconciliation," *NIDNTT* 3:145.
- 80 See, Ralph Martin, *Word Biblical Commentary: 2 Corinthians* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1986), pp. 136-37.
- 81 H. Vorländer and C. Brown, "*Katallássō*," *NIDNTT* 3:167.
- 82 See, Rudolf Bultmann, *The Second Letter to the Corinthians* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1985), p. 161; and Martin, *2 Corinthians*, pp. 153-54.
- 83 I. Howard Marshall, "The Meaning of 'Reconciliation,'" in *Unity and Diversity in NT Theology*, ed. Robert A. Guelich (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1978), p. 123.
- 84 Martin, *2 Corinthians*, p. 155.
- 85 C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), p. 180.
- 86 See also, J. Eichler, "*Logizomai*," *NIDNTT* 3:823; and Stuhlmacher, *Reconciliation*, pp. 59-60.
- 87 For a discussion on this interpretation see, Lyonnet, *Sin*, pp. 251-56. Cf. Hengel, *Atonement*, p. 46.
- 88 E.g., Bultmann, *2 Corinthians*, p. 165; and Ernst Käsemann, "Some Thoughts on the Theme The Doctrine of Reconciliation in the NT," in *The Future of Our Religious Past*, ed. J. M. Robinson (London: SCM, 1971) p. 58.
- 89 H. W. Heidland, "*Logizomai*," *TDNT* 4:292.
- 90 D. E. H. Whiteley, "St. Paul's Thoughts on the Atonement," *JTS* 8 (1957):246, in an effort to reject a penal substitutionary interpretation of the phrase "God made him sin," argues that it just means "that in the providence of God Christ took upon himself human nature." The term *hamartia*, however, is never used in the New Testament to refer to the incarnation. See also *Idem.*, *The Theology of St. Paul* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), pp. 136-37.
- 91 Martin, *2 Corinthians*, pp. 129-30. He finds in the passage both representation and substitution.
- 92 Werner Foerster, "*Echthros*," *TDNT* 2:811.
- 93 Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1980), p. 139; and Foerster, "*Echthros*," p. 814.

- 94 With C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark Limited, 1980), p. 267.
- 95 *Ibid.*
- 96 Büchsel, "*Katallássō*," p. 257.
- 97 This I did in my paper "Romans 3:21-26: Su Contribución a la interpretación de la muerte de Cristo como un sacrificio" (*unpublished*).
- 98 Cranfield, *Romans*, p. 197. See also, Christian Maurer, "*Hupódikos*," *TDNT* 8:558. He states that *hupódiko* "describes the state of an accused person who cannot reply at the trial initiated against him because he has exhausted all possibilities of refuting the charge against him and averting the condemnation and its consequences which ineluctably follow."
- 99 J. A. Ziesler, *The Meaning of Righteousness in Paul* (Cambridge: University Press, 1972), p. 193.
- 100 For a detailed discussion see, Rodriguez, "Romans 3:21-26," pp. 16-25.
- 101 Cf. Sam K. Williams, *Jesus' Death as a Saving Event: The Background and Origin of a Concept* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1975), pp. 46-47.
- 102 S. W. Sykes, "Sacrifice," p. 74, writes: "It is God himself who is the judge; it is God who sets forth Christ to be the expiatory agency, through his death; and it is God from whose wrath man is saved. It appears that God is offering himself as a sacrifice in the person of his (innocent) son. But Paul never explicitly says so."
- 103 Stuhlmacher, *Reconciliation*, p. 55, wrote: "God gave Jesus up to death and raised him from the dead in order to provide in the sin offering of Jesus' life the necessary basis for the justification of those who confess Jesus as their Lord."
- 104 Hengel, *Atonement*, p. 46.
- 105 *Ibid.*, pp. 71-75.
- 106 *Ibid.*, pp. 6-18.
- 107 *Ibid.*, p. 19.
- 108 *Ibid.*, p. 31; cf. also, C. F. D. Moule, *The Origin of Christology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 119.
- 109 *Ibid.*
- 110 *Ibid.*, p. 32.
- 111 John Knox, *The Death of Christ: The Cross in NT History and Faith* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1958), p. 151.



## SALVATION AND OBEDIENCE

By Jack J. Blanco

Southern College of Seventh-day Adventists

The cry of the Philippian jailer epitomizes the longing of men and women since the entrance of sin, "What must I do to be saved" (Acts 16:30)? Over the centuries the answer to this question has varied greatly. As a result, obedience has taken on many forms, from appeasement of an angry God to accumulation of merit for entrance into heaven. Some have even denied the need for obedience altogether.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the answer to the question of how obedience relates to salvation becomes an extremely relevant one and needs to be Biblically sound.

From the Scriptures we know that even prior to sin, obedience was a condition for retaining life (Gen 2:16, 17).<sup>2</sup> The Lord said, "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die" (Gen 2:16, 17, NRSV). After the entrance of sin, the Lord still expected obedience. We see this in His question to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is lurking at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it" (Gen 4:6, 7, NRSV).

"By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to set out for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance; and he set out, not knowing where he was going" (Heb 11:8, NRSV). Centuries later, David acknowledged the role of obedience in salvation when he said, "Happy are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or take the path that sinners tread. They are like trees planted by streams of waters, which yield their fruit in its season. The wicked

are not so, therefore they will not stand in the judgment, for the Lord watches over the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish" (Psalm 1:1-6, NRSV). The prophet Ezekiel, speaking for the Lord, said, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from their ways and live" (Ezek 33:11, NRSV).

In the Gospels we find the rich young ruler asking Jesus, "Teacher what good deed must I do to have eternal life? He said to him, 'Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments'" (Matt 19:16, 17, NRSV). Again, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15, NRSV). And, "You are my friends if you do what I command you" (John 15:14, NRSV).

In the epistles Paul stated, "To those who by patiently doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; while for those who are self-seeking and who obey not the truth but wickedness, there will be wrath and fury" (Rom 2:7, 8, NRSV). In the book of Revelation, John said, "Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they will have the right to the tree of life and may enter the city by the gates. Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and fornicators and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood" (Rev 22:14, 15, NRSV).

One cannot read the Scriptures from Genesis to Revelation and dismiss the importance of obedience as it relates to salvation. We need to examine this relationship more closely.

### Edenic and Post-Edenic Obedience

In Genesis the Lord told Adam and Eve not to eat of the tree that was in the midst of the garden (Gen 2:16, 17; 3:3). The positive side of this injunction was that there could be no character development without a test.<sup>3</sup> The negative side of it was that Adam and Eve could die (Gen 2:17). God had decided to test their love for Him by making eternal life contingent upon obedience (Gen 3:22).<sup>4</sup> We see this in the fact that, after they sinned, the Lord expelled them from the Garden of Eden lest they eat of the Tree of Life and live forever (Gen 3:22). But before He did so, He again offered them eternal life through the death of His Son (Gen 3:15), but not without expecting a response of obedience. Once outside the Gar-

den Adam and Eve would come to its entrance not only to worship but also to renew their vows of obedience.<sup>5</sup>

This raises a number of questions. How is it possible for fallen human beings to obey? Prior to sin Adam and Eve were under a covenant of obedience, for both were perfect and could rightly be expected to obey. After they sinned they were placed under the covenant of grace, yet they were still expected to obey. Prior to the entrance of sin they were in perfect harmony with God. After they sinned their powers were perverted; their natures became evil; they were in harmony with Satan and would have remained so had God not specially intervened.<sup>6</sup> As the Scripture says, "Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey" (Rom 6:16, NRSV)? The instant the first pair sinned, Christ stepped in to rescue them. He promised to come and die as man's substitute.<sup>7</sup>

It is Christ who enables us to obey (1 Cor 10:13; Jude 24, 25). Prior to sin, obedience was the condition for receiving eternal life. After sin obedience became a grateful response to God for having saved him from his enslavement to sin, but obedience is still a condition for receiving eternal life.<sup>8</sup>

How do we reconcile obedience as a condition for eternal life with the statement of Paul when he says, "The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23, NRSV); and with John when he says, "God gave us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life" (1 John 5:11, 12, NRSV)? The answer to this apparent enigma lies in the fact that having accepted Jesus Christ as our personal Savior from sin; having been justified as legitimate recipients of eternal life; and having a right standing before God in spite of our sinful natures, we can retain our Christ-centered status only by continual obedience.<sup>9</sup>

The gift of eternal life through Christ is not permanent as if there were no condition to salvation. It is not once saved always saved. As Paul says, "We are justified by faith and have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God" (Rom 5:1, 2, NRSV). This kind of obedience is not merely outward conformity to a cold external

standard, but a personal relationship with the living Christ through a faith that willingly reveals itself in joyful obedience and fulfills the condition of eternal life as a permanent gift.

### Covenant Obedience

When Moses came down from Sinai he brought with him a law written by the finger of God (Exod 31:18). If the descendants of Abraham had kept the covenant and had the law written on their hearts and in their minds, it would not have been necessary to proclaim the law at Sinai.<sup>10</sup> But the law had to be given to make sin more explicitly recognizable and obedience more explicitly necessary (Rom 5:12-14). At Sinai the Lord also spoke to His people and said, "Now therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession" (Exod 19:5, NRSV).

Covenant obedience is more than mere human morality. Human decency does not obligate people to undertake the rigors of discipleship and loyalty to Christ. It only requires them to do what needs to be done to be human. Common morality acceptable to a civilized society does not make one a Christian. Christian morality is housed in the covenant which God made with His people in the desert.<sup>11</sup>

The law of God at Sinai was not the creation of man's own thinking. Israel did not invent their moral code in the wilderness. It came down from heaven. Man is silent at Sinai. Only the voice of God is heard. No prophet speaks here. No human genius is lecturing on ethics. Israel established no school of philosophy from which they finally developed their own ethical system. God led Israel away from the culture and advanced civilization in Egypt in order that they should hear His voice. For us also, everything depends on our believing that God Himself spoke at Sinai, that these Ten Commandments are not the words of men.<sup>12</sup>

As ABC Nightline moderator, Ted Koppel said in his address to the faculty and students at Duke University:

We have actually convinced ourselves that slogans will save us. Shoot up if you must, but use a clean needle. Enjoy sex whenever and with whomever you wish, but wear a condom. No! The answer is no. Not because it isn't cool or smart or because you might end up in jail or dying in an AIDS ward, but no because it's wrong, because we have

spent 5,000 years as a race of rational human beings, trying to drag ourselves out of the primeval slime by searching for truth and moral absolutes. In its purest form, truth is not a polite tap on the shoulder. It is a howling reproach. What Moses brought down from Mount Sinai were not Ten Suggestions.<sup>13</sup>

As Edward Heppenstall points out:

When men deny and reject the commandments given at Sinai, then it becomes possible not only to disobey them, but to believe that they should be changed and adapted to every generation and situation. If the Ten Commandments are merely ways in which people found it convenient to act at different times, then they have very little authority. They have no binding force in the life. One opinion is as good as another. Man can therefore do as he likes. There is no ultimate authority once revelation is denied.<sup>14</sup>

The law given at Sinai as the basis for the covenant together with the instructions on salvation and obedience were not mere accommodations God made to Israel. We find no indication in the gospels and the teachings of Christ that the covenant or any part of the Old Testament having to do with salvation and obedience was simply a metaphoric accommodation on the part of God to the ignorance of Israel. The Accommodation Theory begun by J. S. Semler in the 1700's under his rationalistic position called "liberalis theologia" says that the way the atonement was explained was merely an accommodation to Jewish thought-forms and is therefore without validity for later ages; even Christ's words were deliberate adjustments to the ideas and beliefs of contemporary Judaism.<sup>15</sup>

It is true that the Scripture is communicated to the human mind so that men and women can assimilate it.<sup>16</sup> But, as Bernard Ramm says,

To liberalism accommodation was the evisceration or enervation of the doctrinal content of the Bible by explaining doctrinal passages as accommodations to the thought-patterns of the times of the Biblical writers. . . . liberals asserted that the Scriptures were not only accommodated in form but also in matter or content. . . . The atonement as a vicarious sacrifice is a way in which first-century Christians thought of the cross, but it is asserted, we are not bound today to think of the cross in that manner.<sup>17</sup>

According to the accommodation theory, Paul's understanding of soteriology was conditioned by what he was taught and he, too, accommodated his words to the ideas and beliefs of the Jews. To carry this concept link by link down the chain of logic, Luther's concept of salvation in turn was influenced by Paul and continued this accommodation, and to a certain extent Ellen White's concepts of salvation are accommodations, except that she adds the larger dimension of the Great Controversy. This kind of reasoning leaves the Scripture open to any hermeneutic or a priori principle of relativity which man may wish to impose on Scripture. But God does not double-talk when He speaks in Scripture.

When Jesus came,

He did not leave His hearers to conclude that He had come to set aside its [the law's] requirements . . . . He said nothing to unsettle their faith in the religion and institutions that had been committed to them through Moses. Christ Himself had given both the moral and the ceremonial law. He did not come to destroy confidence in His own instruction. It was because of His great reverence for the law and the prophets that He sought to break through the wall of traditional requirements which hemmed in the Jews. While He set aside their false interpretations of the law, He carefully guarded His disciples against yielding up the vital truths committed to the Hebrews.<sup>18</sup>

Christ Himself gave the law at Sinai (Neh 9:12-15). It formed the heart of the Hebrew life and worship. The massive indictments that prophets like Isaiah and Amos brought against the people centered on the failure to live up to what the Decalogue required. And when Jesus came to fulfill the law, he fulfilled this law. He set it anew on its foundations of faith and love and restored it to its rightful place.<sup>19</sup> There is no difference between obeying Christ, keeping the covenant, and obeying the law. Christ-centered obedience is covenant obedience.

What is covenant obedience?

1. Covenant obedience is obedience sparked by grace through the power of Jesus Christ.<sup>20</sup> It is not an obedience generated by man.

2. Covenant obedience springs from character transformation, not from behavior modification.<sup>21</sup> Formal education and training, culture, and human effort are all helpful, but they cannot purify the springs of life. For humans to think that all that needs to be

done is to develop the good that is in them by nature is a fatal deception. There must be a power from the outside, a new life from above, and that power is Jesus Christ. He is the only One who can quicken the lifeless faculties of the soul, and purify the springs of life.<sup>22</sup> Only when this has taken place and one has been born again can the heart render obedience that the covenant calls for and make it acceptable to God (John 3:1-10).

3. Covenant obedience is accepting the Lordship of Jesus Christ. It is not a desire for goodness and holiness, as important as this may be.<sup>23</sup> This was the problem with Judas. He loved Christ. He felt a desire to be changed in character and life. He felt in his own person the evidence of Christ's power. He recognized the teaching of Christ as superior to all he had ever heard. But he never submitted to the divine molding; instead he held on to his own judgment and his own opinions.<sup>24</sup>

4. Covenant obedience is the response of a grateful heart for what Jesus Christ has done for us. Our hope is not in ourselves; it is in Christ.<sup>25</sup> Covenant obedience is not accepting salvation offered by Christ and then thinking that we have to prove to the Lord that of ourselves we can obey before we can claim his blessings.<sup>26</sup> Such obedience is worth nothing.<sup>27</sup>

5. Covenant obedience accepts personal responsibility for sin. It is not above accountability to God. Paul says, "We must all stand before the judgment seat of God" (Rom 14:10). And Solomon says, "My child, beware. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh. The end of the matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments; for that is the whole duty of everyone. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil" (Eccl 12:13, 14, NSRV).

Unfortunately, the covenant made at Sinai is often misunderstood and the failure of the Israelites is often used to show that obedience is impossible. The obedience that the Israelites promised to render God was a response of human endeavor without the Lord's strengthening grace. "Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord, and the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the Lord hath said will we do" (Exod 24:3, KJV). The conditions of the covenant were repeated. Again the people said, "All that the Lord hath said we will do."<sup>28</sup> Forty days

later they turned to worshiping the golden calf (Exod 32), and the covenant was disannulled.<sup>29</sup>

There is no provision in the divine plan of salvation to save man from sin by a dispensation of law based on man's inability. There has never been any other means of salvation except through Christ. At Sinai the fault was in the human heart and in the belief that if one would promised to keep the law, one could keep it purely on one's own strength.<sup>30</sup> Covenant obedience, however, springs from divine grace. And such obedience is possible. "God has given no commandments which cannot be obeyed."<sup>31</sup> If obedience under the power of divine grace were not possible, then grace is not grace and God is not the God of Israel.

### Corporate Obedience

Throughout the centuries God has invited His people to come to Him in faith, accept His covenant, and enter His rest, which as a people they failed to do (Heb 3:7-19). God offered them a new covenant, new to them because it would be written by God on their hearts.<sup>32</sup> "The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God and they shall be my people. I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more" (Jer 31:31-34, NRSV).

