



# JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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## THE PRESIDENT'S PAGE

### A Message from the ATS President

C. Raymond Holmes

Greetings in the name of our Lord to all readers of the *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*! Your response to this publication of the *Adventist Theological Society* has been most gratifying. It serves to encourage further cutting-edge theological articles.

For this issue of the *Journal* I want to comment on the name *Adventist Theological Society*, and on two articles of the criteria of membership in the *Constitution of the Adventist Theological Society*.

*Adventist Theological Society* does not imply a formal entity of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, nor that it is inclusive of Adventist theologians and Bible scholars. The term *Adventist* signifies no more than that membership is reserved for Adventists as opposed to members of other denominations. It suggests no more than does *Association of Adventist Forums*, which is not inclusive of all Adventists nor a formal entity of the Church, nor more than *Association of Adventist Women*, which is certainly not inclusive of all women of the Church. Thus *Adventist Theological Society* is neither ambiguous nor misleading.

Article 1 of the *Constitution* states: "We are convinced that the Bible is the Word of God—the inspired, infallible revelation of propositional truth. The Bible is its own interpreter, provides the foundation and context for scholarship and the totality of life, and is the unerring standard for doctrine." The terms *inspired*, *infallible*, and *unerring* represent a high view of the Bible's authority as revelation from God, and have a long and respected heritage in Christian history.

These terms express the view of Scripture held by Ellen G. White, and more recently that of the 1974 North American Division Bible Conferences. Therefore, with respect to its position on Biblical authority, *ATS* stands in the great stream of Christian and Adventist history and does not hesitate to confess its belief in the



full authority and accuracy of the Bible as Word of God. The terms are not understood to refer in any sense to a dictation/verbal theory of Biblical inspiration.

Article 3 reads: "We endorse the use of historical-grammatical Biblical interpretation recognizing the necessity of the Holy Spirit's aid in so doing. We reject the use of any form of the 'historical-critical' method in Biblical study." As a co-founder of *ATS* I am particularly pleased by the inclusion of this Article, as I witnessed first hand the devastation to faith and mission the historical-critical method produced in my former Church. Recent events in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and the Southern Baptist Convention underscore similar devastation, which has, fortunately, been courageously and successfully reversed in those denominations. As one in the early joys of acceptance of the Adventist message I appreciated immensely the rejection of the historical-critical method by the 1974 Bible Conferences, and later by the "Methods of Bible Study Report"—(*Adventist Review*, Jan. 22, 1987), which reinforced my confidence that I had found a secure Bible-based spiritual home in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. *All the presenters at the 1974 Bible Conferences contributed to that confidence.*

I wish to extend to Dr. Leo R. Van Dolson, who has served as distinguished editor for the first six issues of *JATS*, the most extensive word of appreciation for his outstanding service and dedicated labor. He has taken on new duties in revising a major SDA resource volume, forcing him to relinquish the editorship of *JATS*. Elder Frank B. Holbrook has been elected as editor and several associate editors have kindly consented to assist him. We wish them God's blessings for their volunteer ministry in editing *JATS*.

May this issue of *JATS* prove to be a rich source of reading pleasure, and may the Lord continue to empower by His Spirit the message and mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church!

Yours in the service of the Master,

C. Raymond Holmes

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## THE ROLE OF SDA EDUCATION IN THE FORMATION OF ADVENTIST LIFESTYLE

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Because Seventh-day Adventists believe that *the work of redemption and the work of Christian education are one and the same*, we have in that very belief the conceptual construct for a theology of education: the Christian Gospel—in theory and application. Parents *are* expected to train up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; that is an unmistakable injunction in both Testaments (Deut 6:3-5; Prov 22:6; Isa 54:13; Eph 6:4).

From Eden onward we know that the home school is clearly mandated as a residual base for spiritual instruction (about God—theology). We know also that in Old Testament times the prophet Samuel, under divine inspiration, raised up a small network of prophetic schools to ensure the spiritual prosperity of Israel (2 Kings 2). This appears to be the first institutionalized expression of religious instruction. And the cathedral schools of medieval times, under the auspices of the Catholic church, perpetuated the custom, broadening it to include popular education, as well as pre-seminary studies. The great Protestant reformer, Martin Luther, established and encouraged such schools, with the same spiritual objectives as Samuel. We are in the train of that noble legacy since Ellen G. White re-enshrined this grand legacy as a centerpiece of Adventism. Her able articulation of the role of Chris-

tian education as a prime vehicle for the transmission of religious values and purpose constitutes a profound theology of Christian education, and is probably best expressed in her landmark volume *Education*, particularly Part 1, entitled "First Principles" (pp. 13-22). Unknown to most Adventists, however, are the six chapters in *Ministry of Healing* (pages 396-475), which vie with her better known prime piece, in terms of incisive insight and literary majesty.

Establishing the link between theology and pedagogy is not all that difficult, for it is clear from His Word that *God has transparent educational objectives*—and preferred instructional modalities—in mind for the restoration of the race. And that is "curriculum" in anybody's language!

If genuine education means being molded—or perhaps we should say re-molded in the likeness of our Creator, then the mission and goals of education are settled. God is out to repair the damage, to re-model, to overhaul His creation, with a special focus on His creatures. The Bible is saturated with expected learning and lifestyle outcomes; they are clearly enunciated. What role does education play in that overhaul? We will attempt to answer that question in terms of (1) the core curriculum, (2) the content of the core curriculum, (3) teaching the core curriculum, (4) redemptive discipline, (5) modern schools of the prophets, and (6) confronting lifestyle issues.

### The Core Curriculum

Every corporate effort is at first—and last—wound around some central organizing concept, or principle, which anchors and focuses the whole endeavor. Some of our scholars have dealt with this paradigmatic reality under the rubric of presuppositions. They have examined the powerful gravitational pull of central ideas, and the foundational theological studies that inherently flow from such an ideological commitment. No less true is this of education, which educators refer to as "core curriculum"—that is, the anchor concepts and studies that organize and give meaning to the whole educational experience. These become the studies that define, organize, and illuminate all others. Theology is indeed such a discipline.

Every young freshman at a Christian college learns early on

in Bible classes what theology is—the study of God. An awesome, staggering assignment it is (but an ineffable privilege), to be a Bible teacher, to initiate youth into this sacred science. What a way to spend a life! Is there any other study quite like it? May we pose a parallel? Ornithology, the study of birds. So, what does it mean to study birds? It involves learning many things, such as the distinctive shape, size, and coloring of some of the different species, their living patterns, their anatomy and physiology, and what they eat, how they mate and reproduce, their various songs, the assorted flight patterns, etc. And how does one pursue ornithology? By watching birds and by reading about them from those who have watched and written about them.

How then would one pursue theology? Similarly, by watching God and by reading about Him from those who have watched and written about Him. This should lead us to know God—that is, to know what He is like, what He does, what His attitudes are, what His priorities are, what His temperament is, what His abilities are, what His tendencies are, what His procedures are, what His preferences are, what His timetable is, etc. Much of theology focuses on what God thinks, how He thinks, and how He behaves in certain circumstances. It also tries to suggest what is His relationship with beings whom He has created, creatures who are alternately negative and positive in their feelings toward Him.

Why, then, the study of theology as core curriculum in Christian education? Because we believe that we can never really understand the human situation until we place it in the total construct of the divine. The earthly has to take its place congruently in the cosmic. Consequently, theology must be the very core of core curriculum in Christian education. Humanistic studies, rooted as they are in Greco-Roman lore and assumptions for the starting place of a liberal arts education, doesn't begin to take in the whole picture of man in the universe. It just doesn't cut it. Hardly "liberating," in any complete sense of the word, considering the human predicament. Youth instinctively comprehend that.

Surely a pagan center for Christian education must appear as "strange fire on the altar" as far as God is concerned! No, the real Gospel has to be at the center of true Christian education, not out on the periphery. Core curriculum if you please. If it is not so



located, we short-change a whole generation who come to us looking for cosmic, and personal, meaning. For answers, not for more questions.

An observation regarding the general strategy of presentation of “our” theology, *our* Gospel to our youth might be worthy of reflection. It was evident, upon closer inspection of the Valuegenesis research—after the initial euphoric reassurance that our pastors, Sabbath School teachers, and educators are not spiritually derailing their young charges after all—that our young people are indeed confused about the Gospel.<sup>1</sup> Their placement on the “works” scale was, for all practical purposes, as high as that of “grace.” They seemed equally comfortable with either. Disturbing. This certainly indicates that much greater clarity about the central locus of salvation needs attention with the youth in our schools. In fact, would it be too strong to say that what we have on our hands now with the younger generation is, theologically speaking, an emergency situation?

Imagine this Adventist school scenario: two student theology clubs organize on campus, one aggressively liberal and the other arch-conservative, with many of our youth holding *joint membership*, suspecting no ideological dissonance present at all in the circumstance. To which some mugwump theologians among us would cynically ask, “Why not? Then they’d have the whole gospel!” No, decidedly no. The eternal stakes are much too high, and our responsibility as spiritual guides of the young too awesome for any “on-the-one-hand/on-the-other-hand” theology in working with youth today. They are looking for a certain anchor for their young lives, wanting to develop *faith*. Theologizing is far more than an issue of scholarship, a mere matter of academic respectability.

Clearly, the Valuegenesis study revealed that there is a basic need to integrate Seventh-day Adventist formal education and the message of Righteousness by Faith (“Christ, Our Righteousness,” or Justification by Faith). It is this emphasis that will correctly shape, motivate, and guide the educational process. We are talking about a *Steps to Christ* message, framed in the setting of *The Great Controversy*. No “cheap grace” signaled in this type presentation of the divine-human partnership. We’ve heard it all before, but it must

be regularly repeated. Is that not what preaching/teaching is all about?

The law of God demands perfect obedience. This the sinner owes to the law. Christ came, lived, and died to meet the claims of the law for us. His *life* provided the *obedience* that the law required. His *death* paid the *penalty* that the law demanded. This is available to the sinner through *faith*. True faith is both mental assent *and* action based on that belief. Man comes into happy, intelligent cooperation with God’s prescriptions for saving grace, as he/she experiences *the power* as well as the pardon of the Gospel.<sup>2</sup>

### The Content of the Core Curriculum

There is a need for a *balanced, complete* view of this central message. We need to be stirred to *both confidence and obedience*. Prior to 1888 Seventh-day Adventists heard much about obedience, but little about confidence. Since that time we have increasingly stressed the confidence that can be ours, but have simultaneously de-emphasized the obedience by faith that is the prerequisite for obtaining Christ’s imputed righteousness. Little wonder that our youth are confused about the Gospel! At present, the message of love has become focused almost exclusively on the mercy aspect. But, *love has two parts: justice and mercy*.

Ellen White says plainly that “God’s love has been expressed in His justice no less than in His mercy.”<sup>3</sup> With the present de-emphasis of obedience, there is a playing down of the sinful human condition which requires a Savior. We have come *NOT* to see our need. Thus, we have come to devalue God’s love.

The young people in our schools need to hear—and will respond to—a demanding message, one that shows we are indeed sinners but which, at the same time, shows the sinners’ hope. Only those who are sick need a physician. The problem is that many of our youth leaders, pastors and teachers, have become afraid to tell the youth of their, our, desperate need. Thus, we have come to lightly value the Savior. We need to hear much more concerning the standards and principles of the Law of God *while* we hear no less of the marvelous righteousness that is ours through Christ, and His resurrection power working in our lives. It’s all His work, as Paul

correctly understood (Col.1:29). What assurance and confidence in God this balanced theology can bring to our youth!

To focus only on God's mercy or his justice is to rob The Gospel of its power. This, it seems, we have consistently, almost universally done. Without God's mercy, we have no hope. Without His justice, we have no need. Need is the progenitor of hope. We will never really hope without need. The implication is clear for Christian educators, particularly Bible teachers, that greater clarity and balance must attend our teaching about The Good News. As we have observed previously, the Valuegenesis research clearly indicates that today's Adventist youth hold a rather murky theology in this respect.

Another aspect of this Adventist youth confusion about the gospel deserves our attention. Our youth must not be permitted to confuse culture with grace, be it private or corporate, whether it touches matters of self-discipline or group discipline. House rules, dorm rules, school rules, etc., which have so much to do with lifestyle must not be equated with God's rules, lest the necessary and natural youthful rebellion of self-identity (one of the "developmental tasks" of adolescents) eclipses the higher need to *discover who they are in Christ*. Somewhere in Adventism, our sociology seems to be tincturing our theology (or vice-versa?). At any rate, we're talking about "lifestyle!"

Before we come down too hard on pastors and teachers, though, we need to take a closer look at the Valuegenesis data, particularly the open-ended responses. When we do, another picture comes into focus: apparently it is not the Bible class that is the prime suspect, giving the foul tip toward righteousness-by-works, but rather the general legalistic *ambiance* of many of our congregations and the homes from which Adventist youth come. The immediate fall-out effect of this mixed message might likely be a plateauing and postponement of our young people's graceful transition into mature Christian adulthood. If this is true, it certainly represents a developmental distortion that cannot be taken lightly!

#### Teaching the Core Curriculum

Does all this relate directly to our topic of lifestyle? Definitely. If we believe that our theology dictates our lifestyle, then we must address the basic theologic tenets; for what is believed inwardly will

play itself out in the life. One does not need a Ph.D. in social psychology to comprehend that inherent cause-effect relationship. We know, as Christian educators, that we are sending back from the campuses—academy and college (yes, even from the little one-room elementary schools!)—children and youth who will become leaders in their congregations. Members who will materially influence the lifestyle of the body politic. Their leadership role, particularly their modeling, will be based on their concept of *what is important to God*. We're talking about the church of tomorrow, which is already here today, sitting in our classrooms. So the matter is vitally important.

Most philosophers are of the opinion that systematic theology is merely a specialized subset of the general inquiry of philosophy. Religious philosophy, that is. It all has to do with the conceptual search for *meaning*, particularly the cosmic and the moral dimension of that quest. So we constantly find ourselves dialoguing somewhere along the continuum of *the ideal* and *the real*, the "is" and the "ought." As with most of the imponderables of such discussion, we are pulled between inherent ideologic tensions, assessing the polarities rather than determining a given point on a line. There is little doubt where theology and sociology as disciplines fall with respect to finding neat little categories from which to argue. It's a slippery slope, but we have no choice except to walk it with our youth. So we frequently find ourselves talking with them about the polarities—and the choices these ultimately dictate. All true educational endeavor wrestles with this choice: the phenomenalist stance of contemporary popular science today, contrasted with the absolutist aspects of biblical revelation.

Let there be no doubt about it, Adventists are incurable idealists when it comes to the training of the younger generation, believing that God Himself has set the benchmarks for Christian education. They are timeless and are not circumstantially adjustable. Accordingly, unapologetic idealism is at the center of all our educational endeavor.

This brings us to one of the most telling philosophy-of-education questions: should the school just mirror and conform to the society in which it finds itself, or is it assigned the task of transforming that society? It's the old "reflect or reform?" debate, and we cannot enter the dialogue regarding corporate responsibility



until we have thought down to ground zero our real philosophy of education on that bottom-line consideration. You can always count on the idealists and the realists quickly sorting themselves out on *that* starting line! Once that paradigmatic presupposition is established, organizing a supporting rationale follows with hardly a hitch.

In considering the impact of our schools on the lifestyle of the church, we have to deal also with the ever-present reality of the impact of the Adventist society on our schools, which do not exist in isolation but in context. These young people are coming out of our homes; we can only work with what the homes send us. This disclaimer does not constitute a cop-out or transfer blame as a professional form of buck-passing, but rather recognizes the complexity of our problem. We are partners in a common challenge, inextricably involved. Like Siamese twins who cannot say to one another, "You go your way and I'll go mine." Longfellow, in commenting on the relationship of man and woman, husband and wife, described our situation so aptly in his epic poem *Hiawatha*: "Though she bends him, she obeys him, Though she draws him, yet she meekly follows." One is inclined to add: "Like the bow with the arrow, each useless without the other!"

But let us talk from the school side of the partnership. Yes, the schools do indeed have a responsibility to lead Adventist society; that assignment is inescapable. And we do accept it. We believe that our Christian institutions have been providentially founded and are called to be transformers of society, truly a spiritual leaven, with incalculable "lifting power"! Discussions of the "ought," therefore, do not constitute an attack on the educational system for its shortcomings, but rather a review and refreshment of the vision that inspires to greater commitment. Our schools are meant to be lighthouses, islands in a sea of iniquity; and despite the pressures to assimilate into the materialistic, hedonistic world about us, we must continue to steer by the stars. Let me tick off just a few:

*First.* The over-arching purpose of our schools, the macro effect, when it's all said and done, is to give our youth a *Christian world view—to see everything from God's point of view*, as revealed in His inspired Word. It's giving our students a "Christian mind." Teaching them how to "think Christian." The integration of faith

and learning is not some special teaching method; *it's general teacher behavior (modeling!)*. Presuppositional thinking, brought to bear on every study in the student's educational exposure. Passing everything under Christian critique. Students practicing it together under the example and coaching of a benign Christian teacher. If there is a secret driving force that gives true Christian education its peculiar potency, it is this. Have no doubt about it, this natural, unfeigned, pervasive integration of faith and learning is *the* distinguishing mark of a truly Christian school, at whatever level. Deeply spiritual teachers talking as naturally about the supernatural as they do about the weather, without awkwardness or apology. And it really hits home!

The credibility of such teacher life style, absorbed at close range and for prolonged exposure, is indisputably authentic and has a tremendous molding power on impressionable young minds. This is a lifestyle consideration that flows right off the campus into our churches. Sadly the obverse of this is true also: either way, the influence is formative. Indeed, it is a staggering and sobering responsibility to be such a model to youth. We as SDA educators carry this awareness heavy on our hearts everyday.

*Second.* As Christian educators, we recognize that we are as much in the inspiration business as we are in the information business. Because we comprehend this "hidden curriculum" dimension of our schools, we want to bring as many inspiring ideals and goals as possible before these youth— Not only to impact on them personally, but to model for them *all kinds of inspiring, uplifting programming* that honors God and refreshes man. This goes back home with the student also, and helps transform the worshipping church in a significant way. This infers intentional, "confrontive," programming. That word used to be an altogether respectable word before the protest generation claimed ownership of it. It was regularly used by pastors, therapists and physicians who lovingly and responsibly confronted their clients, facing them with the truth about themselves, nudging them toward wholeness and health and true self-dignity. Let us remember: The Gospel *is* confrontive. True Christian education *is* confrontive. Both demand radical life re-adjustments. Jesus modelled that.

*Third.* We all sense that so much of what passes for worship

services today with our youth is nothing more than religious entertainment, frothy and conspicuously devoid of Spirit-blessed *unction*. When Peter preached at Pentecost, the audience moaned under the hammer blows of the Second Person of the Godhead, and they were constrained to plead, "Men and brethren, what must we do to be saved?" That's confrontation, in the highest and most positive sense of the word; and it, too, is a kind of corporate lifestyle, modeling religious programming and worship that our campuses export. It's a role that is formative, alright, and our schools have a definite responsibility in modeling for the church worship services that are arresting, substantial, and sobering.

*Fourth.* Christian character development, consciously pursued, must ever be a centerpiece of holistic SDA education. The conventional wisdom of so-called "liberal studies" abounding today hardly comprehends it's pivotal import, placing personal Christian character development so far out on the periphery as to be non-curricular. Even in many Christian schools today.

### Redemptive Discipline

Have you ever thought of redemptive discipline as corporate lifestyle? It is integral to school management, to be sure, but it is a whole lot more than that; it probably says more to answer the great theological question, "What is God like?," than anything else we do. It is corporate modeling of a most powerful sort and shapes the church of tomorrow. It is a powerful statement also about the justice and mercy of God and how the Family of God on earth operates. Yes, campus discipline is corporate lifestyle, and in the long run it will definitely shape the congregational life of our people. It's so crucial to our unified goals that we must never permit it to become the exclusive province of the dorm dean, or the principal, or the college dean of students. And especially not the discipline committee! No, it must be the on-going burden of every teacher who regards students as his/her own surrogate children. In the truest sense of the word, discipline is not punishment but discipling. One of the great dangers that lurks on a close horizon is that our faculties, even Bible teachers, become so preoccupied with their scholarship that they forget their call to make disciples for Christ. The solemn obligation of the school administrator is to be as concerned about

principle as about policy. Advanced teachers of religion who are powerful mentors and models for their hero-worshipping apprentices, cannot teach theology with the same cold precision of a nuclear scientist, without due regard for the sacred oracles they handle. It's an inherent hazard of our profession, one to which we must be ever alert, that we can easily grow casual about such matters and lose our sense of the sacred. That's when heaven writes "Ichabod" over our doorpost.

Faculty recruitment is of such paramount importance. We aren't buying degrees by the yard, we are commissioning youth evangelists. They are clerics of the classroom and campus—professionals who understand that their teaching lectern is their specialized pulpit, the schoolroom their sanctuary. Such Christian teachers understand that they operate on at least four levels *beyond* the mere professional: the levels of parent, pastor, prophet, and priest.

### Modern Schools of the Prophets

This prophetic/priestly role of the faculty, when taken seriously by them, is what makes a modern School of the Prophets. It starts with a faculty who are the real prime-movers. So contagious is it that the example and influence moves out to the field, and *the school itself begins to rise to the full stature of its assignment in the prophetic role with our people*. Thus the corporate lifestyle of the school touches and molds the lifestyle of our people. That's when we lead the popular culture, not follow it!

When the professional/prophetic roles on campus become discreet and specialized (and separated), students quickly see our modelled compartmentalization of the religious and secular as an attractive option for them personally, and the "hidden curriculum" lesson is not lost on them. Deep down in the fifth sub-basement of the evolving psyche and religious commitment of that young life registers the instruction from the establishment: "You can learn how to keep religion in its place in your life just like we do here at school." The apostle Paul certainly knew about Greek dualism in his day; he had to combat it constantly. We have it on a much more subtle plane today. We tend to think it only has to do only with linguistics and hermeneutics, and arcane theological distinctions.



Skewed symbolic statements having to do with the sense of the sacred, or dichotomized Christian/worldly living, can be just as disastrous to the graduate student as to the teen-ager. Both, of course, eventually pass it through to the church.