Even a cursory look at the prophets gives us a glimpse into the pains of a loving God continually appealing to His people to give their hearts to Him. Repeatedly, the Lord warned His people against disobedience. "You pretend to worship me, and yet you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, make offerings to Baal, go after other gods that you have not known, and then come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, 'We are safe!' only to go on doing all these same things" (see Jeremiah 7:4, 8-10). Again and again the Lord urged His people to come to Him and He would help them obey.

To Jeremiah He said, "Hear the words of this covenant, and speak to the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Cursed be anyone who does not heed the words of this covenant, which I commanded your ancestors when I brought them out of the land of Egypt. Hear the words of this covenant and do them. For I solemnly warned your ancestors when I brought them up out of the land of Egypt, warning them persistently, even to this day, saying, 'Obey my voice.' Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but everyone walked in the stubbornness of an evil will" (Jer 11:1-8, NRSV). "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, all of you according to your ways. Repent and turn from all your transgressions; otherwise iniquity will be your ruin. Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed against me, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone. Turn, then, and live" (Ezek 18:30-32, NRSV).

As Paul says, "If the message declared through angels was valid, and every transgression or disobedience received a just penalty, how can we escape if we neglect so great a salvation" (Heb 2:2, 3, NRSV).

Christ did not come to release us from the obligations of the covenant. He came to establish the covenant, not abolish it (cf. Matt 5:17). He came to magnify the law and make it honorable (Isa 42:21). He fulfilled the conditions of the covenant by His perfect obedience and ratified it by His death. As Isaiah says, "He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities. He was brought as lamb to the slaughter and cut off out of the land of the living. For the transgression of my people was He stricken. Yet it pleased the Lord to make Him an offering for sin" (see Isa 53:4-10).

It was not without suffering that Christ carried out the Father's will and obeyed (Heb 5:7, 8). It was with strong crying and tears that He obtained our salvation. He earned our righteousness by His works in order that our righteousness might be of faith, a faith that is shown by works (James 2:18). To say that obedience as a response of love is unnecessary, or to teach that man cannot keep the commandments, or that works have nothing to do with our redemption is twisting Scripture. There is a vast difference between

servile and free obedience. Free obedience takes place when the heart and will are in harmony with the divine command. Its prototype is the perfect submission of the Son to the Father, which we see in the willing eagerness of Christ to do the Father's will.<sup>33</sup> That so-called faith that releases men from the obligation of obedience is not faith, but presumption on God's mercy and love.<sup>34</sup> The human mind is capable of justifying anything the human heart wants to do (Jer 17:9). Human logic has the uncanny ability to dress up man's reasoning and make the Scriptures say what man wants them to say.

We are not saved by obedience, but neither can we be saved without it.<sup>35</sup> While it is true that our obedience merits nothing, there are results issuing from salvation. While no one is saved by works, it is impossible for one to be saved without works.<sup>36</sup> It is incumbent upon us to keep the covenant of obedience given to Adam in Eden, and renewed to Abraham, again offered under the terms of the covenant to Israel at Sinai, and ratified by Jesus Christ on Calvary, not in order to be saved but because we are saved. Biblical obedience is an ethic of response. It is an act of gratitude and obligation for the Lord's providence and grace.<sup>37</sup>

Paul says, "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom 6:2-4, KJV). If faith does not manifest itself in works, it is not faith. James says, "I will shew thee my faith by my works" (James 2:18, KJV). Paul encourages his converts to obey and says, "No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it (1 Cor 10:13, NRSV). John says, "Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and hold fast to the faith of Jesus" (Rev 14:12, NSRV).

### Obedience in the New Testament

In the Greek mystery religions and in Gnosticism the emphasis was placed on seeing rather than on hearing. It was believed that hearing leads men astray. True mysteries, they said, are known by sight and the climax of such special insight is vision. Judaism had an entirely different emphasis. Visions, they said, are in and of themselves dangerous. The important thing is to hear, to hear the word. In the books of Moses the emphasis is given to the relationship between hearing and doing. The entire Old Testament is replete with, "Hear ye the word of the Lord." True seeking is hearing, hearing that leads to action in obedience. This same relationship between hearing and doing is carried over into the New Testament. Jesus expounds the will of God as revealed in the law. His word is the same word that He spoke to Israel. For Christ, faith was not simply a matter of hearing, but also obeying. His relationship with His Father has its deepest roots in hearing and doing by God's enabling power.<sup>38</sup>

We receive what the Lord has said by listening. The real mark of listening is a faith that issues in obedience. It is by obedient listening that we appropriate the content of what is written. Every message given to the seven churches in Revelation ends with, "Anyone who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches" (Revelation 2 and 3). God meets us in His word and charges us to listen to His word, which must be heard and followed. Israel became known as people of the law, a people who were supposed to listen in order to render obedience to the word they heard.<sup>39</sup>

Biblical hearing is a single response which needs to be understood from three points of view. It involves the physical sense of listening to the word; it demands that the hearer respond in faith; and it includes obedient action prompted by faithfulness to and faith in the God who has revealed Himself. Not to respond in obedient action is tantamount to unbelief. If obedience is the response of faith, then disobedience is a sign of the absence of faith.<sup>40</sup> Failing to obey is willful disobedience on the part of the one who has heard. It is a sin to have listened and heard and then not to obey.

Repeatedly Jesus said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." He was not only asking people to listen to Him in the physical sense,

but to respond with faith that obeys. As He said, "Every one then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock" (Matt 7:24). "Faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ" (Rom 10:17, NRSV). The Lord said, "My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:27, NRSV).

The New Testament knows nothing of lawless believers in Christ. The early believers, as Carl Henry says, were not delivered from an obligation to obey the divine precepts. No believer is left to work out his salvation by the principle of love alone without some external guidance from divine revelation. The life of love which Christ taught is centered in the God of love who has revealed His will and given us His law and the objective guidance needed to know what constitutes a Christian ethic.

Too often, however, Christians see the life of love and the life of law as antithetical. They say that love cannot be commanded. Therefore, conformity to commandments of any kind is assumed to be legalistic. They want to be spiritual and see being spiritual as something beyond law-keeping. The fact is, that the Ten Commandments as well as the two-commandment summary of them that Jesus gave are all cast in "thou shalt."<sup>41</sup> The Ten Words enunciated on Sinai contain the essential principles of righteousness that mirror the pure character of a holy God. Their explicitness sets forth a morality of permanent universal obligation. They stand apart from all temporal commands in scriptural revelation and are valid for all men in all places and at all times.<sup>42</sup>

When God commands: 'thou shalt not commit adultery,' He actually wills that adultery should not be committed, in the solid everyday sense in which the word is used by everyone. This is what God wills, this is what His Commandment means; only it means infinitely more than this, and it is this 'infinitely more' that remains hidden from the eyes of the Pharisee, the legalistic person . . . Man in his divine origin, man who has been created in the image of God, is the truly responsible man . . . [and] true responsibility is identical with this love, which is grounded in the love of God. In this love alone can man fulfil the destiny of his creation; in this love alone does he live and act responsibly towards his Creator; since he knows that he is bound in this way to his neighbor, and since he makes this bond the law of his life, he is a truly *human* being.<sup>43</sup>

Donald Bloesch says that there are two dangers that man must guard against. One is the Scylla of legalism and rigorism and the other is the Charybdis of antinomianism. But the ethics of the divine command unites law and grace, the indicative and the imperative. It shows us that we can live the authentic Christian life in obedience to the power of crucified love as seen in Jesus Christ.<sup>44</sup> Works-righteousness is an ever present danger. There is the idea that a certain degree of holiness is a necessary condition for justification. This is impossible. But there does need to be a breakthrough to victorious living.<sup>45</sup>

There are always those who would misconstrue the meaning of obedience and think that in order to be saved they must do some part of the work alone. But every such effort must fail.<sup>46</sup> On the other hand, while it is true that salvation is a free gift, obedience tests our love to our Father in heaven just as it tested Adam's love in the Garden of Eden. Grateful obedience for what Christ has done may take on many forms. It may be as profound as the obedience of Paul or as simple as the obedient response we see of the thief on the cross, who rebuked his friend for deriding Christ and then turned to the Lord and said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom" (Luke 23:39-43, NRSV).

Whatever form of grateful response obedience takes, there is no effortless Christianity. Activity is the very condition of life. "Those who endeavor to maintain Christian life by passively accepting the blessings that come through the means of grace, and do nothing for Christ, are simply trying to live by eating without working. And in the spiritual as in the natural world, this always results in degeneration and decay."<sup>47</sup>

### Obedience and Freedom

Freedom in Christ excludes the right of disobedience to exist. Christ stripped sin of any such rights. He came and died to set us free to obey. "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, so that the just requirement of the law

might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit" (Rom 8:1-4, NRSV). Salvation is not simply a forensic transaction to declare us righteous in spite of our sin, but to save us from sin and the slavery of the law as a means of salvation which also is sin. Salvation leads us into free and whole-hearted obedience.

Christ died not only to pay the debt of our sin, but to transform us into His likeness. This involves more than a simple change of behavior. No one can bring a clean thing out of an unclean. Can a leopard change its spots? Then how can you do good who by nature are evil (Jer 13:23)? It is not enough to perceive the loving-kindness of God, to see His benevolence, the fatherly tenderness of His character, or the justice of His law and acknowledge that it is established on eternal principles. Man is still carnal. There must be a power working from within, a new life implanted from above, before we can be saved from the power of sin, and that power is Jesus Christ. Only His grace can quicken the lifeless faculties of the soul.<sup>48</sup>

Without such inward change there is no experiential evidence that grace is real, that it really works. If we are good only after we have been transported to heaven, how do we know that we have been genuinely changed and our behavior is not due to more pleasant surroundings? But we know that God's grace is real because of what it does for us on this sinful planet. If we are empowered to live obedient lives in this sinful environment, then we know that we have been genuinely changed and that grace is real.

Christ said to Nicodemus, "I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above . . . . What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You must be born from above'. . . . Are you a teacher in Israel, and yet you do not understand these things? Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen" (John 3:3-11, NRSV). When we are born from above, "The thoughts and desires are brought into obedience to the will of Christ. The heart, the mind, are created anew in the image of Him who works in us to subdue all things to Himself. Then the law of God is written in the mind and heart, and we can say with

Christ, 'I delight to do Thy will, O my God'.<sup>49</sup> "To arouse those spiritually dead, to create new tastes, new motives, requires as great an outlay of power as to raise one from physical death."<sup>50</sup>

Born to obey. This is the message of Scripture. The new birth frees us from ourselves and sets us free for obedience. It is through free and willing obedience that we become elevated and ennobled.<sup>51</sup> Such obedience is the highest form of worship that man can render to his Maker. The last call to worship is a call to obedience. "Fear God and give him glory, for the hour of his judgment has come, and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water" (Rev 14:6, 7, NRSV).

### Endnotes

- 1 Reinhold Seeberg, *Textbook of the History of Doctrines*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1952), pp. 28-52. "Antinomianism," *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1924), pp. 57-59. Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1898), pp. 35, 36.
- 2 Ellen G. White, *Story of Redemption* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1947), pp. 34, 35.
- 3 Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, (Pacific Press Publishing Association, Mountain View, CA, 1890), p. 49.
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 60.
- 5 *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. I, (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1953), p. 1084. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 62.
- 6 Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1892), p. 17.
- 7 *SDABC I*, 1084.
- 8 White, *Ibid.*, p. 62.
- 9 Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, Book 1, (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1958), p. 366.
- 10 White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 364.
- 11 Lewis Smedes, *Mere Morality*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983), pp. vii, viii.
- 12 Edward Heppenstall, *Salvation Unlimited*, (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1974), p. 211.
- 13 *Time*, "Education," June 22, 1984.
- 14 Heppenstall, p. 215.
- 15 F. L. Cross, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, "Accommodation," (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 10. Walter A. Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, "Accommodation," (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1984), p. 9.
- 16 Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation* (A Textbook of Hermene-

- neutics), Third Revised Edition, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991), p. 99.
- 17 *Ibid.*, p. 101.
  - 18 White, *Desire of Ages*, p. 307.
  - 19 Smedes, pp. 4, 5.
  - 20 White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 34.
  - 21 *Ibid.*, pp. 43, 73.
  - 22 *Ibid.*, pp. 18, 19.
  - 23 *Ibid.*, pp. 47, 48.
  - 24 White, *Desire of Ages*, p. 717.
  - 25 White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 70.
  - 26 *Ibid.*, p. 52.
  - 27 *Ibid.*, p. 44.
  - 28 White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 312.
  - 29 *Ibid.*, p. 318.
  - 30 Heppenstall, pp. 438, 478.
  - 31 White, *Desire of Ages*, p. 204.
  - 32 Heppenstall, pp. 455-457.
  - 33 Samuel M. Jackson, *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, VIII, "Obedience," (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1964), p. 212.
  - 34 White, *Steps to Christ*, pp. 60, 61.
  - 35 White, *Selected Messages*, Book 1, p. 364.
  - 36 *Ibid.*, p. 377.
  - 37 Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. Two, "Ethics," (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), p. 165.
  - 38 Colin Brown, ed., *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol. 2, "hear, obey," (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), pp. 172-178.
  - 39 Gerhard Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. I, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), pp. 216-225.
  - 40 George A. Buttrick, ed., *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. 4, "Obedience," (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1962), pp. 580, 581.
  - 41 Carl F. H. Henry, *Christian Personal Ethics*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1957), p. 255.
  - 42 *Ibid.*, p. 269.
  - 43 Emil Brunner, *Man In Revolt*, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1947).
  - 44 Donald G. Bloesch, *Freedom for Obedience*, (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1987), p. 5.
  - 45 *Ibid.*, p. 139.
  - 46 White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 69.
  - 47 *Ibid.*, pp. 80, 81.
  - 48 *Ibid.*, pp. 18.
  - 49 White, *Desire of Ages*, p. 176.
  - 50 Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, March 12, 1901.
  - 51 Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, May 28, 1896.



## HEALTH AND SALVATION

By Mervyn G. Hardinge  
Professor Emeritus  
School of Public Health  
Loma Linda University

### Before the Entry of Sin

The brief record of the creation of man, summarized in Genesis 1 and 2, indicates that if man had refrained from eating of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and had partaken periodically of the fruit of the Tree of Life, he would have lived forever. Put in another way, obedience to God's requirements and continual consumption of the fruit of the Tree of Life would have assured him of eternal well-being.

Adam and Eve came from the hand of their Creator flawless, structurally and functionally designed to enjoy eternal health. But with their act of disobedience, that is, the violation of God's commands, they found themselves under the penalty of death. Only Divine intervention gave to them an extension of life. The future would see the quality of their health gradually decline and ultimately spent, with the loss of life itself.

Prior to the fall, Adam and Eve possessed perfect brains with the capacity for independent choice and decision-making. This God-like capability and freedom of choice made them arbiters of their own destiny. By the exercise of this gift they would develop their individual characters. God could not give them both freedom of choice and a mature character since the latter results from the exercise of the former.

God designed the most suitable environment for Adam and

Eve. Here, under the tutelage of heavenly angels and God Himself they could, by exercising their free choice, form characters suitable for eternal fellowship with unfallen beings. Such righteous character development required living in harmony with God's commands, which, by definition is obedience to the Creator's will.

The Lord blessed Adam and Eve with intelligence such as He had not given to any other creature.<sup>1</sup>

The Lord placed man upon probation, that he might form a character of steadfast integrity for his own happiness and for the glory of his Creator.<sup>2</sup>

### After the Entry of Sin

But Adam and Eve chose to eat the fruit of the forbidden tree. The characters which they were to develop were degraded by disobedience to that of self-serving sinners. To rescue them from this disastrous plight two things were necessary: (1) acquittal from the penalty of death (be given a second chance), and (2) acquisition, in the school of adversity, of characters that would fit them for heavenly citizenship.

The penalty of death was averted by the sacrifice of Christ. By faith the sinner must accept this (complete and perfect) atonement, in which he plays no part. But contrary to popular belief, Christ's death on Calvary could not provide the sinner with a character which fits him for heaven, in which he, the sinner, plays no part.

Unfallen Adam and Eve would have formed righteous characters had sin never entered this planet. So in the probationary period after the fall, it is the sinner's responsibility to cooperate with divine power to develop the sanctified character he would have developed had he never fallen.

It was possible for Adam, before the fall, to form a righteous character by obedience to God's law.<sup>3</sup>

The covenant of grace was first made with man in Eden, when after the fall, there was given a divine promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. To all men this covenant offered pardon, and the assisting grace of God for future obedience through faith in Christ.<sup>4</sup>

### The Nature of Choice

Comparing man with animals, we find several biological similarities. The basic requirements of air, water, sunshine, food, activity, rest, and avoidance of stress and harmful substances, are common essentials for both animal and human life. The functioning of most of the body-systems are, to use a common term in the world of computers, "programmed." The digestion of the food by the digestive tract, the elimination of wastes by the kidneys and bowels, the manufacture and maintenance of the blood, lymph, skin, and bones are under automatic control. The respiration of air by the lungs, and the circulation of blood through the blood vessels are, along with many other functions, carefully programmed.

The brains of man and animals are also similar in many respects. They are physical organs made up of specialized and non-specialized cells. Like the other organs of the body they require oxygen and produce waste carbon dioxide. They, too, are dependent on the nutrients obtained from the food eaten and the water drunk. And as they function, controlling and directing countless activities through the vast reaches of the systems they monitor, they can be assaulted by deprivation of essentials, overwhelmed by excesses, and hindered or injured by overwork and fatigue, or by the actions of poisons, such as drugs.

While creatures exhibit degrees of choice, the extent of this ability is limited. Apart from a few that can be influenced by man's desires, the animal kingdom is programmed so that birds are birds, and fishes fish. A cat is a cat, and cats, under similar circumstances, will behave similarly.

But what sets man apart from other animals is his non-programmed capacity of thought, and choice, and decision. This is the most incredible gift that God could give. Were it not for this gift, Christ need never have died.

### What is Health?

Viewing the body as a whole reveals that it is divided into support and functional systems. Each system consists of a series of discrete units, each unit specifically designed to fulfill its precise function. In Table 1 the body has been divided according to organization and function.

TABLE 1

THE BODY: ITS STRUCTURES AND FUNCTIONS

Functional Units	Support Systems	Guidance Systems
Enzymes	Respiratory	Nervous
Cells	Circulatory	Chemical
Organs	Digestive	Genetic
Systems	Eliminative	Mechanical

The smallest of all functional units is the enzyme. Enzymes are the workmen of the body. They consist of protein molecules. Each enzyme performs only one duty. Enzymes which differ in function have different protein structures. If a series of enzyme actions is required to manufacture a certain substance, say hemoglobin (the protein pigment in the blood which transports oxygen and carbon dioxide), each step requires a different enzyme or group of enzymes.

Let me illustrate both the complexity and immensity of enzyme activity. On the average, 2 to 3 million new red blood cells are manufactured and enter the circulation every second. These replace an equal number of worn out red cells that are removed from the circulation every second. Now each red cell contains approximately 400,000,000 hemoglobin molecules! Thus one billion new hemoglobin molecules are produced every second of life.

And this is but one example of hundreds of thousands of the body's other molecules which are also being made second by second, many in greater numbers and even at faster rates than are the hemoglobin molecules.

The enzymes and their assembly lines are housed within cells. Each cell is a factory where the enzyme workmen carry out their duties. The nucleus of the cell is the command post, guiding and directing the cell's activities. Groups of cells with similar functions are generally placed together. Smaller groups are called glands, large groups form the organs. Since a single cell may have more than one function, it may house hundreds to thousands of different enzymes.

But to maintain the functional activity of the body's glands, organs, and structures (examples: lymph glands, liver, brain, muscles, skeleton, and skin), each cell must be provided with fuel to function, raw materials with which to work, removal of manufactured products, and the elimination of chemical and gaseous wastes.

To accomplish this, the major support systems are constantly at work. The lungs and other respiratory structures blow off waste carbon dioxide and take on life-giving oxygen. The heart and blood vessels transport this oxygen-laden hemoglobin from the lungs to the body's cells and, on the return trip, carry back the waste gases from the cells to the lungs. Besides this, the nutrients, as they are released into the circulation by the digestive processes, are also carried by the blood to every part of the body. Food wastes are expelled by the bowel and chemical wastes by the kidneys.

And all this immense array of chemical and biological activity must be constantly monitored,—activated, guided, and controlled by the brain. In turn, for the brain to accomplish its task, it must be supported by its vast empire. Thus, *Health is the sum total of this orchestrated performance, the myriads of functional units working perfectly, adequately supported, and appropriately guided.* The Hebrew word *shalom* or peace, suggests that all systems are in harmony and are on "go."

### What is Disease?

When our first parents rebelled against the Creator by partaking of the fruit of the forbidden tree, they were spared from immediate death by our Savior's intervention. But what might have been unending health in sinless Eden was replaced by a process of dying. The infraction of moral law and physical law go hand-in-hand. When the physical laws of our bodies are violated, there is a stepwise failure in the execution of one or other of the body's functions.

First, there is loss in the quantity of output. If wrongs are not righted, this is followed by a loss in the quality of output. If the offense continues, tissue damage occurs, that is, the functional unit or units are impaired, and disease results. *Disease, then, is damaged structures with impaired functions.*

At creation health came first. Disease, like sin, is an intruder.

Health is not the absence of disease, but rather, disease is the absence of health. When sin is finally abolished, disease will be eradicated forever. Man will then enjoy unending health.

### Levels of Function

Let's take, as an example, a person who is critically ill from a serious disease or suffering from severe injuries acquired in a near-fatal accident. He is barely alive and unconscious. The two most basic functions sustaining his life are respiration and circulation (Figure 1). Should either fail, death would occur.

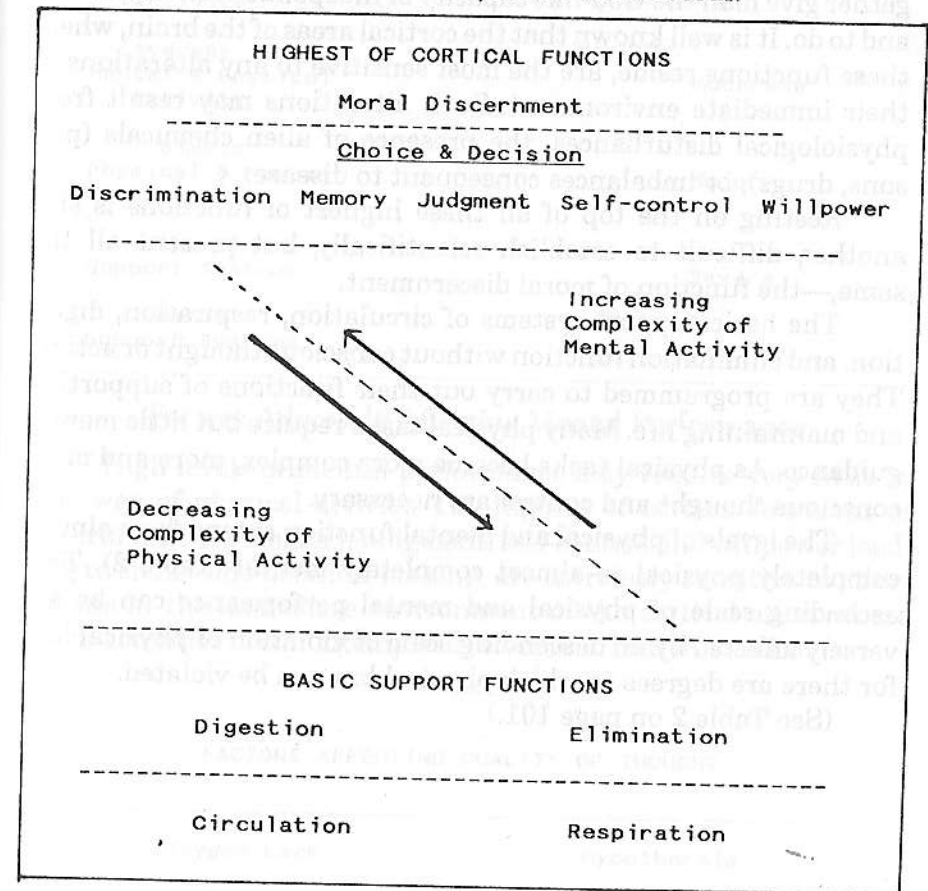


Figure 1. Increasing levels of complexity of physical and mental performance.

In Figure 1 the levels of functional activity are presented. As the functions of digestion and elimination, which had ceased to function, start operating, the individual moves into a slightly higher plain of physiological performance.

At this stage he may or may not have regained consciousness. As consciousness returns, functional capacity increases. With steady recovery, higher and still higher levels of physical and mental performance are regained. Eventually health is restored.

The highest intellectual functions of the brain are discrimination, memory, judgment, self-control, and will power. These together give man the God-like capacity of independent choice, to will and to do. It is well known that the cortical areas of the brain, where these functions reside, are the most sensitive to any alterations in their immediate environment. Such alterations may result from physiological disturbances, the presence of alien chemicals (poisons, drugs), or imbalances consequent to disease.

Resting on the top of all these highest of functions is still another, difficult to establish scientifically, but present all the same,—the function of moral discernment.

The basic support systems of circulation, respiration, digestion, and elimination function without conscious thought or action. They are programmed to carry out their functions of supporting and maintaining life. Many physical tasks require but little mental guidance. As physical tasks become more complex, more and more conscious thought and control are necessary.

The levels of physical and mental function extend from almost completely physical to almost completely mental (Table 2). This ascending scale of physical and mental performance can be adversely affected by an descending scale of violation of physical law, for there are degrees to which physical law can be violated.

(See Table 2 on page 101.)

TABLE 2

## PHYSICAL &amp; MENTAL FUNCTION and VIOLATIONS OF PHYSICAL LAW

Levels of Physical & Mental Function	Degrees of Violation of Physical Law
Moral Discernment	Slight
Choice & Decision in General	Small
Complex Mental or Physical Activity	Minor
Average Mental & Physical Activity	Moderate
Simple Physical & Mental Activity	Major
General Support Systems	Severe
Basic Support Systems	Extreme

## Factors Adversely Affecting Mental Performance

High levels of mental performance may require very little in the way of physical activity. The highest of cortical functions of discrimination, memory, judgment, self-control and willpower leading to choice and decision-making, are extremely sensitive to alterations in the immediate environment of the cortical areas where such activities occur. Examples are summarized in Table 3.

TABLE 3

## FACTORS AFFECTING QUALITY OF THOUGHT

Oxygen Lack	Hypothermia
Fatigue	Dehydration
Nutritional State	Drugs
Inadequate Exercise	

**Oxygen lack.** It is well known that decreased oxygen to the brain will diminish the ability for these highest of cortical areas to function efficiently. Mountain climbers, struggling to reach high altitudes without being adequately acclimatized, have made judgmental errors costing their lives. This is also true of airplane pilots. Because of this, in the United States, all commercial pilots must wear oxygen masks or be in pressurized cabins when flying at 10,000 feet or higher.

**Fatigue.** Whether caused by prolonged hours of work or lack of sleep, fatigue reduces the ability of the brain to make sharp decisions. In a study reported in the *Journal of Aviation, Space, and Environmental Medicine*, pilots were tested for critical decision-making ability while flying four engine jets.<sup>5</sup> They were tested when rested, and later tested when fatigued by long work schedules or sleep deprivation. Each acted as his own control. Brain wave recordings (EEG) were made throughout the flights. The pilots were not apprised as to the type of study, but the co-pilots were, and, whenever necessary, could take over the controls in order to avert an accident. The brain-wave recordings of pilots, when rested or fatigued, are shown in Figure 2.

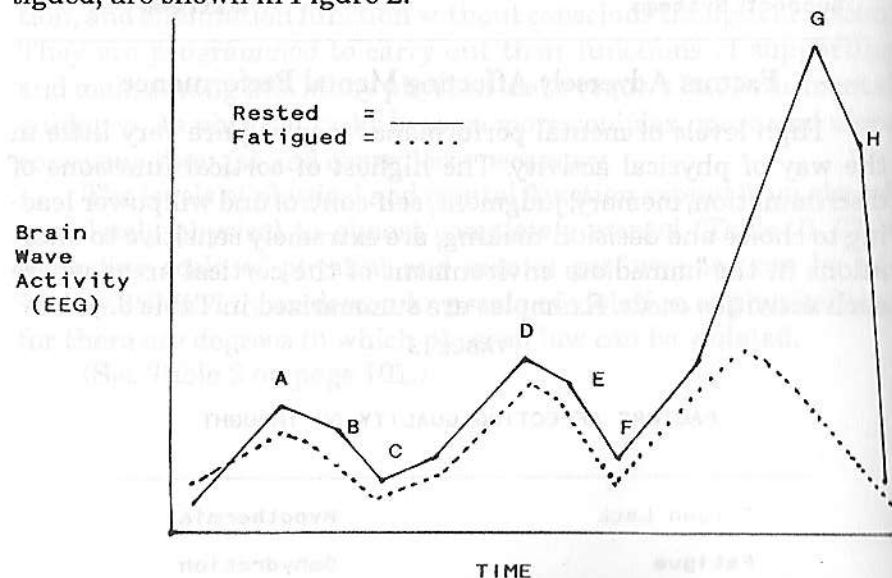


Figure 2. The brain wave recordings (EEG) of a pilot are recorded, both when rested and fatigued (for details see above). The tired pilot was able to force himself to decide when relatively simple decisions were concerned (D). However, when the decisions required difficult choices his brain was

First, observe the brain wave activity, during flight, of a pilot when rested. Take-off required increased cortical activity (A). Once the plane had reached the desired altitude the pilot began to relax (B). At C a problem was introduced. Immediately brain wave activity increased. The increase in activity stopped when the pilot thought he had resolved the problem (D), but the rate of decline was relatively slow until at point E, he was sure the trouble had been resolved.

At point F, a life-threatening problem was now introduced. The same type of spiking is seen at points G and H as was observed at points D and E, as the pilot realizes the problem has been handled. Note that a serious problem required considerably more cortical activity.

When the same pilot, now tired, went through a similar flight schedule, his brain wave recordings (dotted line) were never as high as when he was rested. He was able to solve the minor problem, but try as he did, he was unable to resolve the life-threatening crisis. Had the co-pilot not taken over the controls, the plane would have crashed.

**Hypothermia.** When the core body temperature drops below 90° F (32° C), brain function is depressed and thought processes are slowed and confused.<sup>6</sup>

**Nutrition.** Extreme obesity or even a single heavy meal is known to reduce mental efficiency. On the other side of the scale, starved people think slowly and have difficulty putting their thoughts together. Even the generous intake of certain vitamins, such as A and D, reduce the ability of the brain to make decisions efficiently. Deficiencies of vitamins B1, B3, and B12 do the same thing.<sup>7</sup>

**Exercise.** Insufficient exercise adversely affects mental efficiency. A systematic program of exercise, three times each week for a period of six months, increased physical fitness 20 percent, but decision making 70 percent.<sup>8</sup> Both the Scriptures and Ellen White support this observation.

After the entrance of sin God forced man to work, saying: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread" (Gen 3:19). In the book *Education* we read: "Physical inaction lessens not only mental but moral power."<sup>9</sup>

**Dehydration.** Significant loss of body water, due to inadequate

intake or excessive loss (diarrhea, vomiting, profuse sweating) results in thickening of the blood, serious changes in the mineral balances of body fluids, a rise in body temperature, with irritability, mental confusion, and lethargy.

**Drugs.** A large number of *drugs* affect the higher centers where thought processes occur. The effects may include slowed mentation, faulty discrimination, poor judgment, loss of self-control, and confused thought and finally inability to choose and decide. For example, increasing the intake of beverage alcohol causes all of the above (See Table 4).

Table 4

The Effects of Alcohol on the Brain and Nerves

Special Sense	Actions
Sight	Blurred, deranged
Hearing	Dulled, out of tune
Taste	Dulled
Smell	Dulled
Touch	Dulled
Pain	Dulled, lost
Position	Deranged, imbalance
Direction	Distorted, confused

Electrophysiological studies suggest that alcohol, like other general anesthetics, exerts its first depressant action upon those parts of the brain involved in the most highly integrated functions. . . . The finer grades of discrimination, memory, concentration, and insight are dulled, and then lost.

Carefully performed experiments have shown that, in general, alcohol increases neither mental not physical abilities. Although the individual often firmly believes that his performance is greatly improved, psychological tests involving typewriting, target practice, and complicated mental problems indicate that efficiency is, in fact, decreased. Tasks requiring less skill, thought, and attention are less markedly affected, especially if they are mechanical in nature.<sup>10</sup>

### The Special Senses and the Soul

The special senses are the only means by which the conscious

mind is made aware of its internal and external environments. Through these senses, thoughts are induced which in turn initiate responses—either to be stored in the memory bank or communicated to the physical or social world. The special senses included classically sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch; but they also include pain, and the senses of position and direction.

Speaking of these senses, Ellen White calls them “the avenues of the soul.”

All should guard the senses, lest Satan gain victory over them; for these are the avenues of the soul.<sup>11</sup>

She clearly points to our responsibility to guard these portals to our minds, and mentions some by name.