Yes, we can write it down in our book: anytime we divide up a campus between the sacred and the secular we fracture reality and create a cleavage in wholeness from which the student may not fully recover. Rarely does this kind of institutional lifestyle modeling flood out to congregations, however. It's often imperceptible; it just seeps out. But it is nonetheless "formative" and impacts our church at large.

True, we prepare youth to "make it" in the world, by giving them the essentials of an informed and cultivated mind, and tools for a livelihood in hand. Any school worth its salt must surely do that. But what we're talking about here are those "distinctives" that characterize a truly Christian school and materially shape the lifestyle of its sponsoring church.

#### Confronting Lifestyle Issues

Time does not permit an in-depth examination of each of these lifestyle considerations, but we can cite a few.

A. Long-range family indebtedness over school financing. Our schools and our people together will soon have to address this lifestyle crisis of our times.

B. The extent to which we buy into the secular, materialistic motivation for acquiring an education. Selfless service to mankind is what we are primarily about. Giving, not getting. That's a lifestyle issue of immense magnitude for the Christian, and pastors and teachers must each work from their own side to keep our noble purposes in education ever before the youth and their parents.

C. "Empowerment" is a new buzz word. Helping specialty groups of all stripes to learn how to get and exercise political clout, and leverage their way to their objectives. Based on the principle of duress (social Darwinianism?), this indeed represents a lifestyle expression, and needs to be unpacked for the Christian. Empowered for what? To get our piece of the pie? Or to be privileged to be a part of God's final love call to the world? This whole notion of so-called "empowerment" could be the *coup de grace* for the unity

of our Movement, and I hope we deal with its splintering divisiveness in a spiritual and effective manner. Micro-cultures are here too stay, and we are going to have to exercise commanding, irresistible pastoral leadership if we are to keep the Family of God together. Our schools have a clear responsibility to properly educate in this domain, ever keeping in view before our youth what we are in this world to do for God, and not getting caught up in the social/political skirmishes of the times. So easily a derailment of our mission.

D. Bigness vs. smallness is also emerging as a corporate lifestyle issue. Institutionalization is a way of life. Some impressively large world organizations are concluding now that bigness can be a liability, a lifestyle and a luxury they no longer can afford, often coming at the price of true quality and responsible integrity. That review looms over the horizon for us too, I suspect.

E. The work ethic vs. the play ethic is a lifestyle issue, and a number of our schools, and Christian families, are seriously reviewing their real goals in this respect, with a much stronger tilt toward work as a necessary corollary to maturation and character development. I applaud it, and I believe that we are going to see serious re-orientation on this front, and God is going to signally bless it! Meaningful labor is definitely a part of God's plan for the restoration of the race. It is the enemy who wants us to sleepwalk—or better yet—play our way to Armageddon. God has a much better way. To all of us comes the invitation: "Come up higher."

#### Conclusion

Seventh-day Adventist schools definitely do impact heavily on Adventist lifestyle. Schools, formally assigned or not, are change agents. That's why every movement coming down the pike wants access to our children. So let's look to a wider horizon—The Grand Partnership: the home, the school, and the church pulling together to save our children! That's where the focus has always been, and always will be. Statisticians can provide some marvelous disclosures with their number crunching, and this one came out of the Valuegenesis study, and it's soberingly impressive: when home, school, and church come together and insure that our youth do not live in three separate lifestyle worlds, the combined impact statistically is 800 per cent greater than any one of them standing alone.<sup>4</sup>

Indeed, the formation of an Adventist lifestyle is everybody's business in the Church. Considering the enormous problems—and the enormous potential of partnership—we as a people really have no other options to consider, do we?

#### Endnotes

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2 Scarbrough, Charles D. *To God Be The Glory*. (A composite paraphrase drawn from a 1983 unpublished manuscript. Scripture references include: Isa 53:6; Matt 27:46; Rom 5:10,19; II Cor 5:21; Heb 2:9. E. G. White citations include: *Steps to Christ*, pp. 51, 62; *Selected Messages*, Vol. 1, pp. 20, 34, 344, 366-368, 374, 396, 397.)

3 Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages*, p. 762.

4 Dudley and Gillespie, *Valuegenesis*, pp. 294-95.

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## THE ORIGIN OF THE BIBLICAL SABBATH AND THE HISTORICAL-CRITICAL METHOD: A METHODOLOGICAL TEST CASE

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The origin of the sabbath is a fascinating topic for those who consider the Bible as the primary norm for their system of faith. There is renewed interest in the sabbath on the part of persons who either accept the biblical view that the sabbath is the seventh day of the week, rooted in creation,<sup>1</sup> that is, Saturday,<sup>2</sup> or those who suggest that the sabbath may be kept on any day of the week, preferably on Sunday,<sup>3</sup> or must be kept on Sunday as the Roman Catholic Church has officially "decreed."<sup>4</sup>

The purpose of this study is (1) to review the biblical presentation of the origin of the sabbath, its antiquity, divine origin, and resultant suprahuman authority, all of which are rooted in the sabbath's beginning in creation, (2) to show how biblical sabbath origins are replaced by a radical redating of relevant biblical texts in the books of Genesis and Exodus and a radical reinterpretation of ancient prophetic sabbath texts, (3) to present and analyze new claims in the search for sabbath origins by scholars using the historical-critical method in Scripture study, and (4) to reveal the implications of the historical-critical method for the faith of the believer by means of the impact of historical criticism upon the interpretation of biblical sabbath origins.



### The Biblical Presentation of Sabbath Origins

For the purpose of stating the biblical presentation of sabbath origins this study will restrict its attention to the first three passages in the Bible that refer to the sabbath. These passages under consideration are Genesis 2:1-3; Exodus 16:22-30; and Exodus 20:8-11. Historically these passages have been considered in the period of the last two thousand years to be the oldest biblical references regarding the sabbath.

1. *Creation and the Sabbath (Gen 2:1-3)*. It is universally recognized that the first reference to the sabbath, although without the usage of the word "sabbath" itself, appears in Genesis 2:2-3:

And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation (NRSV).

The creation sabbath is here depicted at the conclusion of creation week. This is of pivotal significance for the understanding of the origin of the sabbath.

The linkage of the verb "rest" (Hebrew *shabat*) with the noun "sabbath" (Hebrew *shabbat*) has been recognized time and again. In this passage the verb "rest" appears in connection with the threefold usage of the expression "seventh day" of creation week on which God Himself rested from His creative activity.

According to this Scripture passage the sabbath originated at creation. G. H. Waterman, a Sunday-keeping scholar, observes, "The Hebrews did not claim to be the creators of this unique institution [of the sabbath]. They affirmed that God himself was the creator. The record of its origin which they preserved for us is in the Bible. The divine origin of the sabbath is described in the opening chs. of Genesis."<sup>5</sup> We can conclude that the sabbath is presented here as of divine, suprahuman origin.

Recently, J. C. McCann, Jr., affirms that the OT "focuses upon Israel's theological conviction that the sabbath originated with God at creation (Gen 2:1-3; Exod 20:8-11; 31:17), that its observance was commanded by God at Sinai (Exod 20:8-11; Deut 5:12-15) . . ."<sup>6</sup> In a widely used non-conservative, contemporary Bible dictionary it has been stated that "an etiological origin of the Sabbath is

supplied in Gen 2:1-3, which speaks of God ceasing from the work of creation on the seventh day, blessing the day, and declaring it holy."<sup>7</sup>

It should not escape our attention that the last two scholarly opinions speak respectively of "Israel's theological conviction" and of an "etiological origin" of the sabbath. Both quotations restate what the biblical text of Genesis 2:1-3 claims. However, they qualify it as being "theological" on the one hand and "etiological" on the other. In both cases there is a restriction regarding the factual quality and accuracy of the report in Genesis 2:1-3. We will observe below why these restrictions have been made and what systems of thought are at work in these caveats.

It can be stated without any shadow of a doubt in harmony with the descriptions of the data contained in Genesis 2:1-3, which these scholars summarize, that the biblical presentation of this passage reveals that the sabbath originates from God Himself as the grand climax of creation week. Thus, the sabbath is of suprahuman origin and vested with "suprahuman authority."<sup>8</sup> By means of the divine cessation of activity on the seventh day the sabbath possesses a transcendent nature which invites observance on the part of the one who wishes to identify with the Creator, claiming Him to be his/her Lord.

Why is it important that the sabbath is a divine and not a human invention and institution? Why is it significant that it is presented in Scripture, in Genesis 2:1-3, as deriving from God Himself as the climax of creation week? Although many appropriate and pertinent answers can be and should be given, I shall restrict myself to the following seven implications:

(1) Since the origin of the sabbath is rooted and grounded in God and not in man, it follows that God has control over the sabbath. If the sabbath derives from God, then only God can change its time and meaning, if any change is/were ever called for.

(2) Since the sabbath originated with God at creation, long before there were any Hebrews, or Jews, in existence, the sabbath cannot be properly said to be originally a Hebrew (Jewish) day of worship and celebration. Thus, the sabbath is not a day of rest and worship restricted to a particular people, a particular time, or a particular place.

(3) Since the sabbath has a creation origin, it is a creation order, a creation memorial, and a creation model. Anyone who interferes with this order, memorial, and model interferes with an institution of God's creation order and not with one of man.

(4) Since the origin of the sabbath is linked with creation, any one who changes, removes, alters, or abolishes that sabbath engages in an alteration, abolishment, removal, or change of a divine creation institution. Such interference means to engage in an undoing of what the deity had accomplished at the end of creation. Such interference is an act of human hybris.

(5) Because the sabbath was first celebrated by God at the end of six days of divine creative activity, God himself provides the example of sabbath observance for humankind to emulate. The rhythm of six days of activity and rest on the "seventh day" is a divine order rooted in God's own creation sequence. The one who follows this divine sequence in the observation of the weekly seventh-day sabbath is linked with the divine Pattern and thus manifests loyalty to God publically.

(6) The text reveals that the divine Exemplar "hallowed," "sanctified," and made the sabbath "holy." Humans do not make a day holy by keeping it or resting on it. The sabbath is made "holy," "sanctified" and "hallowed" by an act of God.

(7) As the sabbath originated in creation and is linked to the universality of creation, so the universality of the seventh-day sabbath for all human beings is rooted in the universality of creation.

The sabbath day is the Creator's gift to humankind. Thus, the sabbath is the "Lord's day" on which human's acknowledge God as their Creator and Lord. As stated elsewhere, "The sequence of 'six working-days' and a 'seventh [sabbath] rest-day' indicates universally that every human being is to engage in an *imitatio Dei*, 'imitation of God,' by resting on the 'seventh day.' 'Man' (*adam*), made in the *imago Dei*, 'image of God,' (Gen 1:26-28) is invited to follow the Exemplar in an *imitatio Dei*, participating in God's rest by enjoying the divine gift of freedom from the labors of human existence and thus acknowledging God as his Creator."<sup>9</sup> The Creator provides with each weekly seventh-day sabbath freedom to

rest, opportunity to commune with God, and time to reflect about the Maker of heaven and earth and His work of creation.

2. *The Manna Experience and the Sabbath (Exod 16:22-30)*. The second major passage on sabbath origins is Exodus 16<sup>10</sup> which reveals "that through a miraculous rhythm in the provision of the manna Israel was both shown the keeping of the sabbath rest on each seventh day and was obliged to keep this divine ordinance."<sup>11</sup>

The unexpected appearance of the sabbath in Exodus 16 serves several major purposes which we may summarize as follows:

(1) The sabbath was taught in the wilderness of Sin to a redeemed, liberated Israel that had gone through the exodus experience. This happened before the giving of the law on Mt. Sinai (Exod 20)<sup>12</sup> and long after the Noachian flood, which shows that the rhythmic cycle of six days of work and the seventh day of rest had not been lost in the deluge experience from the ante- to the post-diluvian world.

(2) The existence of the sabbath prior to the manna experience, is assumed in the text of Exodus 16.<sup>13</sup> The sabbath is presented and treated as something that was known.

(3) The noun "sabbath" (Hebrew *shabbat*) appears in this passage unannounced for the first time in the Bible (Exod 16:25, 26). It is something already known.

(4) The "sixth day" is presented as a day of preparation for the sabbath (vss. 5, 22, 29). A double portion of manna was to be collected on the sixth day.

(5) The sabbath is clearly identified with the "seventh day" (vs. 26). The designation "seventh day" is a direct and explicit linkage with the creation sabbath. The words "seventh day" appear first in Genesis 2:1-3.

(6) The sabbath is called "holy" (vs. 23, Hebrew *qodesh*). This is another direct and explicit linkage to the creation sabbath of Genesis 2:3 where the sabbath is declared to be "holy" (or "hallowed," etc. as English renderings present it).

(7) The sabbath is designated to be a "sabbath feast" (Exod 16:23, Hebrew *shabbaton*). The sabbath is not a fast but a feast. The festive nature of the sabbath comes to expression from the beginning.



(8) The sabbath is a day of "rest" (vss. 23, 29, 30). This is once more a link to the creation sabbath on which God Himself "rested."

(9) A divine commandment enjoins the keeping of the sabbath (vs. 28). This reveals that the sabbath as a commandment is older than its inclusion in the fourth commandment of the Decalogue given later on Mt. Sinai.

These major points reveal that the sabbath's connections with the creation sabbath are rich and multifarious. They make clear at this stage that the sabbath contains religious ("holy"), humanitarian ("rest"), and festive ("sabbath feast") emphases. The sabbath is also set within the context of a people who have been set free from bondage and slavery to be faithful to the redeeming God whose "commandment" must not be refused (vs. 28). Evidently, the sabbath serves to test the faithfulness and obedience which manifest themselves in the believer's lifestyle. These essential insights reveal that "Exodus 16 contains key notions regarding the origin, purpose, function, and meaning of the Sabbath."<sup>14</sup>

3. *The Decalogue and the Sabbath (Exod 20:8-11)*. The third sabbath passage of the Bible reveals the sabbath to be an integral part of the giving of the Decalogue on Mt. Sinai (Exod 20:8-11).

The introductory words of the fourth commandment, "Remember the sabbath day . . ." (vs. 8), suggest that the sabbath was previously known.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, the sabbath commandment is repeated in a farewell sermon by Moses as recorded in Deuteronomy 5:12-15.<sup>16</sup>

The centrality of the fourth commandment within the Ten Commandments is recognized by many students of the Decalogue,<sup>17</sup> not only because of its length, being by far the longest of the Ten Commandments, consisting of fifty-five Hebrew words, but also because of its position within the Ten Commandments.

The sabbath commandment's centrality in the Decalogue serves as "the connecting link between those commandments having to do with the duties toward God and those having to do with duties toward man."<sup>18</sup> The content of the sabbath commandment reveals this twofold connection.

The fourth commandment emphasizes the origin of the sabbath both implicitly and explicitly. There is the twofold emphasis on the fact that the sabbath is "holy" (Exod 20:8, 11). The first

emphasis comes at the beginning with the words "to keep it holy" (vs. 8). The focus is on sabbath holiness. This theme reappears at the end of the sabbath commandment (vs. 11, "he made it holy"). The reference to sabbath holiness at the beginning and the end is a so-called *inclusio*,<sup>19</sup> pointing back to Genesis 2:3 where the same Hebrew verb (*qadash*) is used. In the latter passage it is rendered into English either as "he sanctified it," "he hallowed it," or "he made it holy."

The reason for humans to keep the sabbath "holy" rests in the fact that God Himself made it "holy" (Gen 2:3; Exod 20:11). Creation sabbath holiness and fourth commandment sabbath holiness reveal an inseparable connection with creation and with the very nature of God. God Himself is holy and has invested something of His own nature in the seventh-day sabbath.

Another connection with the creation sabbath is in the opening of the fourth commandment. The word "remember" (Hebrew *zakôr*) calls for both the human action of thinking and the resultant doing.<sup>20</sup> It is remembering with commemoration<sup>21</sup> in which thinking issues in worshiping.

The call to "remember" reveals that the sabbath "is not introduced for the first time on Sinai, it is already there. . . . However, it is not introduced for the first time even in the wilderness of Sin, where the manna is found. Here, too, it is proclaimed as something which is already in existence."<sup>22</sup> Obviously Israelites did not invent the sabbath. They brought it with them<sup>23</sup> and Abraham, who received it from his forefathers, "bequeathed to his descendants the conception of the seventh day as a divine rest day. . . ."<sup>24</sup> We cannot underestimate the power of oral and written communication by which the greatest events and institutions were transmitted from parent to child for successive generations.

One of the two motivations<sup>25</sup> for keeping the sabbath according to the fourth commandment are the words, "For in six days the LORD made the heavens and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it" (Exod 20:11, NKJV). This wording consists of a significant repetition on the part of the divine Speaker of words recorded previously in Genesis 2:2-3. The reason for keeping the sabbath is the fact that (1) God "rested" after his

creation, (2) God made everything in "six days," and (3) God "blessed" (cf. Gen 2:2) and "hallowed" (vs. 3) the sabbath. To keep the sabbath holy means then to (1) follow the divine Exemplar's pattern, (2) acknowledge him as Creator, (3) participate in His rest, (4) accept God's gift of the sabbath, and (5) reveal one's loyalty to the One who is Creator-Redeemer (cf. Deut 5:14c-15a). Sabbath commemoration includes all of these essentials.

In short, the fourth commandment provides the reaffirmation, from the very mouth of God, that the sabbath had its origin in Him and by Him and through Him at creation, linking together the creation activity and rest of God with the exodus-redemption-salvation experience of God's people, making the latter a part of the remembrance (Deut 5:14-15).<sup>26</sup> The exodus experience was an act of creation as well, the creation of a new people. Thus, both the creation of the world and the creation of God's people are commemorated in keeping the sabbath.

The fourth commandment, being part of the Decalogue, puts the sabbath into the framework of God's covenant with his people. God's true Israel will always keep God's seventh-day sabbath as they will keep all of God's commandments, because the latter "are essentially 'categorical imperatives' of universal validity, above time and independent of circumstances."<sup>27</sup> Therefore, the sabbath is God's eternal sign of his covenant with His people. "It is a sign forever between me and the people of Israel that in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed" (Exod 31:17, NRSV). These sabbath passages make it evident that the sabbath was not instituted at Sinai. At Sinai the sabbath was incorporated into the covenant which God made with His people. Its origin cannot be singularly connected with Moses or the Israelites, or for that matter with the Sinai covenant. Ancient Israel inherits the sabbath as of suprahuman, divine creation origin which carries with it a suprahuman character, inviting and commanding observance from all who acknowledge God as Creator-Lord.

The sabbath commandment of the Decalogue does not institute the sabbath but points in various and unmistakable ways to its origin in divine creation. The creation origin of the sabbath

cannot be underestimated. The creation origin of the sabbath is its quintessence.

### The Biblical Origin of the Sabbath Replaced in Historical-Critical Study of the Bible

The investigation of this section of our study will indicate how the explicit and definitive creation origin of the sabbath as presented in the Bible has been rejected in historical criticism.<sup>28</sup> The biblical materials in which the origin of the sabbath is described and defined in its creation origin has been dated very late.<sup>29</sup> Thus, the biblical and revelational authority for the sabbath has been replaced. It is made into a Jewish day of rest of very late beginnings which no longer has any binding force on other people. It is made into a day that developed through tradition and the tradition-shaping process. In order to understand why and for what reasons this reinterpretation and reconstruction has taken place, we must have a clear understanding of the workings of the historical-critical method and the inextricable presuppositions that shape its procedures.

1. *Beginnings of the Historical-Critical Method.*<sup>30</sup> The historical-critical method,<sup>31</sup> often termed "biblical criticism" when applied to the Bible, is linked to the age of the Enlightenment<sup>32</sup> and the philosophy of rationalism which had its hey day in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>33</sup> This method experienced unprecedented support in so-called scientific research in the university, liberal colleges, seminaries and divinity schools in Europe, Great Britain and the United States at about the turn of this century. It remains in many ways the major method of Scripture study today in many institutions of higher learning.

2. *Presuppositions of the Historical-Critical Method.* There are a number of major presuppositions of the historical-critical method which shape its workings and processes. Without these presuppositions the historical-critical method is not the method it purports to be. These presuppositions cannot be separated from the method without a radical redefinition of the method itself and its constituent procedures.

a. *The Bible as a Mere Historical Document.* One of the major turning points in the age of the Enlightenment was the view that



the Bible no longer has inspired and canonical status.<sup>34</sup> In this new way of looking at the Bible it has no special, divine authority. It became axiomatic that the Bible "should be read as a historical document."<sup>35</sup> This meant that the Bible of both the Old and the New Testaments is the same as any other ancient collection of books and should be studied with the same methods and procedures as any other literary documents from the past.

*b. The Bible is not Divinely Inspired.* The Bible is not to be viewed as inspired in the sense that it contains the very words of God and truth in propositional form. If it is to be perceived as inspired, that inspiration is redefined as of human origin like the inspiration of any author or writer from the past or present who has some kind of great insight.<sup>36</sup> It is no more nor any less inspired than the works of Shakespeare, or any other human poet or author.

*c. The Supernatural Replaced by the Natural.* Another key presupposition of this historical-critical method is to understand the Bible in a "natural" way. The Bible has no "supernatural" origin. Its content is no longer perceived to be of divine origin.<sup>37</sup>

This reinterpretation and understanding of the Bible, as shaped and formed by natural forces, was a radical departure from the Christian church's rightful emphasis on the inspiration of Scripture held for centuries.

*d. The Principle of Analogy.* The reign of naturalism, replacing long held supernaturalism, is mandated by the basic principle of analogy essential for the historical-critical method. The principle of analogy is one of three foundation stones of the historical-critical method, the other two consisting of the principles of correlation and criticism.<sup>38</sup>

The principle of analogy holds that the past can be understood only on the basis of the present. The present holds the key to the past because of the assumption that "there is a fundamental homogeneity of all historical events"<sup>39</sup> which makes knowledge of the present the key for understanding the past.

*e. The Principle of Correlation.* Another principle without which the historical-critical method is unable to function is the principle of correlation which holds that everything in history is interrelated in a historical context. A. Van Harvey, a highly respected historical-critical scholar who describes the workings of

the historical-critical method, points out that the principle of correlation insists that "no event or text could be understood unless it is seen in terms of its historical context. This meant . . . (1) that no critical historian could make use of supernatural intervention as a principle of historical explanation because this shattered the continuity of the cause nexus [of immanent causes and effects], and (2) no event could be regarded as a final revelation of the absolute spirit, since every manifestation of truth and value was relative and historically conditioned."<sup>40</sup> In plain language, all historical events have to be explained without any activity of God in history. The principle of correlation correlates all events on the level of natural causes. Divine activity is ruled out in the processes of history.

*f. The Principle of Criticism.* Edgar Krentz, a well-known defender of the historical-critical method defines the principle of criticism for us, stating that it consists of "methodological doubt, which implies that history only achieves probability."<sup>41</sup> Peter Stuhlmacher also notes that the principle of criticism consists "of systematic skepticism which the historian applies to all historical traditions."<sup>42</sup> The relativity of human judgment is based on skepticism. Modern man can never have any final assurance of anything because all human judgments are based to a greater or lesser degree on probabilities only.<sup>43</sup>

*g. The "Closed Continuum" of Reality.* The corollary of this way of viewing reality meant that the Bible was replaced as providing the standard of reality. The vertical, divine-human dimension where God communicates with human beings and provides revealed information was replaced with a horizontal-only dimension. Things depicted as of supernatural, transcendent origin were reinterpreted, redefined, and reconstructed on the basis of immanent, human cause and effect relationships.

Divine causality is not conceived to be active in history. Rudolf Bultmann, one of the most important historical-critical New Testament scholars of this century, has classically defined the new "closed continuum." He stated honestly that "the historical method includes the presupposition that history is a unity in the sense of a closed continuum of effects in which individual events are connected by the succession of cause and effect."<sup>44</sup> The histori-

cal-critical method is thus built on a "presupposition" which defines historical research on the basis of this "closed continuum."

The discerning reader will immediately ask, what about miracles? What about events that happened only once? What about so-called singularities, again events that are non-repeatable? These and other problems have been raised by those who have reacted against the historical-critical method.<sup>45</sup>

*h. The Denial of Miracles.* Since the historical-critical method works on the basis of a "closed continuum" of natural causes and effects, that is, with mere immanent causes and effects of economics, social structures, political powers, and human passions, ideas and ideals,<sup>46</sup> it is not able to account for or recognize miracles caused by divine or other supernatural powers.<sup>47</sup>

Bultmann affirms, "This closedness means that the continuum of historical happenings cannot be rent by the interference of supernatural, transcendent powers and that therefore there is no 'miracle' in this sense of the word."<sup>48</sup> This means not only that there can be no miracles. While Bultmann acknowledges a different picture in the Old Testament, he notes that "while . . . the Old Testament narrative speaks of an interference by God in history, historical science cannot demonstrate such an act of God, . . ."<sup>49</sup> He also makes it clear that the event or happening which the Bible describes as an act of God in history is understood, translated and interpreted by the historical-critical method as a natural event caused by "immanent historical causes."<sup>50</sup> "Immanent" here means human or natural and not divine causes. What is said to be God's working in history is reinterpreted as caused by human or natural forces! The biblical reports of divine causality are made into human-originated causality. This is a radical change and reinterpretation of the Bible's own testimony. What the Bible assigns to be caused by God is said to be caused by man or nature. It is evident that the historical-critical method is a reinterpretation method.

Frank Moore Cross, world-renowned Harvard University professor of Hebrew and Oriental Languages, insists that "history in the modern context means a description and interpretation of human events arrived at by a specific scientific method. Among the stipulations of this method is agreement to eschew discussion of ultimate causation or meaning, . . . You don't speak of divine acts

or victories in writing history. . . Attribution of events to miracles is disallowed on methodological grounds [in the historical-critical method]."<sup>51</sup> In this framework of modernism the "historian *qua* historian must put distance between himself and religious affirmations of Yahweh's divine direction of history."<sup>52</sup>

Professor Cross makes the Bible's claim for divine causality unacceptable to the modern historian. Evidently the historical-critical way of looking at the Bible means a radical departure from the plain biblical testimony of the miraculous or the divine. This can be accomplished only by a determined reconstruction, reinterpretation and redefinition of what the Bible actually says regarding events in history and their causes.<sup>53</sup> Thus, the Bible is longer heard for what it says on its own terms. It must be understood to say something that is in harmony with what the modern historian and his method allows to take place. What is supernatural is made into something that is natural.<sup>54</sup>

The same sentiments are expressed by Hershel Shanks, famous editor of the *Biblical Archaeology Review*, a widely read popular journal of biblical archaeology, who writes in a recent book, "Most modern [historical-critical] biblical scholars do not accept the Bible as literally true. So what you have to do is to treat it almost like an archaeological tell, and excavate it, as it were, and analyze it to see whether what it says is historically accurate by modern historians' standards, by modern historiography."<sup>55</sup> The conclusion drawn from historical-critical analysis, that is, modern historiography, is that "the Scriptures do not contain a historical account of Israel's origin and early history, . . ."<sup>56</sup> Or, the Bible is not literally true. In this view, there was no exodus from Egypt as the Bible depicts it, there were no ten plagues afflicted upon the Egyptians, the wilderness wandering of the Israelites never took place, and so on. Ancient Israel developed in some other way, a natural way, and at that hundreds of years later than the Bible describes it. In other words, the Bible is not literally true.

The "closed continuum" of reality perceived by the historical-critical method is still foundational for "modern historiography."<sup>57</sup> It continues to have far-reaching implications. Such implications are not only related to historical facts, they also change the teachings and doctrines of the Bible. The historical-critical method chan-



ges biblical faith into a modern faith system based on human suppositions.

One such implication is that the biblical picture of the origin of the sabbath in creation cannot be supported by historical criticism. Creation is not an event of a natural cause and effect continuum and thus there must be another origin of the sabbath, one in harmony with modern historiography. The sabbath, in this view, could not originate before Israel came into existence and is actually a very late institution. How does modern historical-critical scholarship understand and present the origin and development of the sabbath?

3. *The Sabbath in Historical Criticism.* The earliest search for another origin for many institutions mentioned in the Bible, including the sabbath, was based on what is known as source criticism, a constituent part and the first procedure of the historical-critical method. This procedure was followed by form criticism and tradition criticism.

a. *The Emergence of Source Criticism.* It may be helpful for the uninitiated to describe briefly major developments of source criticism.

Source criticism is "the oldest of all the critical 'methods' of biblical study,"<sup>58</sup> going back two hundred years to the beginnings of the historical-critical method. "By the end of the first decade of the 20th century, compositional theory was dominated by the Graf-Kuenen-Wellhausen Documentary Hypothesis of source criticism, which understood the formation of the Pentateuch in terms of four chronologically successive parallel strands [or sources] of tradition."<sup>59</sup> Source criticism posits the existence of written sources where the Bible usually describes matters in rather different terms. Often the Bible states that "God said" or "the Lord spoke" or that something happened by divine initiative and direction. Since this is divine causation, the historical-critic has to posit another way of suggesting an origin. Source criticism, as the historical-critic calls this approach, provides a new and different view.

For example, the alleged oldest source used in writing the Pentateuch, the five books of Moses, was the Yahwist (designated by the siglum "J") which is dated by many to the 10th century BC, the time of David-Solomon,<sup>60</sup> by others into the exilic-postexilic

period,<sup>61</sup> and by a few it is now even declared to be nonexistent.<sup>62</sup> The alleged second oldest source is the so-called Elohist (designated by the siglum "E") which is dated by many to the 9th century, the period of Elijah and Elisha,<sup>63</sup> and by a number of recent critical scholars it is also declared to be nonexistent. The alleged third oldest source is the so-called Deuteronomist (designated by the siglum "D") which is the book of Deuteronomy, dated to the 7th century BC, in any case not later than 622 BC.<sup>64</sup> Then there is finally the fourth and latest source. It is the so-called Priestly source (designated by the siglum "P") and dated to either postexilic (Persian),<sup>65</sup> exilic or more recently late preexilic times.<sup>66</sup> The "P" source is in many ways perceived to be the most extensive and the most sophisticated source to which the most sublime and advance ideas of the Pentateuch are assigned.

b. *The Sabbath in Source Criticism.* The first text which contains the creation sabbath is Genesis 2:1-3 as we have seen above. It is part of the creation narrative of Genesis 1:1-2:4a. This first section of the book of Genesis is ascribed to the "P" source, the latest of the four alleged historical-critical sources of the Pentateuch. Thus, the earliest and oldest passage of the creation sabbath is assigned by historical-critical scholars to material that is said to derive from the exilic or postexilic times in the five Books of Moses.<sup>67</sup> This means that Genesis 2:1-3 cannot be used at all for the origin of the sabbath. Since it allegedly comes from such a late time of Jewish understanding it is worthless in the mind of the historical-critical scholar for any understanding of the beginning of the sabbath. It is nothing more than a retrojection of priests writing of the sabbath into an early period. It is an invention on the part of later priests and has no historical value at all. It is said to be theology and not history. Thus, this oldest text is dismissed as unhistorical.

The same "P" source is said to contain the sabbath connected with the manna in Exodus 16:22-30.<sup>68</sup> As a matter of fact every passage about the sabbath in the five Books of Moses is assigned to this late source. This means that the five books of Moses do not provide any information of early sabbath origins whatsoever.

Using this method the conclusion is reached that the institution of the sabbath was a late development in the faith of Israel,

having, therefore, no universal application. It does not derive from God at creation. The sabbath creation origin is simply an etiology,<sup>69</sup> a later answer to the question concerning the origin of the sabbath. The etiological interpretation, or any other for that matter whether it is theological, mythical, parabolic, poetic or the like, denies to Genesis 2:1-3 any factual information regarding the origin of the sabbath as deriving from God's own rest at creation.

Historical-critical research has its own presuppositions, as we have seen above. It has concluded on its own terms that all things must have an immanent, natural origin. Thus, the creation origin of the sabbath cannot be accepted from a historical-critical point of view as a factual and historical event. With this understanding historical-critical scholars turned to investigate the origin of the sabbath as deriving from somewhere in the ancient world other than from God at the end of creation week.

*c. The Sabbath in Form Criticism and Tradition Criticism.* What happens to the fourth commandment of the Decalogue in form criticism, a method of study "that identifies and classifies the smaller compositional units of biblical texts, and seeks to discover the social setting within which units. . . were originally used"?<sup>70</sup> Did not God speak with His own voice on Mt. Sinai? Did not God write the moral law, the Ten Commandments, with His own finger upon the two tablets of stone? Yes, this is the plain, consistent and unambiguous testimony of the Bible which attributes the Decalogue directly to God (Exod 20:1).

The historical-critical scholar, as we have seen above, cannot accept supernatural causes as historically valid. Thus, the modern historian and critical scholar is forced by his own methodology of historiography to deny the plain and unambiguous biblical presentation.

Contemporary historical-critical scholarship has developed a "wide consensus that the present form of the Ten Commandments is the result of a long historical development, whose individual steps cannot be identified with certainty. The complex process of development was related to the institutional life of Israel, its sense of identity, its social structures, its teaching, and its worship."<sup>71</sup> The Ten Commandments do not derive from God or from the times of

Moses and the wilderness experience as the Pentateuch declares, but from postexilic times, roughly 1,000 years later.<sup>72</sup>

As the historical critic has an explanation for the emergence of the Decalogue so he has an explanation for the development of the sabbath commandment in the Decalogue.<sup>73</sup> The historical critic will use "form criticism" and "tradition criticism," developed in the twentieth century, to suggest that there was a long "process in which oral or written materials were passed down from one generation to another, acquiring their final form with the assistance and contributions of many individuals and groups along the way."<sup>74</sup> After these long processes of development, change, and growth over many centuries, there is finally a "P" (Priestly) redaction of the sabbath commandment.<sup>75</sup>

By means of such form-critical and traditio-historical reconstructions with very complex and lengthy processes of development, growth, change, and reshaping, the sabbath commandment<sup>76</sup> finally emerges in postexilic times<sup>77</sup> in the form in which we find it in the Decalogue at present.<sup>78</sup> Historical-critical scholars agree that the earliest form of the sabbath commandment was short and claim that there was growth from something short to something long. This is the alleged principle of growth from short-to-long. Thus, it is claimed that the sabbath commandment was at first something like, "Remember to keep the Sabbath day,"<sup>79</sup> and "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy,"<sup>80</sup> to "You shall keep the Sabbath day and you shall not do any work in it,"<sup>81</sup> "Six days shalt thou labour and the seventh day shalt thou rest, Thou shalt do no work on the sabbath,"<sup>82</sup> and "You shall not do any work on the sabbath and the new moon day,"<sup>83</sup> or the like. Historical-critical scholars cannot agree on its exact wording or when the reconstructed original sabbath commandment of the alleged "Primitive Decalogue" arose.<sup>84</sup>

Such scholars reject as unacceptable the biblical claim regarding the sabbath as spoken and written by God Himself on Mt. Sinai. Biblical claims are unhistorical and untrue because the historical-critical scholar works with a definition of history based on a "closed continuum" of natural causes and effects. Thus, a vastly different origin of the sabbath is called for by historical-critical scholars.



*d. Alleged Historical-Critical Origins of the Sabbath.* The historical-critical quest for the origin of the sabbath began one hundred and ten years ago in the year 1883 and a variety of theories have been developed since. We will refer to some of the most widely circulated theories in order to show how the historical-critical method works.

(1) *Theories of Babylonian Sabbath Origins.* In 1883 W. Lotz argued for a Babylonian origin of the sabbath, claiming that the Hebrew word *shabbat* and the Akkadian term *shab/pattu(m)* mean approximately the same thing, i.e., "day of rest."<sup>85</sup> He believed he had found the natural origin of the sabbath based on the custom of an ancient pagan people.

However, the Hebrew term *shabbat* and the Akkadian term *shab/pattu(m)* are unrelated etymologically as comparative Semitics has clearly indicated,<sup>86</sup> even though there are still a few people who continue to link the two words in both meaning and etymology. The Akkadian term *shab/pattu(m)* never means "sabbath" or "day of rest." It never has the meaning of "seventh day." Rather it refers to the 15th day of the month which is the day of the full moon.

A second theory for the Babylonian origin of the sabbath claims that the sabbath was originally a monthly full-moon day.<sup>87</sup> Gnana Robinson has recently revived this theory. He is a firm believer that the origin of the sabbath is connected with the moon, claiming that the sequence of "new moon--sabbath" in preexilic sabbath texts (Amos 8:4-7; Hos 2:9-13; Isa 1:10-14; 2 Kgs 4:22-23) reveals that the sabbath after the monthly "new moon" is the monthly "full moon" day. In these texts, he claims, the sabbath is not a weekly seventh day, but the monthly "full moon" day. He attempts to prove this by the sequence of *arhum-shapattu*, "new moon-full moon," in some Babylonian texts to which he appeals. In his view, which is gaining some support among contemporary historical-critical scholars, the seventh day and the sabbath were originally separate. At first there was a monthly sabbath, the "full moon" day, as preexilic texts from the eighth century BC (Amos 8:4-7; Hos 2:9-13; Isa 1:10-14) supposedly indicate. Later, in exilic and postexilic times, the seventh day and the sabbath were joined. This joining of the two days was a complex process and did not reach

its final completion until postexilic times when the alleged monthly sabbath turned into the weekly seventh-day sabbath.

Robinson's reconstruction makes the weekly seventh-day sabbath evidently a very late development in Old Testament thought.<sup>88</sup> In this case the seventh-day sabbath is nothing more than a Jewish institution, a development of Jewish thought, and thus holds authority only for Jews. This method supports the claim that the seventh-day sabbath is not a universal day of rest for all true Bible believers.

Robinson's theory has flaws so basic that it is rendered unacceptable, even for the historical-critical scholar who is acquainted with the facts of the matter. Let us consider several major points:

(a) A reinvestigation of all known Babylonian (and Sumerian) texts do not support the claimed two-word sequence of *arhum-shapattu*, "1st [new moon] and 15th [full moon] day" which supposedly follows the two-word sequence of "new moon-sabbath" of the biblical texts which he cites. The sequence of these Babylonian (and Sumerian) texts is really a three-word sequence, *arhum-sebutu-shapattu*, meaning "1st (new moon), 7th, and 15th (full moon) days." Such a sequence is never found in the Bible. For reasons that Robinson does not state he leaves out the second member of the sequence, *sebutu* "seventh day," in his discussions of the sequence in Babylonian texts. This omission is serious. It distorts the context, meaning and purpose of the sequence in these non-biblical texts. The OT itself has no parallel to this sequence in Babylonian (and Sumerian) texts. This Babylonian sequence is unrelated in its thematic context and its three-word schema to the sequence of the sabbath texts of the eighth century prophets.

(b) The 8th century BC text of Hos 2:11 (compare Amos 8:5; Isa 1:13) manifests the sequence "feasts-new moons-sabbaths," three festal celebrations. An investigation of the three underlying Hebrew words reveals that these celebrations are in the order of *increasing frequency*. First appears the least frequent celebration of "feasts," that is, the annual feasts which are celebrated only once each year. The monthly "new moon" celebrations are mentioned next. They are celebrated once each month, or twelve times each year. Finally, the "sabbaths" are mentioned. They are celebrated fifty-two times each year, that is once a week, and are thereby the

most frequent yearly celebrations. Thus the sequence of Hos 2:11 consists of "yearly (feasts), [next] monthly (new moon), and [finally] weekly (sabbath)" celebrations. The sequence is of an *increasing frequency*.<sup>89</sup> This sequence is also found in the OT in reversed order.<sup>90</sup> The sequence of a one time (yearly "feast"), twelve times (monthly "new moon" days) and fifty-two times (weekly "sabbaths") sequence is known only in the OT. There are neither Babylonian texts nor texts from any ancient Near Eastern culture that have such a sequence of celebrations stretched out over the whole year. The Bible is unique in this sequence and in the feasts mentioned.

(c) In later OT texts the "new moon-sabbath" sequence reappears without the yearly feasts but in each instance the "sabbath" is unmistakably the weekly seventh-day sabbath.<sup>91</sup> (d) The contextual settings of the Babylonian (and Sumerian) texts are so different as compared to the biblical ones that they cannot at all be related to each other on contextual grounds.<sup>92</sup>

There are also other less influential Babylonian hypotheses.<sup>93</sup> They do not have much scholarly support at present and do not need to concern us in this study.

(2) *Theory of Kenite Sabbath Origins.* According to the Kenite hypothesis Moses is said to have adopted the seventh-day sabbath in the Sinai region from metal-working nomads known as Kenites. Supporters of this hypothesis claim that the nomadic Kenites knew a Saturn-day which Moses took over as a seventh-day sabbath.<sup>94</sup>

Since there is no documentary support for a Saturn-day or Saturn worship among the Kenites (see the only texts mentioning Kenites in the OT: Josh 15:57; Judg 1:16; 5:24-27; 1 Sam 15:6; 27:10; 30:29 1 Chron 2:55), this hypothesis does not command any supporters at present.

(3) *Theory of Ugaritic Sabbath Origins.* The ancient Canaanite city of Ugarit was discovered in 1929. In Ugaritic texts of the so-called Danel cycle there are divisions of "seven years" and in the Keret legend a sequence of "seven days" is known. It has been hypothesized that "seven days" developed into a seven day week and that the origin of the seven day week was carried over into Israelite practice.<sup>95</sup> In addition it has also been supposed that there was a universal "seven" structure from which the seventh-day

sabbath derived<sup>96</sup> and was attached to the end of the seven day week.

It has to be admitted, however, that there is no evidence for the sabbath to be directly or indirectly connected with any of these structures. It is a pure guess that the "seven" structure leads to a seventh-day and that this day was the seventh day of the week. Ugaritic sabbath origins suggest that one guess leads to another to get to the sabbath. This hypothesis does not command many followers either.

(4) *Theory of Sociological Sabbath Origins.* It has been suggested that the seventh-day sabbath evolved from sociological contexts, out of "special days" or "rest days" of primitive agriculturalists.<sup>97</sup>

More prominent in recent times is the suggestion that market days, which were held at regular intervals, gave rise to the seventh-day sabbath.<sup>98</sup> It is correct that there were various market days at regular intervals in the past as there are today. However, there is no evidence to this day for a seventh-day market day cycle. Even if one could be found, it is difficult to perceive how a day on which buying and selling was the focus would or could become a seventh-day sabbath of rest on which buying and selling is prohibited as the OT makes clear.

It was stated two decades ago that "the origins of the sabbath and its traditions has not yet been found, and the [historical-critical] search still goes on."<sup>99</sup> This assessment of the situation has not changed.

The search for the origin of the sabbath outside of the OT has proven to be unsuccessful. Therefore, historical-critical scholars have placed greater emphasis on theological and sociological implications of the seventh-day sabbath.<sup>100</sup>

## Conclusions and Implications

1. *Limitations of Historical Biblical Criticism.* It is evident that the historical-critical method by its own definition, presuppositions, and procedures is unable to account for biblical revelation and its claims. It treats the Bible as a collection of purely human-originated documents which must be studied in the same way as any other ancient documents and with the same methods.



The Bible, however, makes claims regarding God's work in history and through the processes of history which are unique. One author has stated this succinctly in the following way, "In the annals of human history the growth of nations, the rise and fall of empires, appear as dependent on the will and prowess of man. The shaping of events seems, to a great degree, to be determined by his power, ambition, or caprice. But in the word of God the curtain is drawn aside, and we behold, behind, above, and through all the play and counterplay of human interests and power and passions, the agencies of the all-merciful One, silently, patiently working out the counsels of His own will."<sup>101</sup>

It appears that no compromise is possible between so-called modern "scientific historiography" as manifested in and practiced by the historical-critical method, and the picture of history revealed and presented in the Word of God, the Bible. Either the biblical picture of how God has worked and is working is correct or it is not correct. It has been shown above that to the very time of the writing of this article the assumption of the modern historian working within the framework of historical biblical criticism, using the historical-critical method, is that the picture of history presented in the Bible is not literally true. We have seen above that the historical-critical method continues to work with what it calls a "closed continuum" of immanent causes and effects that deny unique and one-time events in history. It is a method which by its own presuppositions and procedures denies a key part of reality as manifested in the Bible, reinterpreting it as being something else. It understands history only "from below," from the human side, denying the divine dimensions which permeate all of it and transform it into something new, different and unique.<sup>102</sup> It cannot account for miracles, uniqueness, singularities, and it has to reinterpret them in "natural" ways.<sup>103</sup> Thus, it changes the very essence of reality, destroying biblical realism.