Yet we have a work to do to resist temptation. Those who would not fall a prey to Satan’s devices *must guard well the avenues to the soul*. They must avoid *reading, seeing, and hearing* that which will suggest impure thoughts. The mind should not be left to wander. . . .<sup>12</sup>

To the above can be added the senses of taste and touch through which Satan commonly gains access. Appetite and passion are perhaps the most common means of man’s downfall. But God has promised help to close these gates to our souls.

Our only safety is to be shielded by the grace of God every moment, and not put out our own spiritual eyesight so that we will call evil, good, and good, evil. Without hesitation or argument, *we must close and guard the avenues of the soul against evil*.<sup>13</sup>

These special senses or “the avenues to the soul,” can be used by either the Holy Spirit or the Devil and his agents. Man, as a free moral agent, chooses whose influence will bear sway as his mind functions at the highest levels. The Holy Spirit, using these “avenues” with the willing cooperation of the human, can develop in in him a sanctified Christ-like character through which are shown the spiritual graces of love, joy, peace, long suffering, goodness, meekness, and temperance, as illustrated in Figure 3.

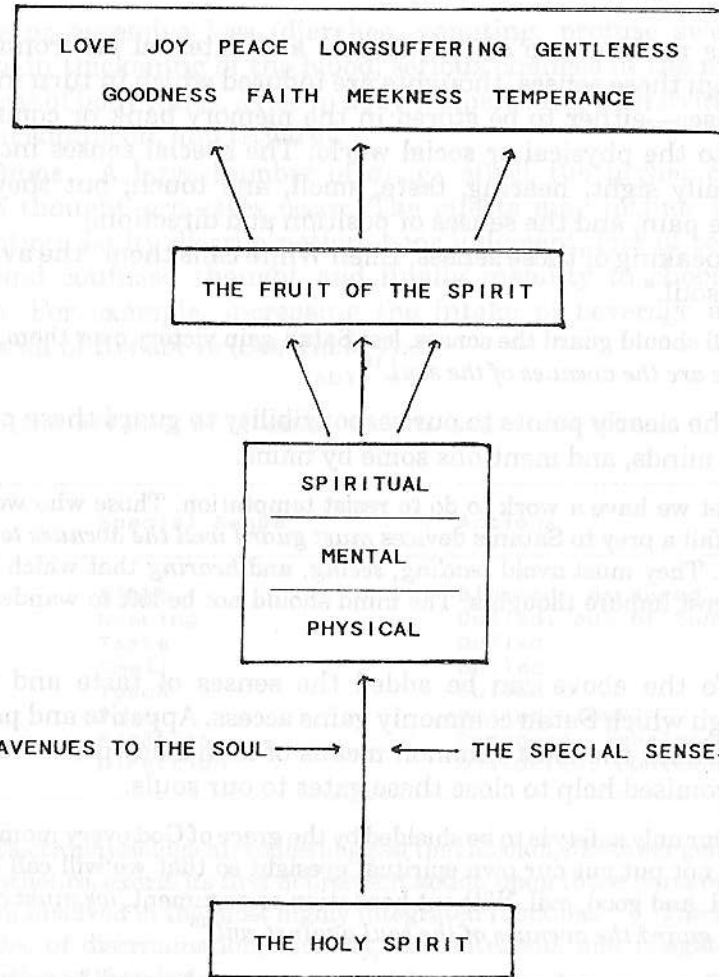


Figure 3. The Holy Spirit, acting through the special senses, also called "the avenues of the soul," transforms our natures, and allows the fruits of the Spirit to be revealed.

The devil, of course, if he is able to use them, will do everything in his power to derange, dull, or block these avenues so man will be deprived of the Holy Spirit's aid in his warfare against sin. That these physical senses can be dulled, deranged, or blocked is well illustrated by the action of beverage alcohol on them (Table 4).

We humans do not *have* bodies. We *are* bodies. Our brains are the command post of these citadels, and the avenues of entrance need ever to be guarded.

The body is the only medium through which the mind and the soul are developed for the up building of character. Hence it is that the adversary of souls directs his temptations to the enfeebling and degrading of the physical powers. . . . The tendencies of our physical nature, unless under the dominion of a higher power, will surely work ruin and death.<sup>14</sup>

The brain-nerve which communicate with the entire system are the only medium through which Heaven can communicate to man and affect his inmost life.<sup>15</sup>

The individual's lifestyle then, determines the manner of character development or sanctification. As far as the devil is concerned, he does not care whether the person's moral discernment is dulled by deficiencies or excesses, as long as the individual is intemperate.

Intemperance of any kind benumbs the perspective organs and so weakens the brain-nerve power that eternal things are not appreciated, but placed upon a level with the common. . . . If our physical habits are not right, our mental and moral powers cannot be strong; for great sympathy exists between the physical and the moral.<sup>16</sup>

A close sympathy exists between the physical and the moral nature. The standard of virtue is elevated or degraded by the physical habits. . . . Any habit which does not promote healthful action in the human system degrades the higher and nobler faculties. Wrong habits of eating and drinking lead to errors in thought and action.<sup>17</sup>

And here it is well to consider Ellen White's beautiful definition of temperance:

True temperance teaches us to dispense entirely with everything hurtful, and to use judiciously that which is healthful.<sup>18</sup>

#### Bible Examples

In Isaiah 7:14 is the well known prophecy of Christ's virgin birth.

Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name, Immanuel.

Less well known is vs. 15, an integral part of this same prophecy.

Butter and honey shall he eat, that he might know to refuse the evil, and choose the good.

The phrase "butter and honey" or "milk and honey" occurs 22 times in the Scriptures. Without exception, it describes completeness. Any land, for example, whose rivers flowed with "milk and honey" had every thing. Thus this Hebrew phrase regarding a diet of "milk and honey" indicates one that lacks nothing and is completely adequate.

The prophet goes on record that Christ would eat a completely adequate diet that "He may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good." Thus, Christ set us an example of living in harmony with physical law so that His moral discernment might not be impaired. When dying on the cross, Christ refused the drink offered to Him, lest His clarity of mind be diminished, even for a moment (Matt 27:34).

### Summary and Conclusions

Man, at his creation, could not be given both freedom of choice and a mature character. In his ideal environment, with the help of heavenly instructors, man was (by his choices) to develop a character worthy of eternal fellowship with unfallen beings.

Subsequent to Adam's fall, thanks to the intervention of our Savior, he was given a another chance, although under adverse conditions, to develop that same heavenly character, again with the aid of heavenly agencies.

Wise choices and decisions, to know, and judge, and act, are dependent on precise information transmitted by our special senses. This information must, in turn, be processed by the functions of discrimination, memory, judgment, self-control, and will-power.

The quality of our decisions determines the type of characters we develop.

These highest cortical functions can be affected adversely by a wide variety of conditions, such as, fatigue, dehydration, inadequate exercise, excesses or deficiencies of food intake, harmful

chemicals. By the loss of health and the onset of disease the situation is made worse.

Satan, well aware of our physiological design, is bent on thwarting God's plan to aid us in character development. Since the special senses are the only avenues through which the Holy Spirit can aid us in our choices and actions, Satan's goal is to disrupt these pathways.

We are living in the final days of this world's history. Christ, looking down the stretches of time, saw the world awash with moral pollution of every kind, and likened the end time to the days before the flood:

But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.

For as the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, [indulging appetite and passion] until the day that Noe entered into the ark.

And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be (Matt 24:37-39).

And within this moral pollution, the Devil is going about his work like a roaring lion seeking his prey. Christ warned His followers that just before His Second Advent, Satan's deceptions would be so cunning that "if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect" (Matt 24:24).

To protect us from these delusions by keeping our minds clear and sharp, God in His infinite wisdom and love, gave His remnant people the wonderful, scientifically vindicated, message of Health Reform. This message, given in language all can understand, describes a lifestyle that preserves, above and beyond its many health benefits, moral discernment.

The apostle John expressed his greatest longing when he wrote:

Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth (3 John 2).

Having good health won't assure us of salvation, but it will aid us in thinking more clearly, and hearing more surely the voice of God:



And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left (Isa 30:21).

And then we have another encouraging promise as we seek for a sanctified character:

When we desire to be set free from sin, and in our great need cry out for a power out of and above ourselves, the powers of the soul are imbued with the divine energy of the Holy Spirit, and they obey the dictates of the will in fulfilling the will of God.<sup>19</sup>

Surely it behooves us, living in the final moments before our Lord's return, to strive, with God's help, to live in harmony with nature's laws, that our *health* might provide us with undimmed moral discernment to make our *salvation* sure.

#### Endnotes

- 1 Ellen G. White, *SDA Bible Commentary*, Vol 1, p. 1082.
- 2 Ellen G. White, *Redemption*, p. 8.
- 3 Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 62.
- 4 Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs & Prophets*, p. 370.
- 5 J. S. Howlett, A. E. Hay, G. R. Shergold, and H. M. Ferres, "Workload and Fatigue In-Flight EEG Changes," *Aviation, Space, and Environmental Med* 49:1187-1202, 1978.
- 6 H. R. Simon, "Exercise, Health, and Sports Medicine," *Scientific American Current-Topics in Medicine* 1:III:1-32, 1990.
- 7 In Hamilton, Whitney, and Sizer, *Nutrition Concepts and Controversies*, (St. Paul, MN: West Publishing Co., 1988), pp. 205-209.
- 8 Reported in *Am Health* Nov/Dec, 1983.
- 9 Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 209.
- 10 J. M. Ritchie, "The Aliphatic Alcohols," *Goodman & Gilman's Pharmacological Basis of Therapeutics*, (New York: MacMillan Pub. Co., Inc., 1980), p. 376.
- 11 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*, Vol 3, p. 507.
- 12 Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 460.
- 13 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*, Vol 3, p. 324.
- 14 Ellen G. White, *Temperance*, p. 102.
- 15 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*, Vol 2, p. 347.
- 16 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*, Vol 3, p. 50-51.
- 17 Ellen G. White, *Temperance*, p. 18.
- 18 Ellen G. White, *Temperance*, p. 138.
- 19 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 466.

*Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 3/2 (1992):111-122.  
Article copyright © 1992 by E. Edward Zinke.

## THE PILGRIMAGE OF A BELIEVER

By E. Edward Zinke  
Silver Spring, Maryland

I will attempt to describe for you the intellectual journey I have experienced as a believer, reared and educated in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. My parents were and continue to be dedicated and active members of the Church, and our family spent some time in the mission field. Upon their return to the United States, my parents continued to be active in the development of new churches in the community in which they lived. From grade school through graduate school, earning a seminary degree, my studies were exclusively in Adventist schools and under the tutelage of very dedicated teachers.

#### Introduction to the Role of Reason

Two basic principles stood out in my education: the absolute freedom of the individual and the necessity to pursue truth. The highest exercise of reason was the task of thinking for ourselves. Not only was it our privilege, but also our duty to follow truth—wherever it might be found, and wherever it might lead.

Thus students stood in the line of the Reformation. We were free from the domination of the church, the state, and the Bible to both think and know for ourselves. Freedom was absolute, it was self-existent. Freedom was a given. God, who operated in harmony with the laws of the universe, granted us freedom of thought, and submitted Himself to the laws of evidence. The free exercise of reason provided the key by which truth could be measured.

Truth was discovered when we exercised our reason to discover the basic data of the universe, the basic facts of the case. Then,

through our reasoning processes, we could integrate the basic facts into a whole, which process resulted in knowledge. If we came to an erroneous conclusion, it was not the fault of reason itself, but a fault in the use of the reasoning process. Such a fault could be remedied by further rational analysis of the problem. As students, we were taught to question every theory, philosophy, and idea in order to determine whether it stood up to the criteria of reason necessary for the determination of truth.

Ours was the age of science. Man could place himself on the moon. He could perform wonders on the operating table. Even unsolved problems were still in our control. It was simply a matter of time, money, and the skillful use of our senses through the means of the instrumentation which science had so ably invented, and solutions could be found to the unsolved problems of the day.

The same was also true on the social scene. By the use of humankind's creative ingenuity, and by careful analysis and application of the laws of sociology and psychology, given time, dedication, and talent, we could solve the problems of the social ills of society.

Through the means of history, archaeology, and geology, humankind could search back in time and determine what really happened in the history of the earth.

### Reason and My Adventist Religion

Fortunately, for us as Christians, and particularly as Seventh-day Adventists, our brand of Christianity was the most rational way to live and think. We had only to share this knowledge with other individuals, who were sincerely seeking for truth, and they would also choose to be Seventh-day Adventists.

We were taught that Scripture and Ellen White also supported this view. God, it was agreed, never asks for our belief without giving us sufficient evidence upon which to base our faith.<sup>1</sup> God appeals to us to come and reason together (Isa 1:18)<sup>2</sup> And to confirm all of this, we were told that the book of Hebrews itself taught that faith is based upon evidence.<sup>3</sup> Scripture and Ellen White thus gave a call for a rationally<sup>4</sup> based religion. Biblical revelation was authoritative, because it was reasonable.

It was the task of the believer to gather the data, the evidence,

and bring it together in such a way as to make a coherent whole. Thus, the Christian arrived at knowledge. Then, based upon this data now brought together into a unit of knowledge, the believer could project (like a hypothesis) how the new data coming into the system would relate to what was already known. This projection was a faith statement into the unknown, based upon what was known. Thus, reason and science provided a model for the determination of the nature of faith.

### Relations Between Nature, Bible, and Reason

What then was the relationship between data from the natural world, data from God's special revelation, the Bible, and reason? Since the natural world, Scripture and reason all came from God, they should be in harmony with one another. Nature brought limited truths about God. Revelation (the Bible) brought additional truths not discoverable by nature.

Although God's supernatural revelation brought additional information, it nonetheless was congruent with what was discovered to be true in the natural world. Therefore, the task of the believer was to synthesize God's revelation in nature with His special revelation in the Bible so they harmonized with one another.

It was exciting to me to think that there were in the natural world evidences that could be used to prove my faith. I wanted a rock bottom foundation upon which to base my acceptance of God and the validity of the Bible as His word. Such reasoning would use universal argumentation that would be acceptable to everyone. Since this argumentation would be in harmony with the nature of things, it would be acceptable to everyone who took their rationality seriously.

Thus, I sought evidences from the sciences and the humanities—from such diverse disciplines as medicine, biology, geology, archaeology, history and philosophy. With such a firm foundation provided by reason, I could surely prove the existence of a personal God and bring conviction to any rational being that the Bible was His Word. Thus, reason could provide a firm foundation for accepting the supernatural and for bringing about a synthesis between the natural and the supernatural.

### An Illustration

Such theological thinking can take many directions. I will illustrate one example by focusing on a theology which derives its understanding of God from a particular notion of love. A key criterion in establishing the truth of this theological stance was my question, Does this idea coincide with my idea of a God of love?

If a theological concept was not worthy of my view of God, it had to be reinterpreted in such a way so as to make it acceptable. The concept of God was judged, and, therefore, formed according to my concept of love. Fortunately, for me, my concept of love was right. Such thinking brought about a neat rational explanation of the judgment. The judgment took place in the amphitheater of the universe. The universe looked on as *God* was brought into the court of judgment. The inhabitants of the universe were free to determine rationally whether God was a God of justice and love.

Within this context, the biblical God of justice had to be reinterpreted. The eradication of sinners was not God's act. It was simply the result of human beings separating themselves from the Lifegiver. Furthermore, Christ, by His death, did not take our sins upon Himself. Such a concept was contrary to rationality. What justice is there if one man dies in the place of another? The notion of a substitutionary atonement was pagan. The cross was explained only as a manifestation of the love of God that the universe might be won over by this expression of the Divine concern.

Such theological expression was exciting to my searching mind. I was relieved of the embarrassment of accepting God as He is represented in parts of the Old and New Testaments. The stumbling block of the cross was removed. I could now live with the God of the Bible in contemporary society.

### The New Dimensions

During this time, I became acquainted with the application of the historical-critical method to the study of the Bible. The historical-critical method is basically the application of humanistic methods to the study of literature. Due to my rationalistic background, it was only natural for me to accept its validity for the study of the Bible. The historical-critical method was in harmony with the way my mind had been trained to operate. Furthermore, the method

itself could be used to defend the Bible against the attacks of the critics. The end surely justified the means.

When my educational pursuits transferred from the west coast to the mid-west, a new dimension came into play in my theological education. Neo-orthodoxy, and concepts closer to existentialism, began to take on more weight. The Bible was not the Word of God. It merely contained the Word of God. The subjectivity of human knowledge was emphasized. Truth tended to be relative to the individual. However tempting such positions might have been, they finally had little power, for I was well trained in the rationality of knowledge and of human thought.