We have seen what this means for the origin, authority and meaning of the biblical seventh-day sabbath. According to the historical-critical method the sabbath cannot originate from God in creation, because the very presuppositions and workings of the historical-critical method do not allow for this to be a reality. The historical-critical method not only reconstructs sabbath origins,

making the sabbath a human invention of late times, it assigns its origin to late Jewish religion, limiting its validity to this particular people. The sabbath is thus robbed of its universal nature as a day valid for all people at all times and in all circumstances.

2. *Jesus Christ and Sabbath Origins.* Jesus Christ rescued the sabbath from such restrictions by affirming, "The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27, NASB). The universality of the sabbath for humankind everywhere in every place is reaffirmed by Jesus Christ. He also reaffirms the divine origin of the sabbath at the time of creation.<sup>104</sup>

3. *The Proper Method for the Study of the Bible.* For Bible-believing Christians there is a method for the study of Scripture which does not deny essentials of biblical revelation and reality. It is a method that takes the claims of revelation of Scripture into account. It is a method informed and oriented by the revelation of God embodied in the Bible. It cannot be limited by anthropocentricity,<sup>105</sup> any sort of mere human orientation "from below," and what principles, presuppositions and workings from that orientation "from below" will or will not allow.

4. *Sabbath, Creation and New Creation-Resurrection.* In the end the issue for the Christian is not just creation and sabbath origins at creation. The issue revolves around another key reality, divine creation as manifested in resurrection. The New Testament appeals to eyewitnesses as a proof for the bodily resurrection of Jesus. Many eyewitnesses saw Jesus alive after he was crucified (1 Cor 15:5-8). The apostle Paul appeals to them as proof that Jesus was bodily raised. This one-time, unique event is denied by historical-critical scholarship.<sup>106</sup> Yet the testimony of the eyewitnesses are irrefutable. "If Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain. . . . If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile. . . . But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died. . . . But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ [will be raised]" (1 Cor 15:14, 16, 23, NRSV). The resurrection of Jesus in the past, as the resurrection of believers in the future, are activities of creating and re-creating new life.

The sabbath is a perpetual reminder of three divine activities of creation. It is the divine activity of creation at the beginning of

the world. It is the divine activity of creation of a new spiritual life in those who follow God in the present. Finally, it is the future divine activity of creation in resurrecting those who belong to God and the creation of a new home for them. The sabbath which comes from creation will continue to exist into the new creation (Isa 66:23) and be part of the celebrative experience of the resurrected saints in the "new heavens and the new earth." In that eternal state the sabbath will continue to be a reminder of God's marvelous creative power. Then all redeemed humankind will worship the Lord (vss. 22-23) as Creator and Redeemer.

Let us return once more to the true origin of the sabbath. The biblical report of the creation origin of the sabbath is as unmistakable, clear, and irrefutable as the resurrection of Jesus. The question is, how will we relate to the reports of God's revelation in Scripture and will we incorporate these true realities into our thinking, our faith and our life? As they worship the Creator on His appointed seventh-day sabbath, Bible-believing Christians are eager to recognize God's purpose and design, affirming his creation in the past, his creative power in present redemption, and his new creation in the future. Although this worship on His day takes place in time and space, it even now transcends time and space, lifting us into the very presence of our Creator.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> This is not the place to study the development of the seventh-day sabbath in the medieval, Reformation and post-Reformation church. The sabbath was rediscovered during the early years of the Reformation in the sixteenth century by such Anabaptist leaders as Oswald Glait and Andreas Fischer (see Gerhard F. Hasel, "Sabbatarian Anabaptists of the Sixteenth Century," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 5 [1967]: 101-121; 6 [1968]: 19-28) both of whom died as martyrs for their faith. The Reformer Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt (ca. 1477-1541) wrote in 1524 a booklet "On the Sabbath and Decreed Holidays" in which he claimed that the sabbath has not been changed to Sunday. He also emphasizes an "inner, mystical Sabbath" because externally all days are the same. Due to this emphasis he cannot be considered to be a restorer of the seventh-day sabbath as a day of rest and worship binding for Christians. The seventh-day sabbath also played a role among the Puritans, and Seventh-day Baptist who began to keep the sabbath in 1631. See Richard Müller, *Adventisten - Sabbath - Reformation* "Studia Theologica Ludensia" (Lund: GWK Gleerup, 1979); Brian W. Ball, *The English Connection* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1981), pp. 138-58.

<sup>2</sup> Among those who believe that the Bible maintains a seventh-day emphasis for the sabbath are Seventh-Day Adventists, Seventh-day Baptists, Church of God (Seventh-day), and other smaller Sabbatarian Christian groups. Historically the various Jewish communities have, of course, also emphasized the seventh-day sabbath.

<sup>3</sup> See here particularly D. A. Carson, *From Sabbath to Lord's Day* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982); Werner Grimm, *Der Ruhetag. Sinngehalte einer fast vergessenen Gottesgabe* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1990). The view of "one day in seven" will fulfill the sabbath commandment instead of the "seventh day" is held by the majority of Christians in one form or another.

<sup>4</sup> There are recent papal statements that reaffirm the position that the Roman Catholic Church has decreed that the Sabbath should be kept on Sunday. Pope John XXIII (1958-63) stated in the encyclical entitled, *Mater et Magistra* (pronounced on May 15, 1961) the following: "The Catholic Church has decreed for many centuries that Christians observe this day of rest [the Sabbath day] on Sunday, and that they be present on the same day at the Eucharistic Sacrifice [i.e., the Mass]. . . ." Cited in Anne Freemantle, ed., *The Papal Encyclicals in Their Historical Context: The Teaching of the Popes from Peter to John XIII* (New York: Mentor-Omega Books, 1963), p. 384.

<sup>5</sup> G. H. Waterman, "Sabbath," *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, ed. Merrill C. Tenney (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1975), 5:183.

<sup>6</sup> J. C. McCann, Jr., "Sabbath," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 4:249.

<sup>7</sup> David A. Glatt and Jeffrey H. Tigay, "Sabbath," *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, ed. Paul Achtemeier (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), p. 888.

<sup>8</sup> Jon D. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), p. 109.

<sup>9</sup> Gerhard F. Hasel, "Sabbath," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 5:581.

<sup>10</sup> For various historical-critical opinions on this passage, see N.-E. Andreasen, *The Old Testament Sabbath. A Traditio-Historical Investigation* "SBL Dissertation Series 7" (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1972), pp. 67-69, 129-30; J. H. Meesters, *Op zoek naar de oorsprong van de sabbath* "Studia Semitica Neerlandica 7" (Assen: Van Gorkum, 1966), pp. 115-18; N. Negretti, *Il Settimo Giorno* "Analecta Biblica 55" (Rome: Pontifical Press, 1973), pp. 173-224.

<sup>11</sup> Martin Noth, *Exodus. A Commentary* "Old Testament Library" (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), p. 132.

<sup>12</sup> Ernst Jenni, *Die theologische Begründung des Sabbatgebots im Alten Testament* (Zollikon-Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1956), p. 20.

<sup>13</sup> Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus* "Old Testament Library" (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974), p. 290.

<sup>14</sup> Gerhard F. Hasel, "The Sabbath in the Pentateuch," *The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, ed. Kenneth A. Strand (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publ. Assoc., 1982), p. 27.

<sup>15</sup> Waterman, "Sabbath," 5:184; Childs, p. 416.

<sup>16</sup> See my explanations of these differences, which are not as significant as some have attempted to make them, in "The Sabbath in the Pentateuch," pp. 28-33, and "Sabbath," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 5:851-52.

<sup>17</sup> See M. Weinfeld, "The Decalogue: Its Significance, Uniqueness, and Place in Israel's Tradition," *Religion and Law: Biblical-Judaic and Islamic Perspectives*, eds. E. B. Firmage, B. G. Weiss and J. W. Welch (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), p. 17.

<sup>18</sup> Hasel, "The Sabbath in the Pentateuch," p. 27.

<sup>19</sup> An "inclusio" is a literary device that frames a given passage.

<sup>20</sup> In the Hebrew text this is an infinitive absolute in the Qal stem which functions as a strong imperative. See Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), p. 593, where it is pointed out that "the infinitive absolute as a word of command . . . [is used] predominantly in divine and/or prophetic commands."

<sup>21</sup> W. Schottroff, "Gedenken" im Alten Orient und Alten Testament "Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum AT und NT, 15" (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchner Verlag, 1964), pp. 117-25.



22 Martin Buber, *Moses: The Revelation and the Covenant* (New York: Harper & Row, 1958), p. 80.

23 W. W. Cannon, "The Weekly Sabbath," *Zeitschrift für alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 49 (1931): 325.

24 M. H. Segal, *The Pentateuch. Its Composition and Authorship* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1967), p. 152.

25 The first motivation for keeping the sabbath in both Exod 20:10a and Deut 5:14a is the identical phrase "but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God." See Hasel, "Sabbath," *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 5:851.

26 From time to time it has been suggested that the sabbath commandment in Deut 5:12-15 is the original version, particularly because it is said to belong to the so-called "P" document which is traditionally dated later than the so-called "D" source (so recently again F.-L. Hossfeld, *Der Dekalog: Seine späte Fassungen, die originale Komposition und seine Vorstufen* "Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 45" [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982]) but this view has been rejected with good reasons time and again (see already, Karl Budde, *Biblische Urgeschichte* [Giessen: Ricker, 1883], pp. 493-94, and more recently C. Levin, "Der Dekalog am Sinai," *Vetus Testamentum* 35 [1985]: 165-91; Weinfeld, p. 5 n. 4).

27 Weinfeld, p. 15.

28 See the summary as presented by Rainer Albertz, *Religionsgeschichte Israels in alttestamentlicher Zeit. Teil 2: Vom Exil bis zu den Makkabäern* "Grundrisse zum Alten Testament 8/2" (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992), pp. 423-426.

29 There are scholars who argue that the seventh-day sabbath was the creation of post-exilic times: A. Lemaire, "Le Sabbat à l'époque royale Israélite," *Revue Biblique* 80 (1973): 181-185; C. Levin, *Der Sturz der Königin Atalja* "Stuttgarter Bibelstudien 105" (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1982), pp. 41-42. Other historical-critical scholars suggest that this happened in exilic times: Hossfeld, pp. 247ff.; G. Robinson (see below n. 67); Albertz, p. 424.

30 The historical-critical method is the major method in vogue still among critical, progressive, liberal scholars. For a recent defense, see Edgar Krentz, *The Historical-Critical Method* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975). The number of dissenting voices regarding the adequacy of the historical-critical method increases among those who have moved to structuralism, post-structuralism, reader-response criticism, audience criticism, rhetorical criticism, literary approaches, and so on. For surveys and summaries, see Anthony C. Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics. The Theory and Practice of Transforming Biblical Reading* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), pp. 31-140, 313-556; Tremper Longman III, *Literary Approaches to biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987); Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991).

31 This method has also been called "historico-critical method," "critical-historical method," and simply "historical method." Regardless of which designation is used it refers by and large to the same method of modern liberal scholarship.

32 An excellent reprint of major actors on the English scene is presented by John Drury, *Critics of the Bible, 1724-1873* "Cambridge English Prose Texts" (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

33 See the authoritative and widely cited study of Klaus Scholder, *Ursprünge und Probleme der Bibelkritik im 17. Jahrhundert. Ein Beitrag zur historisch-kritischen Theologie* (München: Christian Kaiser, 1966). Concise overviews in English are provided by Kendrick Grobel, "Biblical Criticism," *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), 1:407-13; S. J. de Vries, "Biblical Criticism, History of," *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, 1:413-18; D. P. Fuller, "Interpretation, History of," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 2:863-74.

34 One of the first major attacks on the Bible by historical critics concerned its inspiration and canonicity as the following famous study indicates: Johann Salomo Semler, *Abhandlung von freier Untersuchung des Kanons. Vier Teile [Treatise on the Free Investigation of the Canon]* (Halle, 1771-75). On the "neologist" Semler and his lasting influence in biblical study, see Werner Georg Kümmel, *The New Testament: The History of the*

*Investigations of its Problems* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1970), pp. 62-69; Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Geschichte der historisch-kritischen Erforschung des Alten Testaments* (2nd ed.; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1969), pp. 103-13.

35 Bernard C. Lategan, "Hermeneutics," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. D. N. Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 3:151.

36 One recent statement from a widely read biblical critic, James Barr, is symptomatic of this trend. James Barr, *The Bible in the Modern World* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), p. 120: "My account of the formation of the biblical tradition is an account of a human work. It is man's statement of his beliefs, the events he has experienced, the stories he has been told, and so on. . . . It is man who developed the biblical tradition and man who decided when it might be suitably fixed and made canonical" (italics his).

37 Robert Morgan with John Barton, *Biblical Interpretation* "Oxford Bible Series" (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); John Barton, *Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984).

38 See also Langdon Gilkey, *Naming the Whirlwind. The Renewal of God-Language* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1969), pp. 48-63. The principle of criticism is to be applied in order to determine (1) what the author of the document that is studied meant, (2) whether the author meant what he/she wrote, and (3) whether his/her belief was justified on the basis of modern, rational norms.

39 Ernst Troeltsch, "Über historische und dogmatische Methode in der Theologie," *Gesammelte Schriften* 2 (Tübingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1913), 2:732.

40 Van A. Harvey, *The Historian and the Believer* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), pp. 29-30.

41 Krentz, p. 55.

42 Stuhlmacher, p. 45.

43 Van Harvey, p. 14.

44 R. Bultmann, "Is Exegesis Without Presuppositions possible?" *Existence and Faith*, ed. S. Ogden (Cleveland/New York: Meridian Books, 1965), p. 291.

45 Among incisive critiques by former practitioners of historical criticism are the ones by Walter Wink, *The Bible in Human Transformation. Toward a New Paradigm for Biblical Study* (Philadelphia: Fortress 1973); Gerhard Maier, *Das Ende der Historisch-Kritischen Methode* (Wuppertal: R. Brockhaus, 1973), Engl. transl. *The End of the Historical-Critical Method* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1974); Eta Linnemann, *Wissenschaft oder Meinung? Anfragen und Alternativen* (Neuhausen-Stuttgart: Hänssler Verlag, 1986), Engl. transl. *Historical Criticism of the Bible. Methodology or Ideology?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1990); Thomas C. Oden, *After Modernity . . . What? Agenda for Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990), pp. 103-50.

Incisive critiques by others include Gerhard F. Hasel, *Biblical Interpretation Today* (Washington D.C.: Biblical Research Institute, 1985), a book that analyzes the origin, development and current usage of the method and provides reactions to the method from practitioners from within the method and those from without. An alternative method that is faithful to the claims of Scripture is provided. Recently the volume by Royce Gordon Gruenler, *Meaning and Understanding. The Philosophical Framework of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1991) provides a helpful analysis of the critical philosophical systems that have influenced biblical interpretation. Vern S. Poythress, *Science and Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1988) has numerous insightful criticisms of the historical-critical method.

46 Bultmann, p. 292.

47 See below n. 103.

48 Bultmann, p. 292.

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid.

51 Frank Moore Cross, "The Development of Israelite Religion," *Bible Review* 8/5 (October 1992):29, 50.

52 Ibid., p. 50.

53 Moderate reactions to the historical-critical method have come from members of this school of interpretation themselves, see Peter Stuhlmacher, *Historical Criticism and Theological Interpretation of Scripture*, transl. by R. A. Harrisville (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977) and Walter Wink (see above n. 43) whose first chapter begins with the incisive sentence, "Historical criticism is bankrupt" (p. 1).

54 We should notice that one historical-critical scholar, Peter Stuhlmacher, has addressed the difficulties the historical-critical method has caused for faith. He has suggested, therefore, that the historical-critical method be enlarged with a fourth principle, that of "consent," which is to be added to the three principles of analogy, correlation and criticism. By "consent" (German "Einverständnis") Stuhlmacher means a "willingness to open oneself anew to the claims of tradition, the presence and transcendence" (so Peter Stuhlmacher, *Schriftauslegung auf dem Wege zur biblischen Theologie* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975], p. 121). This means that the critical scholar should allow for these claims to have been in existence as realities. This affirmation of tradition, presence, and transcendence on a theological or theoretical level, however, does not change the historical-critical procedures because, if it would, it would nullify the verifiability of critical research (pp. 122-27). See also Stuhlmacher's decisive remarks in *Vom Verstehen des Neuen Testaments: Eine Hermeneutik "Grundrisse zum Neuen Testament"* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979), pp. 216-20.

55 Hershel Shanks in Hershel Shanks, William G. Dever, Baruch Halpern and P. Kyle McCarter, Jr., *The Rise of Ancient Israel* (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Archaeology Society, 1992), p. 25.

56 Robert B. Coote, *Early Israel. A New Horizon* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1990), p. 141.

57 Aside from the flood of articles on this subject the following books are noteworthy for their historical-critical reconstructions: Gösta Ahlström, *Who Were the Israelites?* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1986); Robert Coote and Keith Whitelam, *The Emergence of Early Israel* (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1987); Niels Peter Lemche, *Early Israel. Anthropological and Historical Studies on the Israelite Society Before the Monarchy* (SVT, 38; Leiden: Brill, 1985); idem, *Ancient Israel. A New History of Israelite Society* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988); Thomas L. Thompson, *The Origin Tradition of Ancient Israel* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987); idem, *Biblical Archaeology and the History of Israel's Origin* (forthcoming).

58 John Barton, "Source Criticism," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 6:164.

59 Thomas L. Thompson, "Israelite Historiography," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 3:208.

60 Albert de Pury, "Yahwist ('J') Source," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 6:1015.

61 *Ibid.*, 6:1017.

62 *Ibid.*, 6:1017-18.

63 Alan W. Jenks, "Elohist," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 2:482.

64 Moshe Weinfeld, "Deuteronomy, Book of," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 2:174.

65 B. A. Levine, "Priestly Writers," *Interpreter's Bible Dictionary, Supplement* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976), p. 685.

66 Jacob Milgrom, "Priestly 'P' Source," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 5:458-59.

67 Werner H. Schmidt, *Die Schöpfungsgeschichte der Priesterschrift* "Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament" (2nd ed.; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchner Verlag, 1976), pp. 154-59; Gnana Robinson, *The Origin and Development of the Old Testament Sabbath* "Beiträge zur biblischen Exegese und Theologie" (Frankfurt/New York: Peter Lang, 1988), pp. 225-27; Andreasen, *The Old Testament Sabbath*, pp. 63-67.

68 Robinson, pp. 227-30; Andreasen, pp. 67-69.

69 J. F. Priest, "Etiology," *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible. Supplement* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976), p. 293.

70 John Barton, "Form Criticism," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 2:838.

71 Raymond F. Collins, "Ten Commandments," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 6:383. Paul D. Hanson, *The People Called: The Growth of Community in the Bible* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), p. 53: "Here [in the Decalogue] the effects of centuries of reflection and revision . . . are seen."

72 *Ibid.*, 6:384.

73 See J. J. Stamm and M. E. Andrew, *The Ten Commandments in Recent Research* (Napierville, IL: Alec R. Allenson, 1967); Moshe Greenberg, "The Decalogue as Reflected in Modern Research," *The Decalogue throughout the Generations*, ed. B. Z. Segal (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1985); F.-L. Hossfeld (see above n. 26); B. Lang, "Neues über den Dekalog," *Theologische Quartalschrift* 164 (1984): 58-65; and J. Vincent, "Neuere Aspekte der Dekalogforschung," *Biblische Notizen* 32 (1986): 83-104. These studies provide insights into recent approaches of historical-critical research of the Decalogue.

74 Douglas A. Knight, "Tradition History," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 4:633-34.

75 A. Lemaire, "Le décalogue: Essai d'histoire de la rédaction," *De la Torah au Messie* ed. M. Carrez (Paris, 1981), pp. 159-95.

76 Weinfeld, p. 12.

77 Robinson, pp. 143-54, describes this in some detail. See also Albertz, p. 426 n. 49.

78 Klaus Koch, *The Growth of the Biblical Tradition: The Form-Critical Method* (New York: Scribner's, 1969), pp. 44-51.

79 Moshe Weinfeld, "The Decalogue in Israel's Tradition," *Religion and Law: Biblical-Judaic and Islamic Perspectives*, ed. E. B. Firmage, B. G. Weiss, and J. W. Welch (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), p. 13.

80 Walther Beyerlin, *Herkunft und Geschichte der ältesten Sinaitraditionen* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1961), p. 12.

81 Johannes Botterweck, "Der Sabbat im Alten Testament," *Theologische Quartalschrift* 134 (1954): 154.

82 Koch, *The Growth of the Biblical Tradition*, p. 49.

83 Ernst Sellin, *Geschichte des israelitisch-jüdischen Volkes* (2nd ed.: Leipzig, 1935), pp. 183-84.

84 Robinson, pp. 147-48.

85 W. Lotz, *Questiones de Historia Sabbati* (Leipzig, 1883).

86 Hasel, "Sabbath," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 5:850.

87 This was first suggested by Johannes Meinhold, *Sabbath und Woche im Alten Testament* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1905).

88 So Robinson, pp. 51-65, 155-92. See now also Albertz, pp. 425-426.

89 So also Francis I. Anderson and David Noel Freedman, *Hosea: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* "The Anchor Bible, vol. 24" (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1980), p. 250; Douglas Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah* "Word Biblical Commentary" (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), p. 51; Hans Walter Wolff, *Hosea* "Hermeneia" (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), p. 38: "Sabbath" stands next to the 'new moon,' as in Am 8:5; Is 1:13; 2 Kgs 4:23, but it can hardly be understood as the day of the full moon. Instead, in descending order, it is listed as the most frequent, weekly celebrated (Ex 20:8ff.) festival, and is listed last before various other, not especially important festivals."

90 Ezek 46:1,3, 9; 1 Chron 23:31; 2 Chron 2:4; 31:3; cf. Ezra 3:5.

91 Ezek 45:17; 46:1; Neh 10:33; cf. 1 Chron 23:31; 3 Chron 2:4.

92 Two independent studies reached identical conclusions on these points, see Gerhard F. Hasel, "New Moon and Sabbath" in Eighth Century Israelite Prophetic Writings (Isa 1:13; Hos 2:13; Amos 8:5), in "Wünschet Jerusalem Frieden." *Collected Communications to the XIIth Congress of the International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament*, eds. M. Augustin and K.-D. Schunck (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1988), pp. 37-64, and Ernst Kutach, "Der Sabbat—Ursprünglich Vollmondstag?" in *Kleine Schriften zum Alten Testa-*



ment. *Zum 65. Geburtstag herausgegeben*, eds. L. Schmidt und K. Eberlein (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1986), pp. 71-77.