By education, I was fully a twentieth century thinker. I lived in the age of man come of age. Man could think for himself. He could discover his own knowledge, determine his own criterion for truth. Truth could be discovered, known, and affirmed apart from any relation with God. Man had an independent standpoint in the universe from which he could determine even the truth regarding God and the Bible as His word. Only thus could man preserve his freedom and rationality, the key principles of this century. I had adopted a stance of an intellectual righteousness by works.

### Questions and Surprises

Occasional voices declared the authority of Scripture. Sometimes, these voices confused me, because they were also spoken in the context of the finality of rationality. Nonetheless, the idea of the authority of Scripture was attractive, for it seemed to be in harmony with Seventh-day Adventist belief. Furthermore, it made sense. If the Bible was God's word, surely it must be authoritative.

Questions began to arise. Obviously, reason provided the final foundation and criterion for truth, but then, what was the authority of the Bible?

At this time, I began doctoral studies at Catholic University, Washington, D.C. One of my projects involved a paper on the history of method in theology. Among other themes the paper required an argumentation for the authority of Scripture from a rational perspective. (At the time, I did not realize that I was delineating an oxymoron).

In the course of a discussion with my professor, I attempted to

get down to the fundamentals of theology. I wanted to get in touch with the nature of things, with the basic data, with the truth which stood in the universe outside of me and could be objectively understood by my mind, with the basic nature of the universe. With such knowledge, I reasoned, I could get in touch with the nature of the universe and thereby develop a theology which would be in harmony with the way things are—with the truth.

God and the universe were so interrelated, that I could start with the natural world and use that as a foundation for speaking about Him. That same foundation could be used as a basis for integrating knowledge from nature and special revelation. From the standpoint of an understanding of the nature of the universe, I could argue for the existence of God and the authority of the Bible as His Word.

Imagine my surprise when the professor paused, looked at me from across the desk, and said, "Ed, you are a medieval theologian."<sup>6</sup> I was stunned. I am not a Catholic medieval theologian. I am an Adventist, I said to myself.

A further surprise was the reaction of my peers to the paper on the authority of Scripture. The reaction from both my Catholic professor and some of my peers in the classroom was the same. The problem of subjectivity precludes the possibility of basing theology upon the authority of Scripture they argued. I attempted to answer their questions from a philosophical perspective without satisfaction. To my surprise, the answers which I could not find philosophically lay already within the Bible and Ellen G. White. That is a story itself.

#### Discovery: I Was a Humanist

For the next nine months I began a both an intense search and an intense struggle. Passages such as 1 Corinthians 1 & 2 did not make sense to me. "Christ sent me not . . . to preach . . . with wisdom of words; that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God" (1 Cor 1:17; 2:5, KJV). "Your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God" (1 Cor 2:5, KJV). Foolishness?

Saving faith is the gift of God, Paul said (Eph 2:8) that comes by hearing the Word (Rom 10:17). But how could I take such a step?

After all, wasn't I free? Wasn't my mind the foundation and measure of truth? Didn't I use rationality to build a rock-solid foundation for faith? Because of the fundamental nature of reason, knowledge had a firm and certain foundation.

The idea of giving up the autonomy of my reason was frightening. To accept something in its place as the foundation of faith and knowledge was something to be resisted with all of my will. It was horrible, it was sinful!

My education had taught me to question everything in the pursuit of truth. Everything, that is, except reason itself. Reason was sacrosanct; it was the unquestioned starting point for true knowledge; it was the obvious starting point from which any true human being would view the universe.

I had thought that I was a child of the Protestant Reformation, but now I began to realize that I was a child of the Enlightenment instead. The Reformation taught the subservience of man to the Bible as the foundation of faith, knowledge, and the exercise of reason. The Enlightenment freed man from an alleged bondage to Scripture. It demanded man's autonomy even in his decision regarding God and His Word. I began to realize that I was a humanist, that is, that I had placed faith in man's mind as the final arbiter of truth, and had made all else subject to man. Man was autonomous.

Upon reflection, I began to realize that I had accepted contemporary Western thought: its notions of freedom, truth, knowledge, and love—along with its political systems—as normative for describing the nature of God, and the way He operates within the arena of the universe. God wins His way in the universe in the same way in which the president wins his way in American politics, by the will of the people, so I had thought. The judgment is election time. The people make a rational decision regarding the righteousness and loveability of God. The task of the theologian was to construct a God who was likeable, who could win in the religious arena. I wanted a God who would bring about a "kinder gentler universe." I needed a God who could spell potato. Thus, by way of the notion of the God of love, the theologian could win the world to God.

Questions began to arise regarding the viability of such a system. What made the Western system of thought and politics the

norm for determining the nature and actions of God? Was there in the universe a set of principles by which God operated? Was this set of principles somehow available to man by means of rational thought, sense data, or existential experience? If such a set of principles were available, who would be God—the set of principles, or God? If such a set of principles were available to man, would he be capable of discerning and interpreting them in any universal manner? Or, would the notion of God and, thus the criteria for the Godhood vary with every generation, location, and finally with each individual? Finally, would such a God, derived by such a procedure, be representative of the God of the universe, or would He be simply an idol of man's philosophical making?

#### Salvation and Scripture: Gifts

In the particular climate of the Adventist church in which I was reared and educated, the subject of righteousness by faith was emphasized. Righteousness was the gift of God, rather than the creation of man. In his sinful and proud state, man sought independence from God. He relied upon his own resources as the basis for his righteousness. By contrast, the sinner had to accept his own sinful state and to acknowledge his need of a Savior.

The penitent must learn to do what was repugnant to our contemporary society. He must rely upon a righteousness that was not of his own making, but was the gift of God. To be willing to turn from personal righteousness to that of Jesus Christ required conversion: a totally new perspective on life and a willingness, by the grace of God, to accept and follow that perspective.

The renewed call within the Adventist church and within my own life to accept the righteousness of Christ as a gift was like a spring of living water to a thirsty soul. I then began to realize that God was calling not only for conversion of my heart, but also for conversion of my mind.

I saw that God asks not only that we view righteousness from His perspective, but also truth and knowledge. Furthermore, I saw that the gains brought about by a renewal in our understanding of righteousness by faith could be lost without a similar epistemological shift in the area of knowledge. That is to say, to declare man autonomous in the area of knowledge could be paralleled by a

renewed emphasis upon man's need to be in control of his own righteousness.

Christ had declared Himself the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6). But I had been trying to find truth apart from Him so that I could do Him the favor of pulling Him into the canon of truth. I had attempted to make reason and sense data the standpoint from which truth could be seen, measured and verified. Now it began to dawn on me that God had intended His Word to play that role. I had been looking for the rock-solid foundation that man by his ingenuity could create. Now I began to realize that the rock-solid foundation was the Word of God which came as the *gift* from God rather than a thought system of my own creation. Rather than founding the validity of Scripture upon man's thinking, man's thinking was to be founded upon the Bible, the Word of God. Righteousness and Scripture were both Divine gifts to man.

#### The Scriptures: Authority and Role

The significance of the Reformation to me had meant absolute freedom to determine my own truth. Now, I began to understand the meaning of *Sola Scriptura*, the Bible alone, the battle cry of the Reformation. The Bible was not to be founded upon the pope, church, philosophy, nature, reason, the structure of existence, or any other property of man or the world. The Bible, under the Spirit, did not rest upon any other authority. It was its own authority.

Furthermore, I saw that the Bible could not be interpreted from any other perspective, or philosophical system, no matter how ancient or modern. Thus, my world view for the study of Scripture must not come from Plato or Aristotle, nor from contemporary rationalism, empiricism, existentialism or any other kind of humanism. It was not simply a question of which brand of humanism best represented reality. Rather, it was a question of humanism versus the Word of God.

*Sola Scriptura* also meant that the Bible must not be interpreted from the standpoint of any external methods. The allegorical method of the first century must not be imposed upon it, nor must it be interpreted from the standpoint of some contemporary method, such as the historical-critical method. To do so, would

make Scripture vulnerable to the imposition of an alien culture upon its interpretation.

The Bible was to be its own interpreter. Under the Holy Spirit, the Bible provides its own foundation, philosophical context, method of interpretation, and general historical context for its understanding. The Bible, as a whole, is the final arbiter of its context and meaning.

This does not mean that God cannot speak through the church, nature, reason, sense, or human experience. But it did mean that Scripture rather than man was the norm by which we determine where else God spoke, and the meaning of that message.

Thus, for the Reformers, the standpoint from which the Christian was to view the universe and life did not reside within the believer, but within the Word of God. Because God had spoken, the human family could understand the world around them, the significance of their own life, and the way they should live.

Whereas, I had thought it was a human (Christian) responsibility to convince the world by superior wisdom, it now became apparent that I had been attempting to play the role of the Holy Spirit. It is the human (Christian) task to proclaim the message, but it is the role of the Holy Spirit to bring conviction. The power of the gospel lay not in the wisdom of humankind, but in the power of God. Furthermore, God is capable of taking care of His word. The Bible does not need to be defended. It is the Word of God. It is more awesome to come under the power of God, than it is to come into the wisdom of man.

My notion of freedom also changed. Without realizing it, I had thought that freedom was self-existent. By uncritically accepting the culture in which I lived, I had granted to freedom a property which belongs to God alone.

Now I began to realize that freedom is the gift of God, rather than a right inherent in the universe to which God was Himself subject. The choice was not one of autonomy, nor was it to become autonomous, but rather to live either in the service of God or Satan.

I began to understand that I had been a conservative humanist. The dividing line for me had been between those who accept or reject such things as a six day creation, a short chronology, the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ, and a literal, visible Second Coming.

Now I began to realize that these doctrines are conclusions that come at the end of the path—that what determines the conclusion is the path taken by the theologian years earlier. The dividing line was now seen to be the way in which the theologian thought. Did he intend to establish his thinking upon the foundation of the Word of God, the Bible, or did he choose some other foundation as his starting point and guide to his theological method.

Eventually, I came to see that conservative humanism was the seed bed of liberalism. A conservative humanist already accepts the epistemology, the method of thinking, of his contemporaries. But when he accepts as normative the contemporary method of thinking, he places himself in a position independent of God. He embarks upon a path whose destination is not the illumination of the Word of God, but rather the imposition of the contemporary culture upon the Bible. Thus, the dividing line between the biblically based and the non-biblically based theologian is not doctrine, but their respective attitudes toward the authority of the Bible.

In the wilderness, Christ was confronted with a philosophical option: a God of love would not leave His Son in the wilderness without food and companionship, would He? He was also tempted with an empirical option: I will prove My divinity by turning stone into bread. Instead He chose to live by "It is written."

The Word of God is powerful. It brought worlds into existence. It gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, life to the lifeless. When we read the Bible, we are not contemplating dead words on a page. It is the living Word of God! It is as if God Himself were in the room speaking with us. God's Word is powerful. It is capable under the Holy Spirit of making its own way into the human heart. It is self-authenticating, and all-sufficient, and able to instruct sinners in the way of salvation.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Although my teachers always emphasized the importance of context for the interpretation of a particular document, unfortunately they never referred me to the context of this passage. Rather, they took it out of context and interpreted it from a rationalistic context.

<sup>2</sup> Again, the context was disregarded.

<sup>3</sup> I was so ingrained in a rationalist interpretation of this passage, that it took continual reading over a period of time to see that the passage states that faith is itself the evidence.

<sup>4</sup> I am using the word rationalism loosely. Although many of my professors seemed to see reason as the foundation for viewing the universe, and the criteria for determining truth, they were probably more properly classified in this age of science as empiricists. For the data collected by the sciences and the humanities, rather than the deductions of pure reason seemed to be the foundation of their decisions. I suspect that most of my professors did not recognize themselves as humanists. They probably saw themselves as representing the way things are.

<sup>5</sup> Note that although I was using metaphysical type thinking, I had also gone far beyond the medieval theologian, for I had affirmed the autonomy of the mind from pope, church, state, and the Bible. Man was free to found and determine his own truth apart from any external authority. Man had come of age. The rightful appreciation that Seventh-day Adventists have of God as seen through nature seems to have been taken in directions that are inappropriate. Rather than seeing appreciation of God through nature as the result of biblical theology where divine revelation in Scripture is the foundation, the revelation in nature independent of Scripture has become the foundation. The latter is a serious distortion of a proper understanding of revelation from "the book of nature." Divine revelation as identified with Scripture has priority and must function as the foundation of all knowledge, even revelation found in nature.

*Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 3/2 (1992):123-138.  
Article copyright © 1992 by Bruce Norman.

## PAULINE COSMOLOGY: RELIC OR RELEVANT?

By Bruce Norman

Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies  
Republic of the Philippines

Terry Arries writes: "The cosmology of an individual or nation is the foundation of all further religious, judicial and political thought because all these beliefs are founded upon this elemental concept."<sup>1</sup> The importance of the subject of cosmology can be readily illustrated by the rich witness of the Scripture concerning it. The book of Genesis begins with it, and the book of Revelation ends with it.<sup>2</sup> However, in our time, the term cosmology has been widely interpreted. Because of this, we begin our study by attempting to define it.

### Defining Cosmology

Cosmology, a term of rather recent origin, is defined as the understanding of our universe.<sup>3</sup> In our scientific era many have limited its meaning strictly to the study of the physical world.<sup>4</sup> For the purposes of the present study this definition cannot be accepted because it confines the study of cosmology solely to the intellectual realm. Observation, however, demonstrates that every person, whether he or she can articulate it or not, operates with a world view that enables him or her to cope with the forces that seem to lie beyond human experience and control. The broadness of our definition of cosmology is best summed up by Diogenes Laertius in his *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*. He writes:

This [cosmology] includes such questions as what the substance of the universe is . . . whether the world has a beginning in time or not, whether it [the world] is animate or inanimate, whether it is destructible or indestructible, whether it is governed by providence, and all the rest.<sup>5</sup>

Notice that this definition includes metaphysics within cosmology as well as the investigation of the physical world.<sup>6</sup> When this study refers to cosmology, it has in mind our dealings with the forces outside our control, that is, the transcendent reality of God working in history. It particularly includes the concepts of angelology and demonology.

It must be kept in mind here that this study is making a distinction between cosmology and theology. Cosmology has to do with the specifics of how the transcendent acts on the world while theology is the umbrella under which the many disciplines about the transcendent are included.<sup>7</sup>

### The Importance of Cosmology

That cosmology always has been important in religion mythology has been established at length by Mircea Eliade.<sup>8</sup> One outstanding characteristic of ancient religions is the close connection between a belief in the gods and their activity among men.<sup>9</sup> However, cosmological considerations in religion are not to be relegated only to ancient times as science tells us. Contemporary religion also has to consider cosmology. As one modern writer has stated:

Common to the sciences and the humanities [including religion] is the human urge to understand the universe, and man's connection to it. The failures that have pockmarked history have come at times of philosophical poverty.<sup>10</sup>

One of the reasons we need a suitable cosmology is that, without it, it is nearly impossible to have a convincing doctrine of salvation. Severed from a consciousness of God working in history, it becomes difficult to believe in a personal God who is interested enough in his creation to provide salvation from sin.<sup>11</sup> Thus, it is imperative for the modern-day Church to have a correct cosmology, for without it the church has no message of hope to share with the world.

Secondly, eschatology is woven together with cosmology. Es-

chatology, by its very definition, includes the thought that the drama of life has a universal, cosmic character.<sup>12</sup> The catastrophic end, that is so characteristic of it, usually is brought about by supernatural, divine or demonic powers.<sup>13</sup> Again, without a correct concept of cosmology, the church will not be able to express its hope in a better world that is coming to those who are seeking for meaning in this life.

Christianity traditionally has held a high view of cosmology, particularly, as has already been mentioned, in its soteriological and eschatological outlook. This has been especially true of the Seventh-day Adventist Church with its belief in "the Great Controversy" theme—the idea that evil (Satan) is warring against good (God) and that, ultimately, God will win. Thus, Adventists should have a great interest in understanding Biblical cosmology, especially in the light of the "Great Controversy" theme as put forth by Ellen G. White.<sup>14</sup>

However, some question whether this cosmological theme of the great controversy should be retained in Adventism. Various arguments are introduced in an attempt to support excluding it from Adventist theology. Among the arguments listed are that it is not scientific; it is not a modern world view; it comes from borrowed ideas of antiquity; and it is something found only in Ellen G. White. The conclusion reached is that it is no longer relevant to the modern person to whom we are attempting to address the gospel.<sup>15</sup>

The purpose of this paper is to examine one of the aspects of the Scriptural foundations for the great controversy theme, especially as found in Paul's expression of it in Ephesians and Colossians, and particularly in light of its relevancy for our modern scientific world.<sup>16</sup> Because some have posited that Paul is greatly indebted to the sources available to him in his day,<sup>17</sup> our study will be undertaken from the perspective of the question of Paul's use of the major cosmological sources available to him and his relation to them.