93 See Andreasen, *The Old Testament Sabbath*, pp. 7-9; Robinson, pp. 30-32.

94 A more recent supporter of this hypothesis is H. H. Rowley, "Moses and the Decalogue," *Men of God* (London, 1963), pp. 1-36.

95 Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Worship in Israel. A Cultic History of the Old Testament* (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1966), p. 87.

96 Recently still Negretti, pp. 33-45.

97 So a long time ago H. Webster, *Rest Days. A Study in Early Law and Morality* (New York, 1916), pp. 188-92, 101-23.

98 Ernst Jenni, *Die theologische Begründung des Sabbatgebots im Alten Testament* (Zollikon-Zurich: Zwingli Verlag, 1956), pp. 7-16.

99 Andreasen, *The Old Testament Sabbath*, p. 273.

100 N.-E. A. Andreasen, "'Festival and Freedom.' A Study of an Old Testament Theme," *Interpretation* 28 (1974):281-97; idem, "Recent Study of the Old Testament Sabbath," *Zeitschrift für alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 86 (1974):453-69.

101 Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Assoc., 1903), p. 173.

102 Very insightful are the remarks on this limitation by Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Basic Questions in Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), 1:38-50; Stuhlmacher, *Vom Verstehen des Neuen Testaments*, pp. 30-32; idem, *Schriftauslegung auf dem Wege zur biblischen Theologie*, pp. 128-65.

103 See the insightful analysis of miracles during the last two hundred years in Colin Brown, *Miracles and the Critical Mind* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984).

104 S. Westerholm, "Sabbath," *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, eds. Joel B. Green et al. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), p. 717.

105 Pannenberg, 1:39-47.

106 Gary R. Habermas and G. N. Flew, *Did Jesus Rise from the Dead? The Resurrection Debate* (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1987); Norman L. Geisler, *The Battle for the Resurrection* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1989).

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## PRESUPPOSITIONS: THE KEY TO THE FORMULATION OF BIBLICAL DOCTRINE

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### Introduction

Over the years, there have been and are some Seventh-day Adventists who would like to adopt a modified form of historical-criticism, claiming that it can be used without accepting its presuppositions.<sup>1</sup> But, one wonders whether or not this is possible?<sup>2</sup>

It has been said by some that our most important characteristic is not what we think *about* but what we think *with*.<sup>3</sup> Consciously or unconsciously, everyone, including Christians, operate with certain assumptions.<sup>4</sup> Neither conservatives nor liberals, theologians or exegetes can claim to be free from them.<sup>5</sup> Because one's assumptions about truth and ultimate reality affect the way that a person thinks and acts, one must reckon seriously with their own contexts when interpreting the text of the NT.<sup>6</sup>

This raises the question of the relationship between presuppositions, interpretational method, and the formulation of doctrine. Does the method chosen to interpret Scripture when constructing a system of biblical teaching affect the final shape of that system? If so, should a person select one interpretational method over another when attempting to build their belief system?

The purpose of this paper is to examine briefly the issue of presuppositions, interpretational method, and their effect on the

development of doctrine. Because of the many varied methods of interpreting Scripture,<sup>7</sup> this study will limit itself to an investigation of some of the major presuppositions of two currently popular hermeneutical methods being used in Adventism, i.e. historical-critical approach and historical-biblical approach,<sup>8</sup> spelling out their effects upon the formulation of a doctrine of cosmology as found in the book of Ephesians.<sup>9</sup> This will be done by (1) examining one of the major presuppositions undergirding the aforementioned hermeneutical methods, (2) determining if and/or how this presupposition has affected the formulation of a doctrine of cosmology ("great controversy" for Adventists) as expressed in the book of Ephesians, (3) drawing out the implications of the results of each method's interpretation of the cosmological language of Ephesians for faith and preaching, and (4) deriving some conclusions about the use of hermeneutical methods and the formulation of SDA doctrine. Our goal is to determine whether or not Seventh-day Adventists can use hermeneutical methods apart from the presuppositions that are associated with that method.

#### Hermeneutical Presuppositions

**The Historical-Critical Approach to Scripture.** One of the most controversial points in historical-critical methodology lies in its theological and historical assumptions expressed by Ernst Troeltsch. Troeltsch asserts that religious tradition must be subjected to historical criticism. This means that in the field of religion, we can only; (1) see religious truth in terms of probability and not as absolute, (2) utilize present experiences and occurrences as the criteria for the possibility that something could take place in the past, and (3) interrelate all historico-religious phenomena as causes and effects.<sup>10</sup> The implication is that all knowledge and/or truth is historically conditioned.<sup>11</sup> There is no absolute truth.

However, this creates a tension within theology. It does not account or allow for the historic supernaturalistic understanding of biblical history. Rather, biblical history is set within an unbroken historical continuum without intrusions or "interference" from beyond this world.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, it excludes God as a causative factor in history.<sup>13</sup>

As a result of this, historical-critical scholars hold that the

Bible is exclusively the words of men, i.e. that it is strictly a historical document.<sup>14</sup> One interprets the Bible, therefore, in the same sense that one "interprets" other human books.<sup>15</sup> Hence, a great deal of emphasis is placed upon the need to avoid being controlled by the presuppositions of faith. Consequently, such biblical events as a virgin birth or resurrection from the dead, which cannot be historically verified, are *ipso facto* excluded from serious consideration when interpreting biblical history.<sup>16</sup> The working of the Holy Spirit in interpreting the Scriptures is hardly mentioned because it does not belong to the normal categories of critical inquiry. Much is said, however, about the human authors since they wrote what we have in Scripture.<sup>17</sup> The assumption that history is a closed continuum without supernatural intervention has led historical-criticism to emphasize that the Bible contains the words of men which are to be solely understood in the context of human history rather than as divinely-inspired propositions of truth given by God.

**The Historical-Biblical Approach to Scripture.** In contrast to the historical critical approach, the historical biblical method holds that there is a divine revelatory dimension in biblical history. Since the Bible is the revealed Word of God, one must make room for the supra-historical dimension of divine activity, i.e., that the supernatural invades and intervenes in this world's affairs.<sup>18</sup>

Because God can and does intervene in human affairs, scholars using the historical biblical approach believe that the Bible is in its entirety the Word of God which has been given in the language of men. They assume that God has revealed himself in history by both deeds and words. History is the vehicle of the divine self-revelation of God.<sup>19</sup> The Bible is the Word of God which has been given under God's inspiration.<sup>20</sup> This implies that one cannot ignore the historical context of Scripture because that context is foundational to comprehending its basic message. But, the determinative factor in understanding Scripture is that God gave his revelation of truth in the Bible through men as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet 1:20, 21).

Obviously, each of the foundational presuppositions of the foregoing methods is different and cannot be harmonized with one another. The former holds an anti-supernaturalistic assumption of



history as a closed continuum while the latter emphasizes that God does work in human history. The first sees the Bible as a merely historical document comprised of the words of men whereas the second takes the Bible as divinely inspired, written by men who were guided directly by the Holy Spirit. The question then arises as to whether the foundational presuppositions of both methods affect Biblical interpretation and the formulation of doctrine, and if so, how? We will attempt to answer this question by examining how each method approaches some of the basic tenets of cosmology found in the book of Ephesians.

### The Cosmology of Ephesians

It has been said that the modern interpreter works in a very different historical and contextual milieu than the biblical writer. The modes of thought about the universe in ancient times are very different from our modern scientific world-view.<sup>21</sup> This raises the question of how to understand the New Testament, written many centuries ago in an ancient language and culture, so that it might have relevance for the twentieth-century person.<sup>22</sup> The problem is particularly acute when discussing the world-view (cosmology) of the book of Ephesians with its account of "principalities and powers" (1:21; 3:10; 6:11-12), the "prince of the power of the air" (2:2) and its view of the "devil" (6:11-12). We will now, in the light of their presuppositions, attempt to see how both the historical-critical method and the historical-biblical method approach Scripture and interpret the cosmological language of Ephesians. Our goal is to determine whether or not their presuppositions have affected the formulation of a doctrine of cosmology and if so, how?

**Ephesian Cosmology in Historical Criticism.** As we have already seen, though, historical criticism has attempted to solve the question of how to understand the cosmology of the NT, within its milieu which is said to be so different from our modern world. It holds the words recorded in Scripture to be in fact the words of men. One must, therefore, get behind the mind of the ancient community and discover what the intent of the authors was and then attempt apply truth to the needs of the person living in the twentieth century. This has led the critic to take a more existential approach when explaining the cosmology of Ephesians.

Dibelius' work *Die Geisterwelt im Glauben des Paulus* (English *The World of Ghosts in Paul's Belief*<sup>23</sup>) has contributed significantly to the current trend of treating the Ephesian statements on the powers as irrelevant to the modern world. They are to be either demythologized or dismissed.<sup>24</sup> This has resulted in the powers and authorities of Eph 1:21 being interpreted as names for indeterminate powers hostile to man's best interests. They represent such "modern" ideas as hate, prejudice, racism, nationalism, etc.<sup>25</sup> Accordingly, modern authors represented, for example, by Walter Wink<sup>26</sup> view the cosmic powers (Eph 1:21) as the inner spiritual essence or *Gestalt* of an institution or state or system rather than as spiritual beings.<sup>27</sup>

In regard to the "prince of the power of the air," the historical critic maintains that this terminology represents the evil power or force that is working in the world. Satan, therefore, does not have a material existence.<sup>28</sup> If he was intended to be designated as the personal ruler of the world, one might expect that he would be described as the "god of this world" in a similar fashion as 2 Cor 4:4.<sup>29</sup> Since he is not, the ideas behind the term "prince of the power of the air" are not those of a personal being but those of the deadly enemies of selfishness, envy, hatred, and various kinds of prejudice,<sup>30</sup> evil suggestions and desires,<sup>31</sup> or the immoral conditions from which mankind wishes to be saved.<sup>32</sup> What is emphasized is how closely the powers of evil crowd in on human life. So much so is this the case that the very "atmosphere" of human activity is impregnated with this "force" of evil.<sup>33</sup>

A similar interpretation holds true for Eph 3:10. While for the writer of Ephesians, these forces may have been real superhuman forces of evil which dominate life, for modern man they are something completely different. They are simply the forces that attempt to wreck human life and undermine its existence, i.e., the senses of insecurity and fear, the absorption in material things, rivalry, race-hatred, and selfishness.<sup>34</sup> Some even consider the terminology of Eph 3:10 to be an impressive rhetoric which may have meant as little to the writer of Ephesians as it means to us.<sup>35</sup>

The previous sentiments are echoed in the interpretation of Eph 6:11-12. The whole conception of the spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places must be transported into an entirely

different view of the universe before it can be made relevant to our own day. The phraseology, no doubt, had a mythological significance in NT times which it has lost today. We are told that belief in demons and angels is no longer relevant for our "enlightened age." To give the *pneumatika* (6:12) the meaning of spiritual armies or hosts in the sense of separately existing beings is to depart wholly from the ordinary use of the word in its milieu. Giving up this rendering as untenable, one must translate Eph 6:12 as the spiritual forces or elements of wickedness which function in our world since our own changed cosmology can only admit to a force of evil operating in our world.<sup>36</sup> The principalities and powers are only intangible entities and social, economic, historical, or psychic structures or institutions which concretely exist in this world.<sup>37</sup> The darkness refers to the moral and intellectual climate of a pagan world which stands over and against the kingdom of God.<sup>38</sup> Christians must prepare themselves to fight against these impersonal forces, i.e. the devil's "wiles" and his allies, which consist of all sorts of tricks such as false ideals and prejudices to exercise control over our minds.<sup>39</sup> The Christian does not do battle with real spiritual beings but with ideas. One needs the symbols and concepts of the demonic, but not necessarily its cosmological expression implying that they are real beings.<sup>40</sup>

It is here in the terminology "principalities and powers" of Eph 6:11-12 that one particularly notices the distance which separates us from the thought of Ephesians.<sup>41</sup> Since in our time the ideas of spirits and devils are disappearing from our vernacular, the language of Ephesians about the principalities and powers has no meaning for us. The antiquated mythological terminology of Ephesian thought must, therefore, be demythologized or removed in one way or another. For example, Carr is obliged to say that Eph 6:12 is a later addition to the text because it departs from Paul's notion of the world and the Christian life.<sup>42</sup> Whether the writer of Ephesians conceived of these powers as real beings makes little difference to us. Our task is to get to the essence of the message of Ephesians and what it is saying concerning the work of Christ and man's existence.

The presupposition of historical-criticism that history is a closed continuum which cannot be broken by divine intervention

has led the historical-critic, then, to describe Ephesian cosmology in terms of impersonal evil forces working in our world. The cosmological language or passages are held to be possibly a rhetoric which made little sense even to the original writer, or as a later addition to the text, or as not reflecting a divine reality because it/they do not "fit" with our own modern "scientific" world-view. It is the existential or psychological interpretation of the cosmology of Ephesians which must be underlined.

### Ephesian Cosmology in Historical-Biblical Method

The scholars using the historical-biblical approach are also faced with the same problem that the historical critic is, i.e., how to interpret the language of the "principalities and powers" for today's society. And yet, they have taken a completely different stance because of their presuppositions which do not shut God out of the workings in the world.

This approach, from its very onset, assumes that God can and does intervene in human affairs and history. He does this by working through his court of beings (angels), who although only seen by visionaries under extraordinary circumstances, nevertheless exist to execute God's will. These beings are as real as humans. They do exist as evil beings also (Eph 1:21).<sup>43</sup> What is clear is that the reference to the "principalities and powers" in Eph 1:21 refers to beings who exist in reality and who affect what goes on in the world.<sup>44</sup>

The same position is taken in regard to the prince of the power of the air who is mentioned in Eph 2:2. God has tenanted the world with innumerable hosts. On the earth, the cohorts of Satan are engaged in their destructive missions against humanity. During the present age, Satan and his demon hosts dominate, pressure, and control every person who is unsaved.<sup>45</sup> In fact, Eph 2:2 gives a personal emphasis to the solidarity of evil. In other words, the evil person is under the control of a ruler, a supernatural being (Satan) who is hostile to God's redemptive purposes.<sup>46</sup>

This idea is confirmed in Eph 3:10. The powers and principalities are now called the *archais* and the *exousiais*, the abstract plurals referring to concrete beings. In other words, the *archais* and



*exousiais* are literal beings who actually have authority and rule in this world.<sup>47</sup>

In modern times, the historical-biblical scholar observes, there is a strange phenomenon which exists. Along with the increased disbelief in the existence of the devil is an increased demonic and occultic involvement. Partly because of this dichotomy of modern humanity rejecting the existence of the devil and their increasing involvement in the occult, the biblicist is led to hold that Scripture is clear about Satan's real and personal existence and the fact that he carries out his work of destruction through his invisible demons who are constantly working in the world around us.<sup>48</sup> We find this sentiment expressed in Eph 6:11-12 where the unseen and invisible world is itself a scene of violent conflict and war. Apparently, throughout the ages, there is combat, antagonism, and conflict of which we are an inexorable part. And, this conflict will continue until the end of the ages.<sup>49</sup>

The historical biblical scholar, then, on the basis of his or her presupposition which is based on the Bible itself maintains the supra-historical dimension, God can and does act in history. This scholar understands the "principalities and powers" to be personal, supernatural intelligences, emissaries of Satan who attempt to influence the world and mankind for ill at all levels. This means that these beings have intellects and wills, can speak and be spoken to, and are capable of purposeful activity. Hence, the Christian is at war with these beings, and especially their ruler, Satan, in a life or death struggle, for Satan and his hosts are attempting to thwart the plan of redemption.<sup>50</sup>

#### Implications of Presuppositions and Interpretational Method

Thus far we have perused some of the fundamental presuppositions of both the historical-critical and the historical-biblical methods of interpreting Scripture, especially in regard to the cosmological language of Ephesians. The former held, based on certain philosophical notions, that history is an unbroken continuum which cannot allow divine intervention, while the latter held the opposite view, basing it on the Word of God. The Bible for the critic is the words of men while for the historical-biblical scholar it is the Word of God. As a result of the given presupposition, the histori-

cal-critic existentializes or psychologizes the cosmology of Ephesians. The historical-biblical scholar, on the other hand, emphasizes the real nature of our struggle with spiritual beings who are bent on destroying humans. We would now like to draw out some implications of the results of the use of the two methods of interpretation and their presuppositions in determining a doctrine of cosmology for faith and preaching.

#### Faith

One of the reasons, it seems, for the widespread ignorance and the neglect of the Bible is the failure to study it from the viewpoint of faith. All too often, it is assumed that a serious examination of the Scriptures can only be undertaken when one considers them as historical documents. In a great deal of modern investigation, the Bible is regarded as a mere collection of historical or quasi-historical materials. This can be clearly seen in the examples of interpretation of Ephesians just undertaken with regard to historical critics.

Some maintain that the cosmology of Ephesians is so different from today that we cannot understand it.<sup>51</sup> The conflict between Satan, God, and God's people is seen to be the relic of an ancient mythology and cosmology. What these images really represent are the impersonal forces which impinge upon man's life. The "principalities and powers" then lead one to think in terms of an impersonal God who really cannot act in this world. Thus, the great controversy in which Christ triumphs over Satan and his hosts of evil angels and wicked men no longer has meaning. The so-called "enlightened mind" must accept a more modern scientific cosmology and world view. The text of Scripture should be applied only in the realms of psychology and existence. The "war" on this earth is fought on the couch of the psychiatrist or through the inner resources of men and women themselves. Education and scientific thinking will solve the problems encountered by modern humanity. Faith now resides in the knowledge and advancement of men and women, not in a God who is able to turn the tide of evil in this world.<sup>52</sup>

As a result, a large number of people find the Scriptures difficult, at best, to understand.<sup>53</sup> The only thing that some modern interpretational methods can offer is theories about what the prin-

cialities and powers might have meant, what their source was, and who possibly recorded them. But they cannot determine whether the great controversy is a supernatural event or not nor can they prove or disprove whether Jesus is the Christ who triumphed over the powers or whether he is the one who gives us the power to resist Satan and thus inherit eternal life.<sup>54</sup> The historical critical method, by invalidating the clarity of the Bible in its rejection of supernatural intervention in this world, has destroyed the certainty of faith. It has made the modern person uncertain of where the living God is speaking because Scripture is not the Word of God but the words of men. And if we do not know where God is speaking, then we can no longer know who is speaking and the question "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" remains unanswered.<sup>55</sup>

It should be noted that the matter of the cosmic war between God and Satan is a matter of great importance in Scripture. Redemption (the great controversy resolved) is a demonstration of God's power and ability before both good and evil angels to save sinners from their sins. Our conflict is with these fallen angels who are continually attempting to hinder our way to salvation and faith in Christ who has died to make all free (Eph 6:12-17; 1 Peter 3:18-22). Satan and his hosts have tried to destroy God's kingdom from the very beginning but will ultimately be overthrown (Rev 20:10-15).<sup>56</sup>

The thought of a personal devil is found in nearly every part of the NT (see, for example, Matt 4:1-11; James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8-10; 1 John 5:18; and Rev 12:7-9, 17). And although this idea is not popular today, it must be accepted as true because Scripture tells it to be so. The insidiousness of sin and spiritual temptations can hardly be more aptly or more powerfully described than when they are explained in Scripture in terms of the personal agencies who bring such to men and women.<sup>57</sup> It requires one to have faith to see the great danger besetting us. For we cannot know what biblical authority is nor even what submission to the lordship of Jesus Christ means until we are ready to bend our own opinions, presuppositions, values, mental structures, and methods of interpreting Scripture to what Scripture itself teaches. Our presuppositions and/or methods of interpreting Scripture must not contradict or interfere with the message of the Bible. Where they conflict, it is

we who must change to reflect what Scripture is telling us and not the Bible that must change. Only in this way can one have faith and have that faith grow.

**Preaching.** Historical-critical scholarship has raised the issue of how the Bible can be understood as a historical document and yet still be used for preaching and worship. If the Bible is, as historical-critical scholarship claims, a book of men's words given at a particular time and place, then how can one find its relevance today? Similarly, if God cannot act in a historical continuum, then what is the "message" of such an ancient historical source?<sup>58</sup> Is it just an ancient tradition to be expounded?

It would be strange indeed if the scholarly inquiry about Scripture should render accounts of subjects related to divine revelation subject to the same rules of methods that apply to the subjects that have to do with nature or human history.<sup>59</sup> Yet this is precisely what has happened in regard to the cosmology of Ephesians (great controversy). The players are not real but only general broad principles working themselves out in human history. There is no virgin birth or bodily resurrection because these do not fit into the so-called modern scientific presuppositions of the historical-critical scholars. However, if there is no virgin birth or bodily resurrection, then there is no need to believe in a "great controversy" since that idea goes hand in hand with a mythological cosmology. What is left is a psychological or existential view of Scripture. It is certainly not the Word of God nor the words of Jesus. How then, can one expect to preach repentance to men and women so that they might receive eternal life if the Bible does not teach a great controversy in which there is salvation from sin?