### Pauline Cosmology

**The Question of Sources.** There have been a number of sources cited by scholars which they hold provide for the background of Pauline cosmology. These include Graeco-Roman common religion,



Graeco-Roman philosophy, Philo and Pseudo-Philo, Jewish Rabbinic writings, Jewish apocalyptic, apocryphal and pseudepigraphical writings, and the Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS).<sup>18</sup> These writings from Paul's era show a remarkable similarity in many respects. This is especially true of certain cosmological ideas, where oftentimes, the beliefs overlap.

All of the writings indicate a widespread belief in a transcendent Being or Principle. For the philosophers, this entity was reason, rationality, or scientific principle.<sup>19</sup> For most of the believers of the common religion, it was Zeus, who was a father for all mankind.<sup>20</sup> In Jewish writings, the transcendent being was God, who was also seen as the Father of mankind.<sup>21</sup>

The concept that heavenly forces effected earthly events is found in most of the writings of Paul's contemporaries. In the Graeco-Roman religion this concept is most forcefully illustrated by Mt. Olympus, which was seen as the connecting link between heaven and earth.<sup>22</sup> In Rabbinic writings, heaven was seen to have contact with earth in a number of ways, especially that of the *bath gol*, the heavenly voice that God used to speak to humans.<sup>23</sup> The DSS view angels as beings from heaven who will fight alongside men on earth in the final battle against evil.<sup>24</sup> In apocalyptic, apocryphal, and pseudepigraphical literature, angels interact with humans by bringing answers to prayer.<sup>25</sup>

Another point of contact between the various writings of that period, with the marked exception of the philosophers, was the idea that good and evil powers existed as personal entities in the universe. These powers usually were invisible, but could reveal themselves to men, taking any form necessary to do so. The angels, or demons, as in the case of the Graeco-Roman common religion, usually were divided into groups or classes. The class of the angel or demon determined its function.<sup>26</sup> This was particularly true of Jewish apocalyptic writings.<sup>27</sup>

One of the most pervasive concepts, with the possible exception of the Rabbinic literature, was that of the angels as intermediaries between God and humans. They often were messengers from God or the gods to teach individuals his or their will. They also were sent to help men know the future.<sup>28</sup> The belief in the existence of evil beings (often called demons) is characteristic of all of the

literature of the period. Demons primarily were seen as malevolent creatures who caused misfortune, disease, drought, and death.<sup>29</sup> Both the apocalyptic literature and the Greek common religion believed that these demons could be controlled by magic or herbs.<sup>30</sup>

Although these writings contain many similarities, we must not forget that there were major differences between them. For example, one of the major disagreements between Jewish religion and the Greek philosophers lie in their respective views of creation. For the philosophers, the world was created by an intermediary being such as the Demiurge, not by a transcendent Being, because a transcendent Being would have nothing to do with the material world.<sup>31</sup>

The Jewish writings, with the exception of Philo and his doctrine of the *Logos* as creator,<sup>32</sup> retained the notion that God personally created the world.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, the Jewish view of how God operated in the world was in marked contrast to the way in which Graeco-Roman common religion understood its gods. For Jewish writers, by and large, God was intensely and personally interested in His creation, although one does see evidences of God receding into a remoteness in the DSS and apocalyptic literature. However, God fundamentally was different from man. He was not subject to the kind of whims and passions that they were. Therefore, God could be trusted.<sup>34</sup>

On the other hand, the Greeks viewed their gods as operating with the same passions as human beings. Consequently, the Greeks never could quite trust their gods because those gods were capricious and subject to acting in accordance with their passions, sometimes unfairly. For the Greeks, the gods were an extension of themselves; whereas for the Jews, God was wholly other than and completely different from humans.<sup>35</sup>

This then, was the general religious milieu of the time period. Each particular writing had its own slant and focus for its cosmological beliefs. It was this religious milieu in which Pauline cosmological ideas were expressed.

**Paul and His Writings.** Paul can be considered to be a unique individual in the history of religion. He was brought upon the scene by God at the turning point of the ages (see Gal 1:15, 16). Apparently, he was trained in both the secular schools and the Jewish

religious schools of the time.<sup>36</sup> This training would have most certainly brought him into contact with the various cosmological tenets of his day.

The New Testament records one incident in which Paul actually was involved in the disputation of philosophy, at the Areopagus in Athens (Acts 17:16-32). In verse 18 it is stated:

A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to dispute with him. Some of them asked, "What is this babbler trying to say?" Others remarked, "He seems to be advocating foreign gods." They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection. (NIV)

Paul's cosmology, which was based upon a transcendent God who reconciled the world through Jesus Christ, and who, as personal Being, was interested in His creation, was totally opposed to the philosopher's general tenet that the transcendent entity ruling the cosmos was reason. In their view, the true God would have nothing to do with creation or matter. This may have been why Paul was accused of advocating foreign gods. Paul's cosmology announced that there was a God in heaven who cared about men. Thus, Paul opposed the philosophers of his day.

Because Paul was an apostle to the Gentiles, he needed to be aware of the thinking of the people he was trying to reach—especially what he taught concerning the triumph of Jesus Christ over the principalities and powers of the world.<sup>37</sup> The common view of lesser gods, demons and heroes, was that they inhabited the air and could bring evil upon man by their whim and fancy. Paul used his cosmological concepts to show that life is not controlled by these powers but by God and His angels. Thus, one's life was not governed by fate or other such capricious powers but by the only true God Himself.

Paul shows that God is in control. No power could interfere with God's purposes, which, to the Greek, would have been welcome news. He did not have to constantly live his life in fear that some evil power might come upon him at any time.<sup>38</sup>

Paul probably knew about the common Graeco-Roman cosmology, and sometimes expressed his cosmology in the popular terminology of Greek religion (see Eph 6:10-17; Col 1:15-21; 2:15-19), but traditional terminology was filled with new meaning in the

light of what God had done on the cross. Paul was trying to convey by his cosmology that something was changed and made new by Christ's death on the cross. Christ triumphed over the powers and was, as he always had been, in control. Therefore, it is doubtful that Paul borrowed his cosmological concepts from common Greek religion. Rather, he used their terminology, filling it with new content, in order that they could relate to the message he was proclaiming.

Although Philo's writings contain some ideas that seem to anticipate Paul, and that there seem to be certain parallels that can be traced in both Paul and Philo, it seems highly unlikely that Paul was dependent on Philo for his cosmological views.<sup>39</sup> There are major differences between the two.<sup>40</sup>

With regard to Colossians and Ephesians, they reflect the need to fit Christ into the general religious ideas of the time, whereas Philo is concerned to provide a pedantic explanation of these general ideas.<sup>41</sup> Perhaps it is best to conclude that both writers drew on a common stock of Hellenistic Jewish traditions that were available from the general religious milieu of the times.<sup>42</sup> Each one, however, uses them in their own ways.

Scholars argue for various parallels between Paul and the rabbis. One such example consists of alleged parallels in the vision of Yohanan b. Zakkai and Paul's experience on the road to Damascus recorded in Acts 9. In Yohanan's dream, the visionaries and their disciples are caught up to the third heaven. This thought seems to parallel Paul's vision recorded in 2 Corinthians 12:2.<sup>43</sup> But points of contact do not necessarily mean actual dependence. Pauline thought, especially his cosmology, was reflective of the Christ-event. It also presents an "*an essentially different type of religiousness from any found in Palestinian Jewish literature.*"<sup>44</sup> Paul, who had been brought up a Pharisee, apparently left it behind when he turned to follow Christ.<sup>45</sup> It can be concluded, therefore, that Paul was not dependent upon Rabbinic material for his cosmology because his religion, and especially his cosmology, which began and ended in Christ, was something naturally offensive to Rabbinic theology.<sup>46</sup>

Many of the early Jewish eschatological ideas were not present in the Hebrew scriptures, (such as angelology and demonology), but embellished in intertestamental writings.<sup>47</sup> Studies by R. H.

Charles suggest that Paul seems familiar with some expressions and ideas that appear in the book of Jubilees and other apocryphal works.<sup>48</sup>

For example, Satanil, in 2 Enoch, is seen continuously flying in the air, illustrating a prevalent conception as to the abode of Satan and his angels at the time of Christ and later. The demons and their leaders were conceived to dwell in the air, from where they made their attacks upon men. This reminds us of Ephesians 2:2 and 6:10-17.<sup>49</sup> That the world is controlled by evil principalities and powers; that men's lives are under the power of Satan and his angels; and that God will ultimately triumph over Satan and establish His kingdom throughout the universe are common themes in apocalyptic, apocryphal, and pseudepigraphic literature. Some of these ideas have similarities to ideas in the Pauline writings.<sup>50</sup>

There is the common belief in Paul's day that wars that take place here on this earth have parallels in wars fought in the heavens. When an angel in heaven gains ascendancy, then the nation on earth does likewise and vice versa.<sup>51</sup> The powers involved are given to the angels of the nations by God's sovereign will. Each angel must be dealt with before a nation can be judged.<sup>52</sup> These ideas may be the background for Paul's own cosmological statements such as Ephesians 6:10-13, where he states that we fight against spiritual powers in heavenly places, and Colossians 2:15 and 1:20, where Christ is seen to triumph over the powers, reconciling all things to Himself. Evil affects the entire created universe. It assumes cosmic dimensions. Thus all creation awaits redemption.<sup>53</sup>

There also are various similarities between the Qumran Sect's doctrines and the writings of Paul. Modern scholarship is not certain *how* the theological ideas of the Qumran sect influenced Paul, but thinks there is strong evidence that they *did*. It is claimed that the influence of the sect was more apparent in the later writings of Paul than in the "great" epistles.<sup>54</sup> The claim has been made that the language of the epistle to the Ephesians was influenced by Jewish-Christian gnosis. In the face of the alleged parallels of Qumran with Pauline theology and language, it is concluded that the language and thought of the epistle to the Ephesians was influenced specifically by the Qumran writings. It has been sug-

gested that the parallels are more numerous and closer than they appear to be from Schlier's work,<sup>55</sup> going much deeper.<sup>56</sup>

Pauline writings evidence dualistic conceptions and terminology related to what is found in the Qumran writings.<sup>57</sup> It must be kept in mind that we are not speaking about a dualism of eternal good versus eternal evil, but that evil is warring against good which will eventually triumph and destroy evil. Paul, especially in Ephesians and Colossians, seems to show similarities with the writings of the Qumran sect, specifically those writings with a cosmological bent. For example, Ephesians 6:10-17 reminds us of the *War Scroll* and its cosmology. The war in the *War Scroll* is fought on two levels, the spiritual, and the physical, again an idea found in Pauline cosmology. The DSS's concept of Satan having a limited rule parallels Colossians 2:13-15, where Christ triumphs over the powers and authorities by His death.

The Pauline idea that when one has been created anew by the Holy Spirit he becomes a citizen of heaven and sits in heavenly places now (Eph 2:4-7 for example) finds a similar idea in the sect's theology where the elect are the ones created anew and brought into fellowship with the angels and the heavenly world. The concept of the elemental spirits finds a place in both writings (see 1QH 1:8-15; Gal 4:3, 9; and Col 2:8, 20). Since both Jubilees and 1 Enoch were found in the Qumran literature, it can be suggested that both apocalyptic and the DSS writings have parallels in Paul's writings.<sup>58</sup>

In summary, it seems that Paul used language similar to that of the apocalyptic strand of literature extant in his day. He parallels this literature in many ways. He sees evil angels bent upon destroying the human race and that evil angels surround and are against man; there is a controversy going on that has both physical and psychological dimensions; God exercises control over the evil spirits that are the cause of man's failure to be faithful to the covenant; God ultimately will triumph over evil; and human history is linked closely to celestial events.<sup>59</sup>

#### Paul's Unique Contribution

Paul used some of the common cosmological terminology of the day to reach both Jew and Gentile. But, he used the language with

a different meaning. For him, Christ became the beginning and end of cosmology, transforming it fundamentally and essentially. Herein lies Paul's contribution to ancient and modern cosmology. The main difference between Paul's writings and the extant writings of his time was the transformation of his cosmology by the Christ-event. All cosmology is measured in respect to the cross, especially in the light of Colossians 1:19, 20 which states:

For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness of deity to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven. (NASB)

Paul explained cosmology as it appeared through the cross, which is the decisive cosmic event that changed history and the various extant cosmologies.<sup>60</sup> It was Jesus' death and His subsequent resurrection that determines Paul's cosmology. All cosmological thinking must now be measured in terms of the Christ-event, which shows the love of God for human beings and God's activity among and for them. It also discloses that God is in control, not the demons, principalities, or powers.

### Conclusion

That Paul spoke about cosmology is abundantly evident. The question remains as to whether what he had to say is relevant today or merely a relic of ancient thought. It can be said that Paul's cosmology and his great controversy theme fit in with the criteria established by Bernard Ramm for evaluating Biblical cosmology; that is: it is free from polytheistic cosmology, it has a general hostility to any atheistic cosmology, and it clearly presents a theistic view of nature and the Bible.<sup>61</sup>

Paul seems to have contact with some cosmological insights in his great controversy theme from the surrounding milieu of ideas; however, his cosmology, or great controversy theme, is still relevant for our modern scientific world. It is as relevant as the death of Christ and His resurrection (with its accompanying triumph over the evil powers and principalities) that sinners may be forgiven and brought into a proper relationship with God and receive eternal life. As Biblical salvation still is needed and timely for lost sinners in

today's world, so Paul's cosmology and its great controversy theme continue to have a meaning for the modern mind.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Terry Arries, "Creationism: The Lost Foundation of American Society," *BibSciNews*, (Nov., 1990), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> See Gen 1:1 where God created the earth and Rev 22:20-21 where Christ indicates he is coming back soon.

<sup>3</sup> The term cosmology has received wide currency for the name of a branch of metaphysics by Christian von Wolff in his *Discursus Praeliminaris de Philosophia in Genere*. See Milton Munitz, "Cosmology," in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Paul Edwards, 8 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 2: 237. The word comes from the Greek *kosmos* which has the meaning of world or orderly arrangement. Later, it received the technical sense of a particular world system or way of understanding one's universe. See J. Guhrt, "Kosmos," in *The New International Dictionary of the New Testament*, edited by Colin Brown, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975-1986), 1: 521, and Emery Bancroft, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976, 2nd rev. ed.), p. 64.

<sup>4</sup> See Paul J. Glenn, *Cosmology* (St. Louis, MO: B. Herder Book, 1939), pp. 2-4.

<sup>5</sup> Diogenes Laertius *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 7.133 (trans. R. D. Hicks, LCL, 2:237).

<sup>6</sup> Metaphysics here refers to God as He relates to the origin of the world and His providence ruling the world. See "Metaphysica," in Richard Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985), pp. 192, 193.

<sup>7</sup> Cosmology, in the modern sense of the word refers to the world view of a particular age. Christian cosmology as defined in the modern sense of the word by Larry Alderink, "Cosmology," *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Theology*, ed. Alan Richardson and John Bowden [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983], p. 126) can be expressed as follows: "God acts on the world in bringing into existence and in the world to redeem it, with consequence that the world and its creatures are both the scene of divine activity and the recipients of divine love . . ." One can see the emphasis upon the idea of divine activity in the world of men. See also Alan Richardson, "Cosmology," in *A Dictionary of Christian Theology*, ed. Alan Richardson (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), p. 76.

Theology, on the other hand, has taken on a more general meaning in modern times. S. W. Sykes ("Theology," in *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Theology*, p. 566) has aptly pointed out the modern meaning of theology. He states: "In the English-speaking world today, it [theology] would now be widely taken to refer to the rational account given of Christian faith, as furnished by a series of sub-disciplines such as biblical studies, church history, systematic theology, theological ethics, and practical or pastoral theology." Richardson states that "'theology' has become a generic term for a number of interrelated disciplines." It is apparent that there is a relationship between theology and cosmology. This study employs the modern distinction between the terms. Theology is considered as the generic term, the umbrella under which comes cosmology as one of those

interrelated disciplines. Cosmology is used in this study as that part of theology which describes and studies the interaction of divine forces with humanity.

<sup>8</sup> See Mircea Eliade, *Cosmos and History* (New York: Harper, 1959); Ernest Harms, "Five Basic Types of Theistic Worlds in the Religions of Man," *Numen* 13 (1966): 208; and James G. Frazer, *Folklore in the Old Testament*, 3 vols. London: Macmillan, 1919), especially 1:3-44, for a comparison of the Creation stories of different societies.