The true test of a preacher is whether the biblical message is proclaimed from Scripture and applied in the lives of those who listen.<sup>60</sup> The Bible is divinely inspired timeless truth, a timeless universal truth, which breaks through the portals of time and place everywhere and at any time and speaks to the condition of the human heart.<sup>61</sup> But because of a deliberate suspension of personal participation with the text, historical criticism has encouraged a trained incapacity to deal with the real problems actual living persons face in their everyday life.<sup>62</sup> People find it nearly impossible to respond to the preaching of today because the preaching itself



fails to recognize the biblical Christ whom the church preached as Lord, one who was born to a virgin, actually lived, was crucified, rose from the dead, and is alive today ministering in the heavenly sanctuary. It is only this living Jesus as taught to us by Scripture who provides the decisive and distinctly Christian and biblically faithful interpretation of Scripture and its understanding of the great controversy, or, in other words, redemption.<sup>63</sup>

Within the church, it is the Bible which should be and is the text for preaching and teaching, for it provides unique access to divine truth, and above all, to Jesus Christ and his triumph over the evil beings attempting to destroy each believer. It is not sufficient if treated as a collection of historical source material or as an anthology of works of literature. It needs to be accepted, studied, and heard as what it claims to be and is, the Word of God, a word which is the power unto life eternal.<sup>64</sup>

#### Conclusion

As we have previously mentioned, there have been and are some Adventist scholars who would like to adopt historical-criticism, or a modified form of it, claiming that it can be used without accepting all its presuppositions. Even our brief study of only one of the presuppositions of two hermeneutics illustrates the fact that one cannot simply set aside the presuppositions and approach the text from a detached viewpoint and reach objective scientific results quite untainted by assumptions.<sup>65</sup> An interpretation of Scripture is always oriented towards a specific way of asking questions, towards a specific point of view.<sup>66</sup> Hence, the philosophical framework within which the theologian and exegete works impinges on how they go about their work, i.e., their methodology.<sup>67</sup>

We have already seen that the presuppositional foundations of historical-criticism, as well as the historical-biblical approach for that matter, has in no small way affected the content of the doctrine of cosmology. Historical-criticism takes an existential approach to the doctrine, which at times approximates an allegorical orientation with a subjectivistic personalist understanding of the cosmological language in the book of Ephesians. The "principalities and powers" are something which can be overcome by more education, more modern scientific thinking, and more self-introspection.

Thus, the control for determining the content of the doctrine of cosmology, or the great controversy, remains in the hands of the individual or subjective, rather than with the objective truth of Scripture. Some Seventh-day Adventists may wish to "update" their allegedly "outdated" view of reality and propose a more "scientific" world-view as they accept the use of the historical-critical method and its resultant conclusions regarding cosmology. Those who do this will also change this foundational Adventist doctrine and will most assuredly bring about changes in other areas.

The acceptance of the historical-critical method, even in whatever modified form, will inevitably mean the acceptance and use of its presuppositions.<sup>68</sup> And if the presuppositions of the historical-critical method of interpreting Scripture are at work when constructing a system of biblical doctrinal beliefs, especially that of cosmology (the great controversy), then we may find ourselves believing, as it presupposes, that it is impossible for God to give changelessly true affirmations of truth. The cumulative effect of this direction of thinking is to lead one towards relativism, pragmatism, and functionalism in theology.<sup>69</sup> If we are to avoid such a pitfall and build a biblical theology and biblical doctrines, we must reject the anti-supernaturalism that is inherent in the historical-critical method and its resultant view that the Scriptures are solely the words of men since those presuppositions determine, to a great degree, what the content of our doctrine of cosmology will be. There is such a profound linkage between method and presuppositions that to reject the latter means to reject the method itself. It is futile to accept these presuppositions and then hope to build a biblical theology either with the remaining rubble or in the clouds of a noumenal dimension where faith has fled from science.<sup>70</sup>

The victory of Christ over Satan and his hosts can only be understood within the revealed purposes of God and the ongoing fight with those spiritual beings who are attempting to destroy each and every Christian. Christ has triumphed over the "powers" in order that we might have eternal life (Col 2:15).<sup>71</sup> One thing remains irrefutable, however. We cannot be certain about the triumphant God and his victory through Christ over Satan and the principalities and powers unless we believe that our source of information about that great controversy, the Scriptures, is accurate, true,

and is the Word of God and not the words of men. The belief in the truthfulness of God and his ability to intervene in human affairs, to produce miracles such as the virgin birth and the resurrection, and to resurrect Christ bodily from the dead, is the basic presupposition for theology, particularly Seventh-day Adventist theology today.<sup>72</sup> Any hermeneutical method which is based upon presuppositions that exclude God's activity in this world and views the Bible as a mere historical document or as the words of men instead of the Word of God must be rejected since one cannot accept these presuppositions without affecting the content of doctrine. Hence, Seventh-day Adventism cannot accept the use of historical-criticism, even in a modified form, for then Adventist doctrine would no longer be Adventist.

### Endnotes

1 See for example Raymond Cottrell, "Sanctuary Debate: A Question of Method," *Spectrum* 10 (March 1980):16-26; John Brunt, "A Parable of Jesus as a Clue to Biblical Interpretation," *Spectrum* 13 (Dec 1982):35-43; Larry Herr, "Genesis One in Historical-Critical Perspective," *Spectrum* 13 (Dec 1982):51-62; and Jerry Gladson, "Taming Historical Criticism: Adventist Biblical Scholarship in the Land of the Giants," *Spectrum* 18 (April 1988):19-34, where on page 23 he writes: "It is not necessary to accept the narrow Troeltschian model of historical criticism to make use of this method. We can divorce historical criticism from rationalist presuppositions and employ it in the service of our Lord."

2 In fact, the question of the use of historical-criticism was one of the catalysts which brought about Consultation II. See J. Robert Spangler, "Why Consultation II?" *Ministry*, Feb 1992, pp. 26-29. The agitation on the issue became the basis for a study commission on the methods of Bible study. It produced a document which was voted as an official action at the 1986 Annual Council. For the text, see "Methods of Bible Study," *Ministry*, April 1987, pp. 22-24. This action took the strong position that Seventh-day Adventists could not accept the historical-critical method without also adopting its presuppositions.

3 Norman Geisler and Paul Funberg, *Introduction to Philosophy* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980), p. 70. The term used in this study is "presupposition." It can be defined as something which is assumed or supposed in advance. It is an antecedent condition which tends to conclude something before an investigation is commenced. Josh McDowell, *More Evidence that Demands a Verdict* (n.p.: Campus Crusade for Christ, 1975), p. 3. While the words "prejudice" and "presuppositions" have often been used as synonyms, their meaning is not exactly the same. The word "presupposition" is used here to indicate both the philosophical and theological starting positions taken by a person and the personal factors which affect the judgment of the interpreter. See A. Nygren, *Meaning and Method: Prolegomena to a Scientific Philosophy of Religion and a Scientific Theology* (London, 1972), pp. 160-162, and Graham Stanton, "Presuppositions in

New Testament Criticism," in *New Testament Interpretation* (hereafter referred to as *NTI*), ed. I. Howard Marshall (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1977), p. 61.

The question of presuppositions arises in all scientific, historical, and theological, and interpretational studies (Stanton, p. 60). In fact, the conservatives of the nineteenth century were keenly aware of the role of presuppositions in scholarship long before it was fashionable to talk about the sociology of knowledge spoken of by such scholars as Michael Polyani or Thomas Kuhn. Mark A. Noll, *Between Faith and Criticism* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1986), p. 23.

4 Charles Ryrie, *Basic Theology* (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1987), p. 16.

5 Stanton, p. 64, and McDowell, p. 3. See also Bruce Demarest and Gordon Lewis, *Integrative Theology, Vol. 1: Knowing the Ultimate Reality of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), p. 35, and Anthony Thistleton, "The New Hermeneutics," in *A Guide to Contemporary Hermeneutics* (hereafter referred to as *GCH*), ed. Donald McKim (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), p. 92.

6 Donald McKim, "Introduction," in *GCH*, xvii-xiv, and D. Gaede, *Where the Gods Dwell: On Understanding the Human Condition* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985), p. 91. As Krister Stendahl has written, "We can smile when we see how earlier generations of Biblical scholars peddled Kantian, Hegelian, or Ritschelian ideas, all the time subjectively convinced that they were objective scholars who only stated the facts. All of this naturally calls for caution. . ." (*Meanings: The Bible as Document and as Guide* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984], pp. 21-22).

7 For an extended treatment of the various methodological and hermeneutical choices confronting the modern interpreter of Scripture, see Anthony Thistleton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992).

8 In the past, the historical-biblical method has been called historical-grammatical method. But the latter term, in my opinion is more limited because it primarily focuses on the structure and use of linguistics in biblical interpretation. Context and other factors have been somewhat eclipsed. For this reason, I have adopted the term historical biblicism without implying that the method is any more or less correct than historical-criticism. See Richard Davidson, "Revelation/Inspiration in the Old Testament: A Critique of Alden Thompson's 'Incarnational Model,'" in *Issues in Revelation and Inspiration*, ed. Frank Holbrook and Leo van Dolsen (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventist Theological Society Publications, 1992), pp. 105-115.

9 For Seventh-day Adventists, we are referring to what is known as the "great controversy" theme. What we are interested in here is the major presuppositions which each method holds and how that has affected the formulation of doctrine. We will not, therefore, delve into the various nuances of each method, nor how they carry out their program, but to examine the positions taken in regard to the cosmological language of Ephesians as expressed in the literature of both approaches.

10 Ernst Troeltsch, "Über historische und dogmatische Methode in der Theologie (On Historical and Dogmatic Method in Theology)," *Zur religiösen Lage, Religionsphilosophie und Ethic* (Tübingen, 1922), pp. 729-753. See also Edgar Krentz, *The Historical-Critical Method* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 55-56, and Daniel Harrington, "Biblical Hermeneutics in Recent Discussions," in *GCH*, 15.

11 Krentz, 56.



12 George Eldon Ladd, *The New Testament and Criticism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 45-49. See also Peter W. Mackey, "The Coming Revolution: The New Literary Approach to New Testament Interpretation," in *GCH*, 265, and McDowell, pp. 5-7.

13 Krentz, p. 58. The implication that can be drawn here is that one can deny even the possibility of miracles occurring (*Ibid.*, 58). As a result of this, Bultmann propagated his famous program of "demythologization" which rejected an upper-world view in favor of a this-world subjective view of history which led to a subjective view of faith. See, for example, Walter Kaiser Jr., "Legitimate Hermeneutics," in *GCH*, 133, and Donald Guthrie, "The Historical and Literary Criticism of the New Testament," in *Biblical Criticism* (hereafter referred to as *BC*) by R. K. Harrison, et. al. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), p. 94.

14 Ladd, p. 39. Hence, the person who believes the Bible to be the inspired word of God cannot be scholarly or critical (9). See also Krentz, p. 66, and Patrick Keifert, "Mind Reader and Maestro: Models for understanding Biblical Interpreters," in *GCH*, p. 222.

15 Krentz, p. 62.

16 Ladd, p. 31. OT scholarship becomes the study of the ancient near east whereas NT scholarship belongs to the study of the Graeco-Roman world. Arthur Wainwright, *Beyond Biblical Criticism* (Atlanta, Georgia: John Knox Press, 1982), pp. 2-3.

17 Guthrie, p. 110. This has led modern critical scholarship to posit that the Gospel records are unreliable. As such, they do not offer us the words of Jesus but the words of the early church about Jesus. The implication is that the NT no longer has any truth to speak to us. See Norman Perrin, *What is Redaction Criticism?* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), pp. 69-73.

18 Ladd, pp. 33, 40 and LaSor, pp. 52-53. This historical context requires that the exegete deals with words, syntax, and historical backgrounds in order to be able to fully understand the message of Scripture (*Ibid.*, pp. 51-52).

19 Ladd, pp. 12, 26-27.

20 Gerhard Maier, *The End of the Historical Critical Method* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1977), pp. 9-10.

21 Harrington, p. 17, and Wainwright, pp. 115-116.

22 Donald McKim, "Introduction," in *GCH*, xiv.

23 *Die Geisterwelt im Glauben des Paulus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 1909).

24 See Markus Barth, *Ephesians*, 2 vols., in *The Anchor Bible*, ed. William Albright and David Freedman (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1974), p. 174.

25 Leslie Mitton, *Ephesians*, in *The New Century Bible Commentary*, ed. Ronald Clements and Matthew Black (London: Marshall, Morgan, and Scott, 1976), p. 72, and Lincoln, p. 64.

26 *Naming the Powers* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), especially pp. 3-35, 60-64, 151-163.

27 Andrew Lincoln, *Ephesians*, in *Word Commentary*, ed. David Hubbard and Glenn Barker (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), p. 64.

28 Francis Foulkes, *Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983 [reprint]), p. 69.

29 T. K. Abbot, *The Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians*, in *International Critical Commentary*, ed. Charles Briggs, Samuel Driver, and Alfred Plummer (New York: Scribners Sons, 1897), p. 40.

30 G. H. Thompson, *The Letters of Paul to the Ephesians, to the Colossians,*

*and to Philemon*, in *The Cambridge Bible Commentary*, ed. P. Ackroyd, A. Leaney, and J. W. Packer (Cambridge: University Press, 1967), p. 44.

31 Abbott, p. 42.

32 Edwin Freed, *The New Testament: A Critical Introduction* (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing, 1986), p. 330.

33 George Butterick, ed., *The Interpreter's Bible, Vol. 10, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1953), p. 640.

34 Thompson, p. 57. This represents a psychological approach to the text but one, it seems, is not able to hear the Word of the Lord.

35 Mitton, p. 127.

36 Abbott, p. 183, and Butterick, pp. 736-738.

37 Barth, 2:800-801.

38 Butterick, p. 738.

39 Thompson, p. 94. See also Freed, 332, and Walter F. Taylor, *Ephesians* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1985), p. 87.

40 Butterick, p. 738.

41 J. Merle Rife, *The Nature and Origin of the New Testament* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1975), p. 39.

42 W. Carr, *Angels and Principalities* (Cambridge: University Press, 1981), esp. pp. 93-111. See also P. T. O'Brien, "Principalities and Powers," in *Biblical Interpretation and the Church: Text and Context* (hereafter referred to as *BITC*, ed. D. A. Carson (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1984), pp. 119-128.

43 Barth, pp. 181-182, 154. It is possible, Barth posits, that these principalities and powers mentioned in the Pauline epistles include the demons, that according to the Synoptic Gospels, especially Mark, were expelled by Jesus (p. 173).

44 William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary - Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), p. 101, and Lincoln, p. 64.

45 Hendriksen, p. 114, and John MacArthur, *Ephesians* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), p. 56.

46 Lincoln, p. 95, and MacArthur, p. 57.

47 R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Galatians, to the Ephesians, and to the Philippians* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing, 1961), p. 481.

48 MacArthur, pp. 338-343. In Eph 6:12, Paul, instead of writing *pneumata*, substantivizes the adjective so that it does not denote the spiritual principles of the Satanic powers but Satan and his hosts of spiritual beings with a reality of existence (Lenski, p. 661).

49 W. A. Criswell, *Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), p. 292. It seems that this is the only place in the Pauline corpus (Eph 6:12) where believers are explicitly said to be in a battle against evil personal beings (Lincoln, p. 443).

50 O'Brien, pp. 131-141. This view seems to have the support of Scripture as a whole (see, for example, Rev 12:7-17, Dan 7-12, Job 1-2, etc.).

51 O'Brien, p. 131.

52 *Ibid.*, p. 144.

53 Wainwright, pp. 8-9.

54 *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18.

55 Maier, pp. 48-49.

56 MacArthur, p. 49.

57 Foulkes, pp. 172-173.

58 Krentz, pp. 66, 72, and McKim, xiv.

59 Maier, p. 53.

60 Stendahl, p. 55.

61 LaSor, p. 55, and David Steinmetz, "The Superiority of Precritical Exegesis," in *GCH*, p. 65.

62 Thistleton, p. 90.

63 Wainwright, pp. 18-19.

64 *Ibid.*, p. 4.

65 Stanton, p. 65. An interpreter, then, already brings to the text a certain amount of cultural and linguistic baggage even before he or she reads the text. See D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), p. 128, and Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983-1985), p. 26. As Gerhard Hasel reminds us "Absolute Objectivity is impossible . . . for if the interpreter knows the biblical languages, for example, he obviously has learned the meaning of words and gained an understanding of grammar and syntax which generations of scholars have helped to determine." (*Understanding the Living Word of God* [Mountain View, California: Pacific Press, 1980], p. 77). This implies that the attempt to interpret the NT from a detached, neutral standpoint with a scientific and presuppositionless method is impossible (Stanton, pp. 65-66).

66 Otto Kaiser and Werner Kümmel, *Exegetical Method* (New York: Seabury Press, 1981), p. 43. In fact, according to Stanton (p. 65), behind every question asked of the NT lies the inquirer's presuppositions. The problem one encounters in presuppositions is that one is often unaware of the basic premises that guide one's life. This is due to the fact that they are almost unconsciously determined at an early age through culture and our families (Geisler and Funberg, p. 70).

67 Erickson, pp. 66-67. This is especially true of the biblical interpreter because the presuppositions adopted consciously or unconsciously are far more influential in the NT than disagreements over method (Stanton, p. 60).

68 Most recently, historical-criticism's validity for interpreting Scripture has been questioned precisely on the point of its presuppositions. See, for example, Eta Linnemann, *Historical Criticism of the Bible: Methodology or Ideology?* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), and Thomas C. Oden, *After Modernity . . . What?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), pp. 103-150.

69 Demarest, p. 35.

70 Edmund Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), p. 13.

71 O'Brien, p. 133.

72 Ryrie, p. 16.

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## DISPENSATIONAL BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION: ITS PAST AND PRESENT HERMENEUTICAL SYSTEMS<sup>1</sup>

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### The Past

Modern liberal, progressive scholars divide biblical data through the historical-critical method and its constituent procedures. Dispensationalists, also a modern phenomenon,<sup>2</sup> divide biblical history into separate and unrelated dispensations. Though different, these methods share a common result: the Bible is robbed of its full right to be its own interpreter (*sola scriptura*). This can be a real danger for some Adventists as they focus on the alleged differences in Scripture rather than being informed by biblical unity, and who view the Bible as a mere casebook.<sup>3</sup> We would do well to ponder Grant Osborne's perceptive description of the transformational power of modern historical criticism:

Due to the development of the historical-critical method and of modern theology . . . this view of infallible propositional authority (of Scripture) has collapsed and been replaced by an understanding of Scripture as a symbolic expression of God's redemptive activity, which must be 're-described' in functional terms for our day. In short, in this approach the Bible ceases to contain a revealed set of doctrines that must be believed but rather becomes a *case-book* that provides models to follow in constructing a modern Christianity.<sup>4</sup>

Modernistic methods, such as the historical-critical method, Dispensational and Casebook methods, may construct "a modern Christianity," but only at the expense of biblical authority and



truth. In speaking of the end time Jesus said, "When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith in the earth?" (Luke 18:8). Christ said that those heeding His word will survive tempests for they are on a solid foundation, whereas those who do not heed His words will not survive (Matt 7:24-27). The end-time tempests will be so severe that "none but those who have fortified the mind with the truths of the Bible will stand through the last great conflict."<sup>5</sup> Therefore, God's end-time sealing (Rev 7:1-3) is a "settling into the truth, both intellectually and spiritually, so" we "cannot be moved."<sup>6</sup> Our eternal destiny depends upon our relation to biblical truth, hence the importance of biblical interpretation (hermeneutics).<sup>7</sup>

Dispensationalism, which is the focus of this article, is a system of biblical hermeneutics that has "infiltrated almost every branch of Protestantism,"<sup>8</sup> and has "considerable influence within conservative circles,"<sup>9</sup> as demonstrated by the *Scofield Reference Bible* (1909, 1917) and the *New Scofield Study Bible* (1967). It is, therefore, important that Seventh-day Adventists be informed regarding Dispensational hermeneutics, and avoid a similar focus on biblical distinctions<sup>10</sup> and preoccupation with Israel and the Middle East in eschatology.<sup>11</sup> By looking at the Dispensational presuppositions brought to Scripture, their pragmatic hermeneutics and their failure to see the New Testament as part of the total biblical context for interpreting the Old Testament, these should question similar methods of biblical interpretation practiced now by some Adventists.

Dispensationalism belongs to the Futurist (eschatological) school of prophetic interpretation. It is radically different as compared to the Preterist (contemporary-historical, *zeitgeschichtlich*), the Historical-Critical (analogy, cause-effect, non-predictive, reinterpretation), the Idealist (timeless principles/ideas) or the Historicist schools uninterrupted, predictive, prophetic eras.<sup>12</sup> Toward the end of this article we will evaluate a recent seminal Dispensational book.

### The Roots of the Movement<sup>13</sup>

John Nelson Darby (1800-1882) and C. I. Scofield (1843-1921), the principle pioneer contributors to Dispensationalism, were lawyers who later became ministers; Darby in Britain and Scofield

in America. The story begins in Britain. Darby, ordained a deacon in the Church of England (1825), became disenchanted with the politically dominated church, and left it in 1827. Therefore, "It should be carefully noted that Darby's first and basic dissent was not on the question of eschatology, but on the doctrine of the Church."<sup>14</sup>

He had "doubts as to the Scriptural authority for church establishments."<sup>15</sup> Add to this the fact that he failed miserably to keep God's law for seven years, and only found relief when he discovered in Ephesians 3 that the church is seated with Christ in heavenly places. He took this to mean that Christians are above the law, and that the law merely applies to the former dispensation, to Israel. This led him "to compartmentalize Israel and the Church as distinct objects of God's separate purposes."<sup>16</sup>

This personal experience influenced the way he understood the Bible, and led him to divide Scripture up into seven dispensations. During the years 1862-1868, he came to America and Canada on speaking tours, staying an aggregate of six years,<sup>17</sup> and through contact with C. I. Scofield, and the Scofield Study Bible, the ideas of Dispensationalism spread across North America.