<sup>9</sup> Franz Cumont, *Astrology and Religion Among the Greeks and Romans* (New York: Knickerbocker Press, 1912), p. 103. Astronomy, for them, it must be remembered, served as an introduction to theology. Aristotle states the following about the consideration of the universe in the practice of religion: "Such men should pity for their small-mindedness (consideration of beauty of mountain or other such scenery, or of the plan of a city, etc.) in admiration of ordinary things. . . . They have never contemplated what is the nobler—the Universe and the greatest things of the universe. . ." (*De Mundo* p. 391. a. 20, 25).

<sup>10</sup> Norman Cousins, *The Healing Heart* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1983), p. 145.

<sup>11</sup> R. S. Barbour, "Salvation and Cosmology: The Setting of the Epistle of Colossians," *ScotJrTh* 20(1967): 258.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985), pp. 1149-1165.

<sup>13</sup> S. Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, trans. G. W. Anderson (New York: Abingdon Press, n.d.), p. 126.

<sup>14</sup> *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View: CA, 1950 ed.). The subtitle of this particular work emphasizes the cosmological warfare between earth and heaven. The full title reads: *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan: The Conflict of the Ages in the Christian Dispensation*.

<sup>15</sup> Ariel Roth, Director of the Geoscience Research Institute, recently wrote concerning creation, which is a part of cosmology, "Unfortunately, the same pressures that have caused other churches to allegorize the biblical account of beginnings are upon us. Some among us [SDA] wonder if the current scientific concepts of long ages should not take precedence over the biblical model of beginnings." *Adventist Review*, 9 July 1990, p. 6. See also Bernard Ramm, *The Christian View of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954), pp. 65-69 for a discussion on the state of Biblical cosmology.

<sup>16</sup> See for example Eph 1:10; 2:4-10; 3:8-12; 6:10-20; and Col 1:15-23; and 2:8-15. Compare these statements with Rom 8:18-39. A word is necessary here about the issue of the authorship of Ephesians and Colossians. Many hold that these books were not written by Paul but by a disciple of Paul. For the relevant discussion, see for example D. J. Rowston, "Changes in Biblical Interpretation Today; The Example of Ephesians," *BibThJ* 9 (1979): 121-125; J. B. Pohill, "An Introduction to Ephesians," *RevEx* 76 (1979): 465-479; Idem, "The Relationship between Ephesians and Colossians," *RevEx* 70 (1973): 439-450; and F. D. Howard, "An Introduction to Ephesians," *SWJTh* 22 (1979): 7-23. In the latter, Howard has demonstrated that the Pauline authorship was not questioned until the 19th century, with the Greek manuscripts including it in the Pauline corpus. This author has accepted the authenticity of the book on the basis of stylistic similarities with other Pauline works, thematic parallels with other Pauline writings, and the complexity of thought appearing in Ephesians.

<sup>17</sup> For example, see Heinrich Schlier, *Principalities and Powers in the New*

*Testament* (London: Nelson, 1961) concerning how some think Paul's cosmology is related to Hellenistic ideas. See R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 2 vols., trans. Kendrick Grobel (New York: Charles Scribner & Sons, 1951-1955), 1: 178, for how some think Paul's cosmology is related to or based on Gnosticism.

<sup>18</sup> For further explanation, see Bruce Norman, "Some Cosmologies of the Mediterranean World in the Time of Paul," M. A. Thesis, Andrews University, 1986.

<sup>19</sup> E. O. James, *Creation and Cosmology* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1969), p. 84; Martin P. Nilsson, *A History of Greek Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925), p. 281; and F. C. Grant, *Roman Hellenism and the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1962), p. 45. It seems that astrology with its emphasis upon scientific method provided the link between the common religion and the philosophical schools of thought during this period. For further study, see Helmut Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 1: 376-378.

<sup>20</sup> Martin P. Nilsson, *Greek Popular Religion* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1940), pp. 71-78. It must be kept in mind that Zeus was an Olympian or uranian god, i.e. a god who belonged to the heavenly sphere in contradistinction to the chthonian or earthly gods, who were not to be confused. See W. K. C. Guthrie, *The Greeks and their Gods* (London: Methuen, 1954), pp. 206-209. In Greek thought, the heavenly gods were supernatural beings who were very much like men and indulged in the same passions that men did. This gave to the Greeks an awareness of a close kinship between the human and divine. See F. M. Cornford, "The Pattern of Ionian Cosmogony," in *Theories of the Universe*, edited by Milton Munitz (New York: Free Press, 1957), p. 29.

<sup>21</sup> The Jewish writings, by and large, simply asserted, in accordance with Scripture, that God exists, created, and rules the world, and is generally interested in his children upon earth. Note here that God is involved with the world and not separate from it as the Greeks held. See for example, Helmer Ringgren, *Faith of Qumran* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963), esp. p. 52; C. C. Rowland, *The Open Heaven* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), pp. 80-91; George F. More, *Judaism*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1962), 1: 401; and R. T. Herford, *The Pharisees* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1952), esp. pp. 151-153. Regarding Philo's view of God, see P. Borgen, "Philo of Alexandria," in *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period*, edited by Michael Stone, 3 vols. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 2: 273.

<sup>22</sup> Guthrie, *Greeks*, pp. 206-209.

<sup>23</sup> Rowland, *Open Heaven*, p. 275.

<sup>24</sup> 1 QM 12.15.1-5 and Batya Rabin and Chaim Rabin, "The Scroll of the War of the Sons of Light Against the Sons of Darkness," in *The Scroll of the War of the Sons of Light Against the Sons of Darkness*, edited by Yigael Yadin (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 237.

<sup>25</sup> Raymond Surburg, *Introduction to the Intertestamental Period* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1975), p. 61 and Harold Kuhn, "The Angelology of Non-Canonical Jewish Apocalypses," *JBL* 67 (1948): pp. 217-232, esp. 226.

<sup>26</sup> H. J. Rose, *Ancient Greek Religion* (London: Hutchinson's University Library, 1946), pp. 28, 137.

<sup>27</sup> 1 Enoch 61:10; 71:7, Jubilees 2:2, 2 Baruch 59:11, Surburg, 62, and D. S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic* (London: SCM Press, 1964), p. 241.

28 Jubilees 3:15; 12:22-28; 16:1-4; 4:6, 21; 10:9-10; 15:31; 35:17; and 48:4, 13. See also O. S. Wintermute, "Jubilees," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, edited by James Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1985), p. 47.

29 T. F. Glasson, *Greek Influence in Jewish Eschatology* (London: SPCK, 1961), 92; James Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha and the New Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 66; and Rose, p. 28.

30 Jubilees 10:10-14; Lewis Farnell, *Outline History of Greek Religion* (Chicago: Ares Publishers, 1921), p. 150; and Bruce Metzger, *An Introduction to the Apocrypha* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1957), p. 157.

31 Diogenes, *Lives* 3.76-77; *Timaeus* 42-43; and W. K. C. Guthrie, "The Pre-Socratic World Picture," *HTR* 45 (1952): 87-104.

32 H. Chadwick, "Philo," in *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, edited by A. H. Armstrong (Cambridge: University Press, 1967), p. 144; Charles Bigg, *The Christian Platonists of Alexandria* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1886), pp. 18, 19; Samuel Sandmel, *Philo of Alexandria* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), esp. p. 149; and Norman, *Cosmologies*, pp. 50, 51.

33 Donald Gowan, *Bridge Between the Testaments* (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Pickwick Press, 1976), pp. 229, 230.

34 J. Abelson, *The Immanence of God in Rabbinical Literature* (New York: Hermon Press, 1969), pp. 278-297; Hereford, p. 151; Rowland, *Open Heaven*, p. 275; and Charlesworth, *Old Testament*, p. 66. In regard to the receding of God into remoteness in the DSS and Jewish apocalyptic, see Metzger, *Introduction*, p. 61 and Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), 1: 231.

35 Cornford, p. 29. The gods indulged in many of the passions of men such as jealousy, hate, love, and violent deeds. In fact, the only difference between men and the gods is that the gods were immortal. See Cumont, p. 105.

36 For evidence of the secular training, see Acts 17:16-32 and Titus 1:12. In Acts 17, we find Paul able to argue with the Epicureans and Stoics. In order to do so, he must have known their basic tenets. Paul, in this passage, quotes from their poets. In Titus, Paul once again quotes one of the Cretan poets, a strong evidence that he had a knowledge of secular classics. For the evidence of his religious training, see Acts 22:3. Here, he claims to have studied at the feet of Gamaliel I, who tradition assigns as the successor of Hillel as head of his school. See F. F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977), p. 50.

37 See Gal 2:7,8 and Acts 9:15 as examples of the fact that Paul was called to preach to the Gentiles, that is the men and women of the Graeco-Roman world.

38 William Fairweather, *Jesus and the Greeks* (Edinburgh, T. and T. Clark, 1924), 117-118 and Arnold Ehrhardt, "Creation ex Nihilo," *StTh* 4 (1951): 19.

39 Chadwick, "Philo," p. 157 and Fairweather, p. 210. See for example 1 Cor. 4:9 where Paul uses the cosmological terminology describing the earth as the theater (*theatron*) of the universe. Philo uses this same terminology in *Gig.* 7.31.1-3, "For the souls that are free from the flesh and body spend their days in the theater (*theatro*) of the universe and with a joy that none can hinder." This is but one of the examples of similarity between Paul and Philo.

40 Chadwick, "St. Paul," p. 306.

41 Sandmel, p. 149.

42 Chadwick, "St. Paul," p. 290.

43 J. Bowker, "'Merkabah' Visions and the Visions of Paul," *JrSemSt* 2 (1971): 169-173. See E. P. Sanders, "Patterns of Religion in Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: A Holistic Method of Comparison," *HTR* 66 (1973): 458.

44 E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), p. 543.

45 Hereford, p. 198.

46 We must keep in mind here the *birkat ha-minim*, the nineteenth blessing concerning heretics added to the eighteen blessings prayed daily, which was written sometime around 100 A.D. and was directed against Judeo-Christian and Gnostic sects. In order to avoid any suspicion of collaborating with Christianity, this prayer had to be recited in public worship. See Meir Ydit, "Birkat Ha-Minim," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, edited by Cecil Roth and Geoffrey Wigoder, 16 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1971), 4: 1035-1036. For the English and Hebrew text, see C. W. Dugmore, *The Influence of the Synagogue on the Divine Office* (London: Oxford University Press, 1944), pp. 114-127. Note that the *birkat ha-minim* appears in the 12th blessing.

47 Joshua Bloch, *On the Apocalyptic in Judaism* (Philadelphia: The Dropsie College for Hebrew and Cognate Learning), p. 44.

48 R. H. Charles, "The Book of Jubilees," pp. xxxiii-lxxxv, as found in Wintermute, 2: 49. Among the several New Testament writers, Paul and James seem to display the greatest number of coincidences with the Apocrypha. See Metzger, pp. 158-162, especially 162.

49 Edward Langton, *Essentials of Demonology* (London: Epworth Press, 1949), p. 143.

50 For example, see Eph 1:10; 6:10-17; Col 1:15-20; 2:15-23; Rom 8:18-39. See also D. S. Russell, *Method*, p. 238.

51 Russell, *Method*, pp. 244, 245 and Glasson, p. 70.

52 Russell, *Method*, pp. 244, 245.

53 Russell, *Apocalyptic*, p. 36.

54 J. A. Fitzmyer, *Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1971), p. 201.

55 See Heinrich Schlier, *Principalities and Powers in the New Testament* (London: Nelson, 1961).

56 Karl G. Kuhn, "The Epistle to the Ephesians in the Light of the Qumran Texts," as found in J. Murphy-O'Connor, ed., *Paul and Qumran* (Chicago: The Priory Press, 1968), pp. 116, 117.

57 D. Dimant, "Qumran Sectarian Literature," in *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period*, edited by Michael Stone, 3 vols. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 2: 535-536. As an example of this thinking, one might examine the use of the term "elemental spirits" as used in *IQH* 1.8-15 and its corresponding uses in Paul (see for example Gal 4:3, 9; Col 2:8, 20). They both allude to the elemental spirits, the spirits appointed by God to rule over the elements and natural phenomena in accordance with God's will and the plan which He has established. See Ringgren, p. 57. For a listing of the parallels of Pauline texts with the Qumran literature, see Roland Murphy, "The Dead Sea Scrolls and New Testament Comparisons," *CBQ* 18 (1956): 263-272.

58 Russell, *Method*, p. 237 and J. T. Milik, ed., *The Books of Enoch-Aramaic Fragments of Qumran Cave 4* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), esp. pp. 59-69.

59 A sampling of these ideas can be found in Ephesians and Colossians, in Romans 8, and in 1 Corinthians 4:9, 10.

- 60 George Maloney, *The Cosmic Christ* (New York: Sheed and Ward), pp. 18, 19.
- 61 Ramm, p. 69.

*Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 3/2 (1992):139-145.  
 Article copyright © by C. Raymond Holmes.

## WHAT IS THE GOSPEL? (Galatians 1:6-10)

By C. Raymond Holmes  
 Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary  
 Andrews University

What a way to begin a letter! With a rebuke? The apostle wastes no time with flattery. The issue is too crucial. His concern is with the heart of the Christian faith, the "gospel"—with its nature, with its preaching.

The nature of the gospel had been challenged; its preaching perverted. That riled Paul's mind and soul as nothing else could. He was quick to respond, and his passion for the gospel runs through every sentence. There are those who believe that this letter saved Christianity from degenerating into a form of paganism. If so, does it not need to do so again?

The words are sober, hard. But even so, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, we can sense the profundity of God's love in them—love for the truth of the gospel; love for those who will hear the gospel and be saved by its power.

Confusion, perversion, desertion, came early in the life of the Christian church. It came so soon that it astonished the apostle Paul, that great preacher of justification by grace through faith.

Here is a dramatic example of how we should respond when the nature of the gospel is threatened and the preaching of it perverted. We ought to get passionate about the nature of the gospel, about it being preached in the right way, because it is the heart and center of faith.

In Galatians 3:1-5, the perversion of the gospel that riled Paul

so is made clear: "You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? . . . Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?"

### What About Today?

Do we face the same challenge to the gospel today? Is the preaching of it being perverted? Professor Carl Braaten of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago thinks so. He warned his church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), about the preaching of a pseudo-gospel in which

a god without wrath brought people without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross (*Christian Century*, Jun-Jul, 1990: 623).

If Braaten's gauntlet were not enough, Professor Robert Jenson of St. Olaf College, in analyzing the origin of the theological problems faced by the ELCA, throws down another. He attributes those theological problems to the "general threat" faced by Christianity in our time. He calls the threat a "new form of 'gnosticism' which balks at the specificity of biblical particularity and yearns for categories more amenable to the contemporary mind" (*Ibid.*).

Are Adventists also beginning to see evidence of a struggle for the "truth of the gospel and the integrity of the Church's mission?" As with the ELCA, there are "theological plates grinding away at each other under the surface" of the Seventh-day Adventist church. Although we may use different labels, the fault line runs between those for whom "traditional theological affirmations remain indispensable and effective and those who regard them as so much baggage to be jettisoned on the way to the future" (*Ibid.*, p. 624).

Borrowing some more thoughts from this provocative article, let's ask if there is any evidence, in our own church, of a struggle for the "truth of the gospel and the integrity of the Church's mission?" (*Ibid.*, p. 623).

### The Current "Pop" Gospel

In practical terms, the problem can be demonstrated this way: "I have a relationship with Jesus" a young man said, "and eternal life is mine." He had responded to a preacher's invitation to "receive

Christ." He talks of Jesus, of faith, of eternal life. But his behavior gives little evidence of regeneration and conversion. He lives and behaves like someone never touched by the power of the gospel.

A contradiction you say, and you are right, for there is no communion with Jesus based on disobedience. But this is what happens when a perverted gospel is preached. Judas had a relationship with Jesus too, but that relationship did not save him.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer said that no one can claim to be justified through faith who has not left all to follow Christ—left the old life of sin and left rebellion against God's commands. It is not the leaving that saves, it is the saving that results in the leaving. No one can follow Christ who has not died to self-will.

For preachers and theologians the way is made clear in Galatians 1:10. Shall we seek the approval of people, of society and culture, or of God? Paul's answer is swift in coming: "If I were still trying to please [these], I would not be a servant of Christ" (NIV).

The "pop" gospel, popular preaching, proclaims a false hope to sinners because it leads them to believe that they can have a saving relationship with Jesus while maintaining an ungodly life. This "gospel" separates the Biblical call to believe in the Saviour from the Biblical call to obey Him as Lord. Furthermore, it means we have drifted into an unAdventist way of interpreting the Bible.

The softening of the New Testament message has brought with it a putrefying inclusivism that in effect sees almost any kind of positive response to Jesus as tantamount to saving faith. Christians today are likely to accept anything other than utter rejection as authentic faith in Christ (John MacArthur, *The Gospel According to Jesus* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Pub. House, 1988], p. 37).

MacArthur is speaking of the evangelical communions. However, it may well be that in our own church, somewhere behind pleas for tolerance of behavior and for theological pluralism, lurks this softening of the New Testament message.

If all that matters is a "relationship" with Jesus, if obedience is not to be considered in the preaching of righteousness through faith, it means that standing up in response to a preacher's invitation is more evidence of faith than is victorious Christian living.

To invite people to make a decision for Christ without making clear why such a decision is necessary and what the consequences



of the decision must be is to preach a pseudo-gospel, a message not in harmony with the New Testament.

### What Constitutes Salvation?

Perhaps the time has come for us to stop talking so much about righteousness by faith, and to start talking about salvation by grace—how to get saved and how to stay saved. What is the evidence of salvation? We seem to gain the impression that when righteousness by faith alone is spoken of today, the emphasis is on “alone.”

The gospel is the good news of love, acceptance, and forgiveness, but it also rebukes those who outwardly are religious but whose lives provide no evidence of righteousness. A personal relationship with Jesus is life-transforming.

We talk a lot about focusing on the “essence” of the gospel these days. Ask what it is, and the answer invariably will be “love.” But what is the nature of that kind of love? Does it make no moral demands, no behavioral expectations? Is faith in Jesus nothing more than hero worship?

God so loved that He gave. Self-sacrificing love is the essence of God’s character. But the New Testament gospel teaches that, while God loves all people everywhere, He forgives only those who repent and accepts into His kingdom only those who turn from a life of sin and rebellion to embrace a life of holiness and discipleship.

The Biblically narrow way is becoming culturally broader today. The depth of commitment to Christ is becoming more and more shallow. This is reflected in debates on Church standards. It was apparent in the debate on the floor of the General Conference at Indianapolis concerning guidelines for Sabbath observance.

Is our doctrine of salvation becoming deficient? Are we preaching justification divorced from sanctification as though they are two unrelated experiences, one necessary, the other optional?

Are we having problems relative to Church discipline because we are bending over backwards to avoid legalism, or is it because our concept of the gospel and salvation is changing?

A pseudo-gospel is actually a subtle form of legalism in that “deciding” for Christ becomes the work that qualifies for salvation. True faith in Christ evidenced in submission and discipleship is

absent entirely. Hebrews 11:8 informs us that “By faith Abraham . . . obeyed.”

### True Effects of Divine Grace

The good news of the gospel is not just about justification. It also is good news that by God’s grace we can be regenerated, sanctified, and glorified. Faith that rejects the authority of Christ is not true faith. Faith that is not demonstrated by a transformed life is not true faith.

God’s grace does not allow us to live in the flesh, it empowers us to live in the Spirit. Grace does much more than give us good feelings about Jesus and about ourselves. It is not only the way in which God’s love is demonstrated, but it also provides a powerful spiritual force in the believers life as Paul says:

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 (Titus 2:11-14, NIV).

These certainly are not human works. It takes the grace of God to overcome sin. And that’s good news! That’s the gospel truth! Furthermore, those who live by the Spirit

will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other (Gal 5:16, 17, NIV).

Preaching that does not include the call to repentance and transformation is not the Biblical gospel. To tell a listening congregation to give their sins to Jesus without telling them how to do it, what that transaction involves in terms of repentance and confession, leads only to confusion and misunderstanding.

Only those who confess their sin, rebellion, and need; repent of their sin; hear the message of forgiveness; and have been empowered by divine grace to turn from sin and embrace the new life of

righteousness are in a position where they can give glory to God. They are the kind of people God addresses in Revelation 14:7.

The day of the big congregation—the mega-church—has returned, appealing particularly to the ambitious, aspiring, young preacher. But size should not be the issue. The preaching of the true gospel should be. There is only one account in the New Testament of a mass conversion, on Pentecost—a most unusual event in itself. Pentecostal power produces pentecostal preaching—preaching like Peter's. Peter's preaching was direct, forceful, confrontational.

“Men of Israel . . . you, with the help of wicked men, put [Jesus of Nazareth] to death by nailing him to a cross . . . God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” When the people heard this they were cut to the heart and said to Peter . . . “what shall we do?” Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” . . . With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation” (Acts 2:23-40, NIV).

A contemporary writer comments:

Preaching often falls short of prophetic power. Divorced from the monstrous infirmity we carry within, it can speak no good because it shrinks from speaking any ill. Despite what contemporary preachers predict, the spiritual life is seldom a matter of painless, uninterrupted growth. The irony of the gospel is that it becomes good news only for those immersed in the bad news of their normal experience (Belden C. Lane, “Grace and the Grotesque,” *Christian Century*, Vol. 107, Nov. 14, 1990: 33).

### God's Church: Agent of Redemption

When Jesus spoke to Nicodemus about salvation He challenged his entire lifestyle and called for total regeneration (see John 3:1ff). Being born again is something we cannot accomplish for ourselves.

Nicodemus' problem was his religion. He had done all the right things, such as coming forward at a preacher's invitation. But without spiritual regeneration and renewal he could not enter the kingdom. Regeneration is not an option. It is a necessity. It is the result of hearing and receiving the gospel.

The church is not a discussion club for the exchange of views, nor a debating society. It is an agent of redemption. The church lives from the faithful and powerful preaching of the gospel's full truth. On this there can be no compromise. For the very existence and evangelistic success of the church depends on giving the gospel.

When the whole gospel is preached, our relationship to God is objectified. Without gospel reference points we would not know that we need to repent, or rejoice, or whether our thoughts and actions are in harmony with God's will and purpose.

The gospel is to be presented, not as a lifeless theory, but as a living force to change the life . . . Those whose course has been most offensive to Him He freely accepts; when they repent, He imparts to them His divine Spirit (Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 816).

In apostolic times he [Satan] led the Jews to exalt the ceremonial law and reject Christ; at the present time he induces many professing Christians, under pretense of honoring Christ, to cast contempt on the moral law and to teach that its precepts may be transgressed with impunity. It is the duty of every servant of God to withstand firmly and decidedly these perverters of the faith and by the word of truth fearlessly to expose their errors (Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 387).

(Additional Reading: chapter 36, “Apostasy in Galatia,” in *The Acts of the Apostles*.)

*Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 3/2 (1992):146-151.  
Article copyright © 1992 by Leo R. Van Dolson.

## THE FORERUNNER

By Leo R. Van Dolson

Southern College of Seventh-day Adventists

Hebrews 6:19, 20 points us to the tremendous hope that comes as a result of Jesus serving as our Advocate in the heavenly sanctuary: "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec" (Hebrews 6:19, 20). A while ago I was thrilled to find an explanation of what the word *forerunner* means. In the classic volume, *The Cross and Its Shadow*, Elder S. N. Haskell explains: "The Saviour gave His life a sacrifice for sin here upon the earth; and as He entered the heavenly sanctuary as High Priest, He is called the 'Forerunner.' Under no circumstances, except as He enters 'within the veil' of the heavenly sanctuary, is that name applied to the Saviour."<sup>1</sup>

Elder Haskell indicates that the forerunner is a familiar character in those countries which have monarchical forms of government. "In gorgeous uniform, with waving plumes, he rides before and announces the approach of the royal carriage. While he is always hailed with joy by the waiting crowds, yet he is not the center of attraction; their eyes do not follow him as he passes on, but are turned down the road whence he came to get the first glimpse of the royal personage of whom he is the forerunner."<sup>2</sup>

In Philippians 2, Paul outlines Christ's condescension in emptying Himself for us by coming to this world as a human being and dying a criminal's death on the cross. But here in Hebrews we find another step in Christ's emptying Himself for us:

"When He entered heaven a mighty Conqueror over death and

the grave, before the entire heavenly host and representatives of other worlds, He entered a forerunner for *us*. He presented the 'wave sheaf,' those brought forth from the graves at the time of His resurrection as a sample of the race He had died to redeem, thus directing the attention of the wonderful assemblage down the road whence He came to watch for royalty—for royalty!—yes, for royalty made so by His precious blood. It is only a company of poor frail mortals stumbling along and often falling by the way; but when they reach the heavenly gate, they will enter 'heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.'"<sup>3</sup>

What Christ is pictured doing as our forerunner not only describes what He will do for us in the future, but what He **ALREADY HAS DONE**. The last several paragraphs in the magnificent book, *The Desire of Ages*, describe the scene of Christ's joyous reentry into heaven. It would be helpful for you to read the entire selection on pages 833-835. We can only summarize it here.

Jesus entered heaven as a Conqueror over sin and death as all heaven was waiting to honor and welcome Him. But as they rush forward to pay homage to Him "He waves them back." He has to do the work of the Forerunner. "He cannot now receive the coronet of glory and the royal robe. He enters into the presence of His Father. He points to His wounded head, the pierced side, the marred feet; He lifts His hands bearing the prints of the nails. He points to the tokens of His triumph; He presents to God the wave-sheaf, those raised with Him as representatives of that great multitude who shall come forth from the grave at His second coming. . . . He declares, 'Father, it is finished. I have done Thy will, O My God. I have completed the work of redemption. If Thy justice is satisfied, "I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am.'"

"The voice of God is heard proclaiming that justice is satisfied. Satan is vanquished. Christ's toiling, struggling ones on earth are 'accepted in the beloved.' Before the heavenly angels and the representatives of unfallen worlds, they are declared justified. Where He is, there His church shall be."<sup>4</sup>

Having completed the work of the Forerunner, Jesus then was able to receive the homage, glory, and honor due to the God who for our sake became forever linked with the human race. But we should

not minimize what it meant for Him to be accepted and welcomed in heaven on the day He returned with the “wave sheaf” as our Representative.

After describing that amazing scene, Ellen White adds: “Songs of triumph mingle with music from angel harps, till heaven seems to overflow with joy and praise. Love has conquered. The lost is found. . . . From that scene of heavenly joy, there comes back to us on earth the echo of Christ’s wonderful words, ‘I ascend unto My Father, and Your Father; and to My God, and your God.’” John 20:17. The family of heaven and the family of earth are one. For us our Lord ascended, and for us He lives.”<sup>5</sup>

When the Father eagerly stepped down from the throne and, in the greatest exhibition of His love ever recorded, threw His arms around His returning Son—our Forerunner, He encircled each one of us with all the enthusiastic love with which He welcomed Jesus home. *We are* accepted in the Beloved. None of us need ever wonder again about God being willing to accept us. The only question that remains is Are we willing to be accepted?

The hope that Hebrews 6:19 describes as being like a sure and steadfast anchor to our souls “enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain” (NIV). This suggests that, by faith, we must enter with Jesus into the heavenly sanctuary. “It is those who by faith follow Jesus in the great work of the atonement who receive the benefits of His mediation in their behalf, while those who reject the light which brings to view this work of ministration are not benefitted thereby.”<sup>6</sup>

After making that statement, Ellen White points out that many of the Jews, because of their attachment to the services of the earthly sanctuary, had no knowledge of Christ as Mediator. Thus they could not receive the benefits of His ministry of atonement in the heavenly sanctuary. Their experience is illustrative of many Christians who “are willingly ignorant of the work of our merciful High Priest, even though it is more essential than ever that those of us living in this antitypical Day of Atonement . . . understand the work of our High Priest and know what duties are required of us.”<sup>7</sup>

What exactly is the work of Jesus as our Mediator or Advocate in the heavenly sanctuary? We turn to Ellen White for another description: “God did not deem the principle of salvation complete

while invested only with His own love. By His appointment He has placed at His altar an Advocate clothed with our nature. As our Intercessor, His office-work is to introduce us to God as His sons and daughters. Christ intercedes in behalf of those who have received Him. To them He gives power, by virtue of His own merits, to become members of the royal family, children of the heavenly King. . . . As Christ intercedes in our behalf, the Father lays open all the treasures of His grace for our appropriation, to be enjoyed and to be communicated to others.”<sup>8</sup>

Some view God as a sort of vengeful tyrant, just waiting to catch us doing something wrong so that He can destroy us. Here we find an entirely different picture. After doing all possible to provide salvation, the Father “by His appointment” provided our Advocate to intercede in our behalf. He is longing for us to be introduced to Him by Christ as His sons and daughters so that He can lay open to us “ALL THE TREASURES OF HIS GRACE for our appropriation.” Doesn’t this bring us a new understanding of how much our Father in heaven cares for us?

#### “Behold, the Bridegroom Cometh”

Ellen White ties together “The coming of Christ as our high priest to the most holy place, for the cleansing of the sanctuary, brought to view in Daniel 8:14; the coming of the Son of man to the Ancient of Days, as presented in Daniel 7:13; . . . the coming of the Lord to His temple, foretold by Malachi, . . . [and] the coming of the bridegroom to the marriage, described by Christ in the parable of the ten virgins.”<sup>9</sup> She specifies that these are “descriptions of the same event.” Then she explains that: “At the appointed time the Bridegroom came, not to the earth, as the people expected, but to the Ancient of Days in heaven, to the marriage, the reception of His kingdom. ‘They that were ready went in with Him to the marriage: and the door was shut.’ They were not to be present in person at the marriage; for it takes place in heaven, while they are upon the earth. The followers of Christ are to ‘wait for their Lord, when He will *return* from the wedding. Luke 12:36. But they are to understand His work, and to follow Him by faith as He goes in before God. It is in this sense that they are said to go in to the marriage.”<sup>10</sup>

Do you catch the import of that statement? Talk about the

EVERLASTING GOOD NEWS—the gospel being preached under the three angels’ messages—this is it! Revelation 14:6 connects the gospel with additional good news—“The hour of God’s judgment has come.” Is that good news? For those who already have been accepted in the beloved (that’s you and me), those who ALREADY are sons and daughters of God, joint heirs with Christ, members of the royal family of the universe, there is nothing in the judgment hour message that should frighten us. It is GOOD NEWS! By faith we HAVE ENTERED in through the veil with Jesus and stand by His side before the judgment throne of God.

What IS happening to us as we stand before the judgment throne? We are there not as criminals, but as clients of the Great Advocate who has been placed there “by God’s appointment.” Do you grasp fully the significance of what we’re studying? Do you begin to sense that we have nothing to fear from the judgment because God ALREADY has accepted us in the Beloved as His sons and daughters?

As sons and daughters of God, members of the royal family of the universe, those who have been accepted in the Beloved, our challenge is to live as sons and daughters of God. When my family and I were serving as missionaries in Japan in the 1950’s, a lot of excitement was created when Crown Prince Akahito became engaged to Michiko Shoda. Their pictures were displayed in the main stores. Magazines, newspapers and television vied with each other to present the details of how this couple had met on a tennis court and fallen in love. For the first time a member of Japan’s royal family was marrying a commoner. We watched as her father was interviewed on television and were surprised that he did not seem happy about what was happening. Although he was wealthy, he felt his daughter’s upcoming marriage into the royal family and her future role as empress of Japan placed too much responsibility on his family. Even though she had been educated in some of the best schools in Japan, Michiko had to go to a special school for two years to learn how to properly represent her new family and serve as empress, which she now is. Every little thing she did was subjected to intense scrutiny to see if she would measure up to her new responsibility.

We, too, are challenged as adopted sons and daughters of the

heavenly King to live in a manner that befits our new royal status. It cost Christ everything to provide the crowns He earned for us. It will cost us something to wear them. We must be gratefully willing to live in such a way that we bring only honor and praise to Heaven’s royal family of which we NOW are a part.

Our new status is outlined in 1 John 3:2: “Beloved now are we the sons of God.” As God’s children we may be living on earth right now, but we belong in heaven as members of the royal family of the universe. This verse also promises, “We shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.” Verse 3 adds: “And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.” The purpose of the atonement in heaven is to not only make us at-one with God as members of the royal family, but to make us at-one with Him in character. It is our privilege and responsibility to uphold and vindicate the name and character of God before the universe.

We have the assurance in this judgment-hour that not only has the Father accepted us in the Beloved, adopted us as His sons and daughters into the royal family of the universe, but also that our High Priest is able to cleanse and purify us, enabling us to live as representatives of the royal family, vindicating the character of God before the universe.

### Endnotes

- 1 Stephen N. Haskell, *The Cross and Its Shadow* (South Lancaster, MA: The Bible Training School, 1914), p. 70.
- 2 *Ibid.*, p. 70.
- 3 *Ibid.*, pp. 70, 71.
- 4 *The Desire of Ages*, p. 834.
- 5 *Ibid.*, p. 835.
- 6 *The Great Controversy*, p. 430.
- 7 *Ibid.*, pp. 430, 431.
- 8 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, vol. 6, pp. 363, 364.
- 9 *Ibid.*, p. 426.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 427 (italics supplied).