### Dispensational Hermeneutics

**Dispensations.** We need to understand the term "dispensation." Scofield says that "a dispensation is a period of time during which man is tested in respect to his obedience to some specific revelation of God."<sup>18</sup> The word "dispensation" comes from the Greek word *oikonomia*, and is perhaps only referred to as a time period in Ephians 1:10.<sup>19</sup> Its usual meaning is stewardship, rather than a time period. Yet Dispensationalism denotes the dividing of salvation-history into distinct time periods, seven for Darby<sup>20</sup> and Scofield,<sup>21</sup> eight<sup>22</sup> or even ten<sup>23</sup> or twelve<sup>24</sup> for others, and three for Charles Ryrie.<sup>25</sup>

Dispensationalists admit that the "the number of dispensations in a Dispensational scheme, and even the names of the dispensations, are relatively minor matters." "The essence of Dispensationalism is (1) the recognition of a distinction between Israel and the Church, (2) a consistently literal principle of interpretation,

and (3) a basic and working conception of the purpose of God as His own glory rather than as a single purpose of salvation."<sup>26</sup>

Daniel P. Fuller correctly concludes that Dispensationalists "must, however, insist on at least three dispensations in order to assert the idea of the Church as a parenthesis between God's dealings with Israel."<sup>27</sup> Dispensationalists believe God's program for Israel is merely on hold during this "church age," to be resumed at the rapture of the church, with ultimate fulfillment of all the covenantal promises to Israel during the millennial kingdom. So at least three dispensations are required.<sup>28</sup>

**The Israel/Church Dichotomy.** Ryrie's list of three dispensations places the distinction between Israel and the church as the first essence of Dispensationalism. In fact, this distinction drives the entire system. Remove this distinction and Dispensationalism would cease to exist. The Israel/church dichotomy is basic to Dispensational hermeneutics.<sup>29</sup> Keep this basic distinction, and it multiplies numerous other distinctions—even beyond the various dispensations—in order to maintain the basic Israel/church construct.<sup>30</sup> Dispensationalists are united on this Israel/church dichotomy, even if they have four different views for when the "church-age" began,<sup>31</sup> and three views for when it will close.<sup>32</sup>

Scofield wrote a book entitled, *Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth*,<sup>33</sup> based upon 2 Tim 2:15. In commenting on "rightly dividing the Word" he said, "The Word of truth, then, has right divisions, and it must be evident that, as one cannot be 'a workman that needeth not to be ashamed' without observing them, so *any study* of the Word which ignores divisions must be in large measure profitless and confusing."<sup>34</sup> In other words, Israel and the church must be kept separate, and each dispensation must be kept separate. However, we must note that the Biblical word "dividing" does not mean "divisions." The Greek word *orthotomeo* comes from *orthos*, "right" or "honest" and *stemno*, "to cut." "The renowned Syrian exegete Theodoret (c. 393-c. 458) applied the verb to 'a plowman who drives a straight furrow?'"<sup>35</sup>

The Greek term *orthotomeo* is found only in 2 Timothy 2:15 in the New Testament, and only twice in the Greek (LXX) Old Testament (Prov 3:6; 11:5). Many consider this compound verb to have "probably lost the meaning from which it was derived and. . .

acquired the more general sense of right handling (RV, RSV). It was from this sense that the derived noun came later to denote orthodoxy."<sup>36</sup> Orthodoxy holds that rightly dividing means allowing any part to be interpreted by the whole (*sola scriptura*). This means the New Testament will interpret the Old Testament, a premise anathema to Dispensational divisions. "What God has joined together (whole Bible), let man not separate" (Luke 10:9) is also good hermeneutical advice.<sup>37</sup>

**Consistent Literalism.** Dispensationalists claim to use a literal "interpretation consistently in all. . . study of the Bible" and charge non-Dispensationalists "with allegorizing or spiritualizing when it comes to the interpretation of prophecy."<sup>38</sup> They claim to be the only consistent literalists because they also give prophecy a literal interpretation.<sup>39</sup> They oppose "spiritualizing" in defence of Biblical authority,<sup>40</sup> and against liberals.<sup>41</sup> This includes opposition to a spiritual kingdom now rather than a literal Messianic kingdom later. But this ignores New Testament present fulfillment.<sup>42</sup> Paradoxically they spiritualize the ascension of the church into a rapture, claiming biblical authority when there is none,<sup>43</sup> and so do employ spiritualization in prophetic interpretation.<sup>44</sup>

The New Testament applies Old Testament passages according to their true meaning and shows that it was the literalists in prophetic interpretation who crucified Christ (Matt 23:13-39; Mark 12:1-12; Luke 12:56; John 11:45-57).<sup>45</sup> Unlike His contemporary Israel, Christ interpreted the kingdom as already in their midst (Matt 10:7; 12:28; more of this later). The entire book of Hebrews is based on the fact that the new covenant promised to Israel and Judah (Jer 31:31) is not some literal event in a future Messianic kingdom, but already inaugurated in Christ for spiritual Israel, the church (Heb 8:6-13).

The question is not literal versus spiritual interpretation. The New Testament speaks of Christ as the "lamb that was slain from the creation of the world" (Rev 13:8), and as coming in the second advent on either a "white cloud" (Rev 14:14) or a "white horse" (Rev 19:11). Here we have a spiritual truth (His death atoning for man from the beginning), a literal truth (His return) and symbolic expressions (cloud/horse) intermingled. Walvoord concedes the problems of only a literal interpretation,<sup>46</sup> but Dispensationalists



never apply this to the Israel/church relationship as does the New Testament. George E. Ladd rightly comments, "Our point of departure must be the way the New Testament interprets the Old Testament."<sup>47</sup>

We need to define the word literal. Literal, to Dispensationalists, means obvious or clear meaning. It assumes that the words and the passage are transparent. Dispensationalists refer to this hermeneutic as literalism, as "its plain interpretation,"<sup>48</sup> "normal" "ordinary" or "customary" meaning, the "grammatical-historical method,"<sup>49</sup> or the "plain grammatical sense."<sup>50</sup> But is the meaning of the Bible that literalistic, particularly the prophetic passages? Even Dispensationalists recognize that "almost complete confusion reigns in the interpretation of prophecy,"<sup>51</sup> and that "acquiring the knowledge of the spiritual [note this word] content of the Bible is a life task."<sup>52</sup> Why so long, and why are there so many different interpretations, if the meaning is so obvious? Why does Scripture warn that spiritual things are "spiritually discerned" (1 Cor 2:14)? If the normal understanding of language is sufficient to grasp biblical truth, then would not the "unspiritual" person also understand?

**Evidence Opposing Consistent Literalism.** Old Testament prophecies are the playground of Dispensationalists, who project their fulfillment onto a future earthly kingdom. Several facts should be weighed against "consistent literalism," or the "transparent understanding" theories: (1) Most Old Testament prophecies are written in the Hebrew language. Hebrew has a small vocabulary, and is not as technically precise as New Testament Greek. "In literary form, written Hebrew is full of metaphors, elastic and vague; sometimes indeed it is capable of more than one meaning."<sup>53</sup> (2) "The authors of the various NT books did not introduce and apply the quotations from the OT in a scientific manner, with literary accuracy characteristic of our day. Rather the Old Testament passages were embodied in the Gospels, in the Epistles, in the Acts, and in the Apocalypse in order to bear witness to the fulfillment of the Old Covenant in the New."<sup>54</sup> This does not mean that NT writers misconstrue the OT in their quotations. They bring out their true meaning and their fuller importance.

As C. Norman Kraus says, "Dispensationalist interpretation

is built on an inadequate concept of the nature of language and its use. In seeking to uphold the supernatural quality of the biblical narrative it has assumed that the biblical language is like the language of a science textbook; that is, that its terms have a fixed meaning from beginning to end."<sup>55</sup>

**A Literal Fulfillment of Prophecies Does Not Support Consistent Literalism.** Not only do Dispensationalists confine their focus to an alleged transparency of language, but they cite the literal fulfillment of prophecy to prove literalism.<sup>56</sup> They say, "There is no non-literal fulfillment of these prophecies in the New Testament. This argues strongly for the literal method."<sup>57</sup> Apply this hermeneutic to Christ. Granted He was born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2, Matt 2:1), came out of Egypt (Hos 11:1, Matt 2:14-15), was crucified (Isa 53:7-12, John 18:1-19:37) and rose again (Hos 6:1-2, 1 Cor 15:3-4)—all literal fulfillments of prophecy,<sup>58</sup> but is this all He fulfilled? Is it not also true that through this One Israelite, Jesus Christ, the Abrahamic promise was fulfilled—the promise that "all peoples on the earth will be blessed through you" (Gen 12:3)? Is it not true that "no matter how many promises God has made, they are 'Yes' in Christ" (2 Cor 1:20)? Is it not true that Christ has broken down the wall between Jew and Gentile (Eph 2:11-22), which denies the Dispensational Israel/church dichotomy?

Thus "consistent literalism" makes a selective use of Christ's fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, and hence is an inconsistent interpretation of prophecy.

**Typological Interpretation Calls in Question Consistent Literalism.** Dispensational systematic theologian Chafer says, "Almost every important truth of the New Testament was typified and foreshadowed in the Old Testament,"<sup>59</sup> and that "the antitype serves to lift its type out of the commonplace into that which is inexhaustible and to invest it with riches and treasures hitherto unrevealed."<sup>60</sup> These insights are correct and agree with the New Testament interpretation of the Old Testament. If these insights had guided Chafer's theological system, it would have transcended the confining strictures of literalism. There are other statements in Dispensational literature that, like Chafer's, are seminal for a totally different shape of biblical interpretation.<sup>61</sup>

The *New Scofield Study Bible* disproves the Dispensational

claim to use a consistent literal interpretation. For the study notes acknowledge that Old Testament people and things not only receive a literal interpretation, but function as types of antitypes in the New Testament. Thus historical persons or things are both literal and typical. Many typify Christ<sup>62</sup>—they are christologically interpreted. Many typify the church—they are ecclesiologically interpreted. In the introduction to the Song of Solomon the interpretation is threefold, (1) literal (Solomon's love for Shulamite girl), (2) figurative (revelation of God's love to Israel) and (3) allegorical (Christ's love for the church).<sup>63</sup>

Although Dispensationalists claim that the church is not even thought of in the Old Testament,<sup>64</sup> yet surprisingly it finds the whole Song of Solomon to be an "allegory" of the church, "in spite of the fact that the book says nothing about either Christ or the church."<sup>65</sup> The *New Scofield Study Bible* also finds in the Old Testament numerous types for the church, including Eve,<sup>66</sup> Isaac,<sup>67</sup> Rebekah,<sup>68</sup> the tabernacle,<sup>69</sup> Aaron and sons,<sup>70</sup> the wave loaves<sup>71</sup> and the Shulamite maiden.<sup>72</sup> But nowhere is Israel a type of the church, even though its claim to such is far greater than any of the other choices. In fact Dispensationalists specifically state that Israel is not a type of the church.<sup>73</sup> This demonstrates the inconsistency of Dispensational typological interpretation when it encounters their Israel/church dichotomy.

Moreover, the *New Scofield Study Bible* cites many types, even some extreme ones.<sup>74</sup> As O. T. Allis long ago correctly concluded, "While dispensationalists are extreme literalists, they are very inconsistent ones. They are literalists in interpreting prophecy. But in the interpreting of history, they carry the principle of typical interpretation to an extreme which has rarely been exceeded even by the most ardent of allegorizers."<sup>75</sup> So Dispensationalists are accused of that for which they accuse others—allegorization.<sup>76</sup>

Typology, is an important hermeneutical key in biblical interpretation, as is recognized by many scholars.<sup>77</sup>

**The Principle of Sola Scriptura Opposes Consistent Literalism.** Dispensational literalistic interpretation is actually too confining. It limits meaning with no proper regard to the Protestant principle of *sola scriptura*, where the Bible interprets itself. Such an approach to Scripture would seem consistent with

the Dispensational claim to have a broader worldview—God's glory beyond human salvation.

Divine truth is always far greater than human words, even as God's Divine Son was far greater than His manifestation in human flesh. Both the Written (Bible) and Living Word (Jesus Christ) of God contain divine content that transcends the limited vehicle of the human. Literalism limits the meaning of words rather than allowing the theological context of the whole Bible to inform the interpretation of a given text. This means that Old Testament words are confined in their meaning, and are cut off from the unfolding plan of salvation, from typological relationship, and from meeting their intended fulfillment in Christ.

Looking to literalistic future fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy to a literal Israel in Palestine ignores the fact that the New Testament fulfillment is (1) Christological and (2) escalated from a local to a global fulfillment. Here, briefly are some of the biblical facts. Christ recognized that Old Testament people/institutions were types of Himself. True to type/antitype correspondence, He is greater than Jonah (Matt 12:1), greater than Solomon (Matt 12:41), greater than David (Mark 2:25-28) and greater than the temple (Matt 12:6). Just as lambs typified the Lamb of God (John 1:29, Rev 5:12-13, 13:8), so prophets, priests, and kings were supposed to typify Christ's prophetic, priestly and kingly ministries. In each, Christ transcended the type. So His was a better ministry (Heb 8:6), a better sacrifice (Heb 10:11-12), with a better covenant (Heb 8:6) and better promises (Heb 8:6), and consistency requires a better throne. For David's throne is no longer what counts, but Christ's throne in heaven (Acts 2:36, Heb 1:3,13, 8:1, 10:12, 12:1, Rev 3:21).

Therefore, says the New Testament, "What God promised our fathers he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus. . . The fact that God raised him from the dead, never to decay, is stated in these words: 'I will give you the holy and sure blessings promised to David.'" (Acts 13:32-34). So these ancient promises to Israel were fulfilled in Christ. What is involved in this fact? "The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say 'and to seeds,' meaning many people, but 'and to your seed,' meaning one person, who is Christ." (Gal 3:16)



Here is reference to Genesis 12:7, 13:15 and 24:7, where possession of the land is promised to Abraham's seed. In the type/antitype correspondence, with its escalated fulfillment, Abraham is heir of the world (Rom 4:13), not just of Israel. His heirs are "as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore" (Heb 11:11-12). He is the father of many nations (Rom 4:16-17). Yet even the original promise included being "a father of many nations" (Gen 17:5), with heirs as countless as stars and sand (Gen 22:17). Not only is Abraham the father of many nations and heir of the world, transcending race (Israel) and region (Palastine), but in his one seed, Christ, the distinction between Israel and other nations has been removed (Eph 2:13-14), so that they have become "one new man" (Eph 2:15), "one body" (Eph 3:6) and "a holy temple" (Eph 2:21). Translated literally, the Greek of Ephians 3:6 says, "The nations are joint heirs (*sugkleronoma*) and a joint body (*sussoma*) and joint sharers (*summetocha*) of the promise of Him in Christ."

So the promise made to Abraham has been fulfilled in Christ. Abraham was called out so that through him all nations of the world could be blessed (Gen 18:18, 22:18, 26:4, 28:14). These references and their context indicate that many nations would come out of Jacob/Israel (Gen 35:11), that his seed would be as the sands of the sea, and through them God desired to bless the world. So already in the type there is revealed God's desired future that transcends race (Israel) and region (Palestine). That mission depended upon Israel remaining faithful to God. The promises made to Israel were conditional (Deut 28). Their unfaithfulness brought captivities (Assyrian and Babylonian) as predicted (Deut 28:32-68).

So where the seeds of Abraham (Israel) failed, there the seed Christ (Gal 3:16) succeeded. Their failed mission to bless the world (Gen 12:3) was accomplished by Christ (John 3:16). In Christ's history He recapitulated the history of Israel. Indeed He was the new Israel (as the head of his body the church Eph 3:6, 5:19-20, Col 1:18). He came out of Egypt (Matt 2:15; cf. Hos 11:1), spent forty days in the desert (Matt 4:1). Realizing the type/antitype correspondence, Christ's three quotations of Scripture in answer to Satan's wilderness temptations were all taken from Deuteronomy and the experience of Israel in the wilderness (Matt 4:4, cf. Deut 8:3; Matt

4:7, cf. Deut 6:26, Matt 4:10, cf. Deut 6:13). His betrayal was typified by David's (Luke 22:48, cf. Psa 41:9), His death and resurrection after three days was typified by Israel's restoration after three days (1 Cor 15:3-4, cf. Hos 6:1-2). Christ is now on David's throne (Luke 1:32-33, Heb 1:3, 8, 13), from where He guides in the present building of the temple made up of Jew and Gentile Christians (Eph 2:20, 1 Pet 2:4-5).

So although the cosmic nature of the promises and mission given to Abraham were partially foreshadowed in the Old Testament, true to the type/antitype escalation, the New Testament explicates their fulfillment in and through Christ, who became the head (Col 1:18) of the new body (Eph 3:6, Jew and Gentile) which became the new Israel of God" (Gal 6:16). The promise transcends the type of the promised land (Palestine) to antitype of the promised world (Gen 26:26:3-4) and including the heavenly inheritance (2 Tim 4:18, Heb 11:13-16, 13:14, 1 Pet 1:4, 2 Pet 3:13). This inheritance is not only future but already present "in Christ." For "God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in heavenly realms in Christ Jesus" (Eph 2:6). Far transcending the limited Dispensational focus on Palestine and Jerusalem, God says that His new Israel of God "have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. . . to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant" (Heb 12:22,24). There is also the intended mission. The Israel of God does have a mission to the world (Matt 28:19), as did ancient Israel (Gen 12:3), but "now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms" (Eph 3:10).

Covenant relationship with God was pre-requisite to being true Israel and receiving the covenant promises in the Old Testament (Gen 17:8-9; 22:18; 26:4-5; Deut 28:1-14). So in the New Testament the children of promise, not necessarily the natural children, are Abraham's offspring (Rom 9:2-3). For not all of Israel are Israel (Rom 9:6-7), but only those who are so inwardly (Rom 2:28-29), those belong to Christ (Gal 3:27-29; cf. "receive Christ" John 1:12, and "believe" Gal 3:6-9, Matt 3:9-10). Christ said that Abraham's children are those who do the works of Abraham (John 8:38-40). The present secular state of Israel fails to meet Christ's definition of the "Israel of God." No wonder Gentiles in this new

Israel of God, the church, are called a "chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God" (1 Pet 2:9)!

The New Testament, therefore, speaks about "the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints" which is "Christ in you the hope of glory" (Col 1:26). Paul says, "We proclaim him" (Col 1:28), and considered his Jewish heritage as nothing compared to gaining "Christ and be found in him" (Phil 3:9). As Anthony Thiselton concludes, "The New Testament writers see Christ as an interpretive key for the interpretation and understanding of the Old Testament."<sup>78</sup> And, by contrast, "Socio-Pragmatic hermeneutics remain explicitly ethnocentric."<sup>79</sup> Paul sums it up succinctly, "For no matter how many promises God has made, they are 'Yes' in Christ" (2 Cor 1:20).

**Dispensationalist Interpretation of the Seventieth Week of Daniel 9:24-27: Inconsistent with Consistent Literalism.** If Dispensationalists really believe in a literalistic interpretation, on what basis do they remove the seventieth week from the other sixty-nine weeks in the prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27? They take the seventieth week and jump over nearly two thousand years of church history to give the last pre-advent seven years to literal Israel, after the alleged church rapture. Here again the quest is driven by the need to keep Israel and the church separate. This interpretation of a time prophecy is anything but normal or usual. As Payne notes, it has distinct problems.<sup>80</sup> The linguistic form of the expression "seventy weeks" in Dan 9:24 excludes the possibility of a gap between the 29 weeks and the 70th week. The "seventy weeks" must be continuous.<sup>81</sup>

No other time prophecy in Scripture is interpreted in such a strange way. It seems to me that an authentic literal or normal interpretation would mandate that the seventieth week follow the other sixty-nine. As one scholar asked, "Is it credible that this prophecy, which speaks so definitely of 70 weeks and then subdivides the 70 into 7 and 62 and 1, should require for its correct interpretation that an interval be discovered between the last two of the weeks far longer than the entire period covered by the prophecy itself?"<sup>82</sup>

**Consistent Literalism Critiqued.** Since 1945, a number of significant books have critiqued (directly or indirectly) Dispensa-

tional hermeneutics. Some of these include (listed chronologically by publication date) *Prophecy and the Church* (O. T. Allis, 1945),<sup>83</sup> *The Seed of Abraham* (A. Pieters, 1950),<sup>84</sup> *Crucial Questions About the Kingdom of God* (G. E. Ladd, 1952),<sup>85</sup> *The Kingdom of God* (J. Bright, 1953),<sup>86</sup> *The Gospel of the Kingdom* (G. E. Ladd, 1959),<sup>87</sup> *Jesus and the Kingdom: The Eschatology of Biblical Realism* (G. E. Ladd),<sup>88</sup> *The Gospel and the Land: Early Christianity and Jewish Territory Doctrine* (W. D. Davies, 1974),<sup>89</sup> *The Bible and the Future* (Anthony A. Hoekema, 1979), *Gospel and Law: Contrast or Continuum? The Hermeneutics of Dispensationalism and Covenant Theology* (D. P. Fuller, 1980),<sup>90</sup> *The Israel of God in Prophecy. Principles of Prophetic Interpretation* (H. K. LaRondelle, 1983),<sup>91</sup> *The Covenants of Promise. A Theology of the Old Testament Covenants* (T. E. McComiskey, 1985),<sup>92</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, Old Testament Professor of Regent College, recently wrote, "In my opinion, the works by LaRondelle and Hoekema remain the best on the topic."<sup>93</sup> He says LaRondelle's work is a "superb book."<sup>94</sup> It is a gold mine of information on the subject.<sup>95</sup>

The cumulative evidence, given above, lays out the inconsistency of "consistent literalism," and finds that it has problems that need to be addressed. For example, (1) the alleged unconditionality of the Abrahamic covenant, (2) the alleged belief that Israel can return to Palestine in unbelief, (3) the alleged idea that Christ came to Israel to establish an earthly kingdom, which is only postponed, and (4) the alleged absence of the church in the purview of the Old Testament. The Israel/church dichotomy lies behind each of these four major problems with continuing inconsistencies. Space limitations only permit consideration of the alleged claim that Israel can return to Palestine in unbelief.

#### Is the Establishment of the State of Israel a Result of OT Prophecy?<sup>96</sup>

Ever since the modern State of Israel was established in May, 1948, Dispensationalists have rejoiced in this as *the* sign of the nearness of Christ's return.<sup>97</sup> They believe that soon God is going to fulfill all the Old Testament promises to Israel because of the unconditional Abrahamic Covenant. It is God's faithfulness that will bring this about, and not the faithfulness of Israel, and so



apparently it is no problem for Dispensationalists to look at the modern State of Israel as fulfilling covenantal promises, even though Israel is secular, and the vast majority have returned in unbelief.<sup>98</sup> It is interesting the even the *New Scofield Study Bible* can speak of "restoration dependent on repentance,"<sup>99</sup> although this is an exception to the normal presentation.<sup>100</sup> Has God made a covenant promising the land to Israel, without any condition?

**Loss of Land Due to Unbelief.** There is much more to the covenant than a merely formal deed, or legal transaction on paper with no personal involvement. That the Abrahamic covenant is conditional as far as the human partner is concerned is evident from Gen 18:19; 22:16-18 and 26:4-5. In Gen 26:5 it is made clear that obedience to the divine "charge," "commandment," "statutes" and "laws" is the prerequisite to God giving to Abraham's "descendants all these lands." (NASB). Without belief resulting in obedience there can be no covenant experience. The mosaic covenant is also conditional as is evidenced by the fact that it can be violated (Joshua 23:16; Judges 2:20-21) or abandoned (Deut 29:25-26; Jer 22:9). Moreover the captivities of Israel to Assyria (2 Kgs 15:29-17:24) and Judah to Babylon (2 Kgs 18:17-19:36; Dan 1:1-3) were due to unbelief. They had turned from God to serve other gods. Their covenant unfaithfulness did make a difference (Deut 28:15-68). Their captivities argue against the idea of an unconditional covenant, and possession of the land as an inherited right.

**Loss of Land Can Be Eternal.** If covenantal obedience is decisive to covenant permanence, then what did God mean when He said to David, "your throne will be established forever" (2 Sam 7:16; 1 Chron 22:10; Psa 89:4), and that Israel is God's "forever" (2 Sam 7:24). The Davidic covenant is also conditional on human obedience (Ps 89:28-32). We must remember that God also said that Judah "will lose the inheritance I gave you. . . for you have kindled my anger, and it will burn forever" (Jer 17:4; cf. Jer 23:40; 24:9). Thus Scripture says, "If you are careful to obey me, declares the Lord. . . this city will be inhabited forever" (Jer 17:24-25).<sup>101</sup>

It is obvious that if Israel's departure from Palestine was due to unbelief, then a return in unbelief<sup>102</sup> does not fulfill any prophetic promise.<sup>103</sup> Modern Israel is clearly "a nation without prophetic significance."<sup>104</sup> God said, "When you and your children

return to the Lord your God and obey him with all your heart and with all your soul according to everything I command you today, then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations where he scattered you" (Deut 30:2-3; cf. 2 Chron 6:24-25; Deut 30:2-3 and God's response in 2 Chron 7:11-22).

When faced with this biblical evidence even Walvoord admits that conditionality is involved.<sup>105</sup> This makes the present State of Israel an entity of history that is outside of biblical prophecy. Nevertheless, Walvoord believes that the return is "one of the greatest miracles of world history"<sup>106</sup> and that "Scriptures make clear that the regathering will continue until consummated after the second advent of Christ."<sup>107</sup> He conveniently provides no biblical support. This is the length to which literalism goes to defend the Israel/church dichotomy.

**Return to Location No Substitute for Return to Loyalty.** Alexander Wachtel, at the Jerusalem Conference on Biblical Prophecy, said, "If we who believe in Jesus Christ as Son of God and Savior of the world cannot find some divine purpose in the return of the Jews, then we are embarked on a course that will undermine the unique claim of our gospel. . . We must find the divine purpose in the return of Israel. If we cannot, then Christ is not the only way."<sup>108</sup> Here Wachtel misses the fundamental nature of the covenant as a relationship. No return to location can substitute for a return of loyalty to God.<sup>109</sup>

**Is Israel's Original Entrance to the Land a Type for its Present Entrance?** The question could be raised, is the present return of Israel a parallel with the original entrance into the land? Concerning that first entrance God said, "It is not because of your righteousness or your integrity that you are going in to take possession of their land; but on account of the wickedness of these nations, the Lord your God will drive them out before you, to accomplish what he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" (Deut 9:5). Did God bring Israel into Palestine because of His covenant promise to Abraham rather than because of Israel's faithfulness? If the latter were true, this would be the same as the Dispensational argument about Israel's present entrance in unbelief.

We must first note that Deuteronomy 9:5 and 30:2-3 both deserve equal attention. They are not mutually exclusive, nor is one more normative than the other. Rather, Deuteronomy 9 witnesses to the fact that no one is worthy of God's grace. The entrance into Canaan by Israel is a type of entrance into the heavenly Canaan by the redeemed. Not one of the redeemed will be worthy. Grace is the reason for both entrances. By contrast, in Deut 30:2-3, the writer says a return is not possible without a return to God. Where is grace? Without denying the operation of grace (Deut 9), the reader is reminded that grace can be spurned. Whereas no human works earned entrance to the promised land (Deut 9), no return to Palestine will come without a return to God (Deut 30). Both biblical truths stand in their literal meaning.

As Duane L. Christensen put it, "If the gift of the land were contingent on the righteousness of the people, it would never be received. It was a gift, graciously given, not a reward. Nonetheless. . . continued possession of the gift of the land is contingent on obedience. Disobedience of the covenant will lead to forfeiture of the land."<sup>110</sup> Scripture does not teach anywhere Israel's return to the land in unbelief.

**No Promise of a Return to Palestine in the New Testament.** The New Testament does not teach anywhere that a land promise was given to Israel. Not even in Romans 9-11 is there any mention of land. In fact the New Testament does not present Palestine as the goal for Abraham and his descendants. For, he "was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God" (Heb 11:9-10). They are spoken of as "longing for a better country—a heavenly one" (Heb 11:16). The New Jerusalem witnesses to the union of Israel and the church with the names of the twelve patriarchs and twelve apostles inscribed on the gates and foundations respectively (Rev 21:12-14).

Evidently the land of Canaan was but a type of the heavenly Canaan, the old Jerusalem but a type of the new Jerusalem, the land of promise but a type of the earth made new. Reductive literalism, refusing to be informed by the full teaching of the Bible of both Testaments, completely misses the magnitude of the promise. The *New Scofield Bible*, which finds so many different types in Scripture, never sees Palestine (the promised land) as a

type of the new earth, nor is there any comment on this land promise in Hebrews 11.<sup>111</sup>

**Christ's Earthly Kingdom as His Reign or Rule.** "The majority of exegetes have recognized that the central meaning of *basileia*, as of the Hebrew word *malkuth*, is the abstract or dynamic idea of reign, rule, or dominion rather than the concrete idea of realm."<sup>112</sup> For "the Kingdom is not a realm or a people but God's reign."<sup>113</sup> George Ladd argues persuasively that the kingdom Christ offered Israel was His rule in their midst. Christ's "authority in deeds and words was nothing less than the presence of the Kingdom of God."<sup>114</sup>

Whereas God had sent many prophets to call them back to Him, now Christ was Himself in their presence, pleading, "Come unto me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (John 11:28). This was His gracious rule—to set them free in covenant relationship (Luke 4:18; cf. Isa 61:1). He is the embodiment of that covenant—man joined to God. To Him the promise of the Old Testament meets the fulfillment of the New, for in both "is the dynamic concept of the rule of God."<sup>115</sup> He came to give them the essence of that covenant—a relationship of resting in His gracious rule.

But, "He was despised and rejected by men" (Isa 53:3). They did nothing to help Him when He was clothed with a royal robe by Romans who went "up to him again and again, saying, 'Hail, O king of the Jews'" (John 19:2-3). Finally Pilate said to them "'Here is your king.'" But they shouted, "'Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!'" (John 19:15). They rejected Christ's reign and rule, not the realm.

#### Calvary: Christ's Last Word about Israel<sup>116</sup>

Christ spoke of His rejection as a fulfillment of prophecy (Psa 118:22-23), concluding, contrary to Dispensationalists,<sup>117</sup> "Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit" (Matt 21:42-43). So the church takes the place (functionally) of unfaithful Israel, and is called "a holy nation" (2 Pet 2:9). "Israel's day as a nation favored and blessed of God. . . ended."<sup>118</sup> The twelve patriarchs of Israel were followed by the twelve disciples of the church, as He



continued His saving mission through the continued true "Israel of God" (Gal 6:16). Not Old Testament literalism but the "It is finished" (John 19:30) from the cross is the last word concerning Israel. The temple veil, rent from top to bottom by a divine hand,<sup>119</sup> declaring that the place was holy no more, the sacrifices were now meaningless, God had gone from their midst.<sup>120</sup> He had committed Himself to the faithful remnant of literal Israel who became Christians.

Hanging on the cross, Christ is the predicted lamb of God. Here is the Prophet, Priest and King to whom OT prophecy pointed. Here is "the Word" made "flesh" (John 1:14), God united with man, the at-one-ment, dying as man's substitute. Here is the embodiment of the covenant, the law and the plan of salvation as well as the recapitulated history of Israel. As the Passover lamb saved the firstborn in the Exodus (type) so the greater Exodus from earth to the heavenly Canaan is possible through the Lamb of God slain at Calvary (antitype). In Christ all believers, whether Jew or Gentile, meet. Here is the ultimate revelation of God's promise to Abraham, and all the families of the world. In the light of the cross, and its subsequent "resurrection-ascension-intercession-return," we see the WORD unfolded in an unfolding revelation that sheds light on all prophetic language, speaking authoritatively about His kingdom rule, already in process, moving towards a realm, embracing a new Jerusalem in a new heaven and a new earth.

The present return of Jews to the State of Israel is, therefore, an event that has nothing to do with the Abrahamic promise or with salvation-history as seen from the perspective of the whole Bible. "For no matter how many promises God has made, they are 'Yes' in Christ" (2 Cor 1:20). He has not merely brought fulfillment to the Abrahamic promise, He is the fulfillment. Through Him all the nations of the world are being blessed (Matt 28:20, John 1:9). Through Jesus Christ all human kind, both Jew and Gentile, will gain entrance into the earth made new and into the true Jerusalem, the one which is in heaven now but will return to earth (Rev 21:1-3).

### The Future

Having examined Dispensationalism as known at present, we must now look at an epochal book just released, *Dispensationalism*,

*Israel and the Church. The Search for Definition*, (1992),<sup>121</sup> which gives insight into some changes taking place in Dispensationalism, allegedly subscribed to by key leaders of Dispensationalism today.<sup>122</sup> Because of space limitations we can give only a summary overview, with suggestions for future dialogue.

Dispensationalism has experienced four dispensations of its own, i.e. Pre-Scotfieldian, Scotfieldian, Essentialist and Progressive Dispensationalism.<sup>123</sup> The fourth era issues out of an attempt to be "more accurate biblically"<sup>124</sup> and "to re-examine biblically the distinction between Israel and the church."<sup>125</sup> The resulting seminal book referred to above is written by ten younger Dispensationalist scholars who present a progressive theological hermeneutic beyond the one present in the other three eras of Dispensationalism. Their advance over previous Dispensationalist contributions moves the dialogue with Dispensationalism to a new level, as they have (1) critiqued some of the old positions that non-Dispensationalists also questioned, as well as (2) their acceptance of a new Christological hermeneutic absent in previous Dispensational literature.

The changes from their predecessors include: (1) Progressive fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies/promises in the church age, and thus a rejection of traditional futurism.<sup>126</sup> (2) Accepting the church as implicit in the Old Testament, and the moral law and the Sermon on the Mount as applicable in the church age rather than relegated to Israel in the millennium.<sup>127</sup> (3) Accepting that Old Testament prophecy can have double fulfillments in the church age, such as Joel 2 at Pentecost (Acts 2) and in the future.<sup>128</sup> (4) Progressive fulfillment of prophecy involving an acceptance of inaugurated eschatology<sup>129</sup> and a rejection of the church age as a parenthesis between Israel in the Old Testament and Israel during the millennium. (5) Progressive fulfillment of prophecy involves rejection of a postponed kingdom and rule of Christ, and focuses on His present rule from heaven's throne over all on planet-earth.<sup>130</sup> (6) Progressive fulfillment of prophecy rejects that there are two new covenants, one for Israel and the church,<sup>131</sup> finding the one new covenant sequentially fulfilled—spiritually in the church age and physically to Israel in the millennium.<sup>132</sup> (7) Progressive fulfillment of prophecy rejects the final difference between the earthly

people of God (Israel) and the heavenly people of God (church), opting rather for a dwelling together in the new earth.<sup>133</sup>

These changes are substantial, and clearly separate Progressive Dispensationalists from the other three kinds. Progressive Dispensationalism has taken more seriously the Christological fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies/promises, and has come a long way to respond positively to the biblical type/antitype hermeneutic that involves escalation in the New Testament fulfillment. The book documents the roots of Progressive Dispensationalism, with (1) the rejection of the distinction between the kingdom of God and kingdom of heaven (1959), and (2) with Ryrie's *Dispensationalism Today* (1965) and then Ryrie's *sina qua non* questioned (1970s). So Progressive Dispensationalism has allegedly been developing for some years. The contributions in this book are by ten authors, all of whom are New Testament scholars, bringing their expertise to bear on traditional Dispensationalism that overlooked the hermeneutical function of the New Testament in interpreting the Old Testament. Although three respondents are Old Testament scholars, they provide further suggestions for additional progress to be made in hermeneutics by Progressive Dispensationalists.

The ten Progressive Dispensationalists have advanced from pure futurism typical of dispensationalism of the past to include inaugurated eschatology. They have transcended the simplistic literal/spiritual dualism, have done more justice to the New Testament's place in interpreting prophecy, and attempted a Christological interpretation of the Old Testament prophecies/promises. This is a development over their predecessors, and is an advance beyond previous Dispensational hermeneutics.

However, the *sina qua non*, shared with the other three stages of Dispensational development, is still the distinction between Israel and the church, even though the book speaks of a "softening" of this distinction.<sup>134</sup> Progressive fulfillment presents the kingdom as (1) preliminary during the present inter-advent period, (2) intermediate during the millennium and (3) eternal after the millennium. Along this progressive unfolding of the kingdom (fulfillment) the parenthesis (of older Dispensationalism) is simply moved from the church age to the millennium.

### Conclusion

Walter Kaiser Jr. suggests that in the next two or three years another book should be written titled *Dispensationalism Tomorrow*.<sup>135</sup> Craig Blaising and Darrell Bock suggest, "Future publications need to carry the dialogue forward."<sup>136</sup> I submit four specific suggestions, for consideration, which in my opinion, could carry the dialogue forward in a future book.

(1) Present a more thorough-going Christological hermeneutic which takes into consideration the limitations of the *sensus plenior* of Old Testament predictions, and does full justice to the historical types with their biblical correspondence in Christ-centered fulfillment.

(2) Think through the present reign of Christ on heaven's throne (e.g. in Hebrews and Revelation) in relation to the church as His Body (Eph 5:30, Col 1:24), the one new man (Eph 2:11-15; cf. 3:6) the one olive tree (Rom 11), one vine (John 15), one chosen people, one holy nation, one royal priesthood (1 Pet 2:9), one bride (Rev 19:7), and the one holy city with names of both prophets and apostles on it (Rev 21:1-14). For "in Christ" the present and future oneness of Israel and the church is functional now and not sequentially divided into stages.

(3) Think through the inaugurated-consummated eschatology of the New Testament in the biblical type/antitype context, with its necessary escalation. Progressive Dispensationalists' commendable acceptance of this escalation is seriously undermined by their returning to the local focus on Israel as a part of consummated eschatology. The Bible simple does not support such a return from the antitype escalation to the localized type. There is no example of this reversal of escalation in Scripture.

(4) Think through the biblical understanding of the millennium which is different from the view given.<sup>137</sup> All four eras of Dispensationalism are pre-millennial. That is, they believe the second advent will precede a millennium on earth. However, nowhere in the Bible is the thousand years said to be on earth.<sup>138</sup> For example, the word "throne" (*thronos*) is used 38 times in the book of Revelation, and always about God's heavenly throne, except three instances where the throne is on earth, but in each case it is always occupied by an enemy of God (Rev 2:13, 13:2, 16:10).<sup>139</sup> This



constitutes persuasive biblical evidence that those who will reign with Christ a thousand years (Rev 20:4) will do so at His heavenly throne, and so does not support an earthly millennium, nor does the literary structure of Rev 20.<sup>140</sup> This calls into question a millennium on earth for Israel. Further biblical evidence supporting a heavenly millennium is the Old Testament day of atonement in the earthly sanctuary (Lev 16) as a type of the antitypical day of atonement in heaven's sanctuary. The judgment/removal of sin process takes place in the sanctuary in both type (Lev 16) and antitype (Rev 20:4-6, 11-15). Only after the millennium in heaven's sanctuary will the sanctuary process be completed in the removal of sin and sinners on earth (Rev 20:7-10, 13-15).

Progressive Dispensationalists have moved the dialogue to a new level by doing more justice to biblical inaugurated eschatology. The next step forward is to do justice to biblical consummated eschatology, and thus to the New Testament paradigm that is fully (not partially) Christological. This would more consistently question traditional Dispensational hermeneutics, and more effectively cause a return to the biblical mode of thinking. This biblical mode of thinking includes the conditionality of the covenants and the community of the faithful (church), that is, the Israel of God, made up of both Jews and Gentiles.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> The first paragraphs speak to this challenge. The rest of the article demonstrates the results of a hermeneutic which is less than Christological and *sola scriptura*. Seventh-day Adventists must allow Scripture to reveal its own meaning rather than superimposing ideas onto it from pragmatic/socio/historical-critical presuppositions.

<sup>2</sup> As a system Dispensationalism did not begin until the early part of the eighteen century in writings of Pierre Poiret, John Edwards and Isaac Watts. See C. C. Ryrie, "Dispensation, Dispensationalism," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. W. A. Elwell, (Grand Rapids, MI, Baker Book House, 1987), pp. 321-323.

<sup>3</sup> See Alden Thompson's promotion of the casebook method in *Inspiration. Hard Questions, Honest Answers* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1991).

<sup>4</sup> Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral, A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL:IVP, 1991), p. 289 (parenthesis and emphasis added).

<sup>5</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 593-594.

<sup>6</sup> Ellen G. White, MS 172, 1902, published in F. D. Nichol, ed., *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington DC: Review and Herald, 1955), 4:1161.

<sup>7</sup> And also to the One Who is the Truth (John 17:3).

<sup>8</sup> Thus Oswald T. Allis could say in 1945, "Dispensationalism as such, has made Dispensationalism an issue of greater or lesser importance in practically all evangelical denominations at the present time." *Prophecy and the Church* Philadelphia: The Pres-

byterian and Reformed Pub. Co., 2956), pp. 12-13. By 1958, it was reported that "dispensationalists have infiltrated almost every branch of Protestantism. . ." Arnold B. Rhodes, F. H. Caldwell and L. C. Rudolph, eds. *The Church Faces the Isms: The Members of the Faculty of the Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky* (Nashville: Abingdon Press 1958), p. 109.

<sup>9</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1986), p. 1162.

<sup>10</sup> For example, see Alden Thompson, *Inspiration*, (Hagerstown, Md., Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1991). For an evaluation of the book see my book review in *MINISTRY*, (December 1991): 28-30, and my article "An Evaluation of Alden Thompson's 'Incarnational' Method in the Light of His View of Scripture" in *Issues in Revelation and Inspiration*, (F. Holbrook and Leo Van Dolson, eds. "ATS Occasional Papers," vol. 1, Berrien Springs, MI: Adventist Theological Society Publications, 1992): 69-90.

<sup>11</sup> For example, see R. A. Anderson and J. M. Hoffmann, *All Eyes on Israel*, (Fort Worth, TX: Harvest Press Inc., 1977).

<sup>12</sup> For further data on these schools, see Gerhard F. Hasel, "Israel in Bible Prophecy," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 3/1 (1992): 121-130, Leon Morris, *Revelation, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, (Leicester, England, IVP), pp. 18-20, Alan F. Johnson, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Revelation*, Vol. 12, Ed. F. E. Gaebelin, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1981), pp. 408-410, and Robert H. Mounce, "Revelation" *NICNT*, F. F. Bruce, ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), pp. 39-43.

<sup>13</sup> George M. Marsden compares Dispensationalism to Marxism and Catastrophism, which both divide history into periods brought to an end in judgment as does Dispensationalism. George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism: 1870-1925* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), pp. 64-65.

<sup>14</sup> C. Norman Kraus, *Dispensationalism in America. Its Rise and Development*, (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1958), p. 27.

<sup>15</sup> John Wick Bowman, "The Bible and Modern Religions," *Interpretation*, 10/2, (1956): 170.

<sup>16</sup> Daniel Payton Fuller, "The Hermeneutics of Dispensationalism," (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Northern Baptist Theological Seminary, Chicago, Illinois, 1957): 183-184.

<sup>17</sup> Fuller, *The Hermeneutics of Dispensationalism*, p. 68.

<sup>18</sup> C. I. Scofield, *The New Scofield Study Bible*, (afterwards *NSB*), (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 3, footnote on heading for Genesis 1:28.

<sup>19</sup> Arnold B. Rhodes, F. H. Caldwell and L. C. Rudolph, eds., *The Church Faces the Isms* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1958), p. 104.

<sup>20</sup> His seven dispensations are as follows: (1) (Paradisical state), to the flood, (2) Noah, (3) Abraham, (4) Israel, (5) Gentiles, (6) The Spirit, and (7) The Millennium. See Kraus, p. 29.

<sup>21</sup> These seven dispensations are (1) Innocence, (2) Conscience or Moral Responsibility, (3) Human Government, (4) Promise, (5) Law, (6) Church, and (7) Kingdom. *NSB*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>22</sup> Charles C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1973), p. 50.

<sup>23</sup> Kraus, p. 26.

<sup>24</sup> See Charles F. Baker, *A Dispensational Theology*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Grace Bible College Publications, 1972), p. 3.

<sup>25</sup> These three dispensations are (1) the Mosaic law, (2) the present dispensation of Grace, and (3) the future Millennial Kingdom. See Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, p. 50.

<sup>26</sup> Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, p. 48.

<sup>27</sup> Daniel P. Fuller, *Gospel and Law: Contrast or Continuum? The Hermeneutics of Dispensationalism*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Assn., 1980), p. 12.

<sup>28</sup> Lewis Chafer calls these three "law," "grace," and "kingdom" in *Systematic Theology* (Dallas, TX, Dallas Seminary Press, 1948), 4:183.

<sup>29</sup> Louis A DeCaro, *Israel Today: Fulfillment of Prophecy?*, (Philadelphia: Pres-

byterian and Reformed Pub. Co., 1976), p. 26, rightly notes that "Without this basic dichotomy in its hermeneutics, dispensationalism could not endure as a distinct system of biblical interpretation. The whole system turns on this alleged division existing between Israel and the Church."

30 Here are some of these divisions: (1) The church founded by Paul is different from the church founded by Peter, the first is a genuine church, the second a counterfeit. See Oswald T. Allis, *Prophecy and The Church*, (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., 1945), pp. 102-103. (2) Seven judgments are given in the *New Scofield Bible* (NSB, p. 1384). (3) Although "all Scripture" is profitable (2 Tim 3:16), "all Scripture is not addressed to the Jew, nor is it all addressed to the Christian" writes Lewis S. Chafer, "Dispensationalism," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 93 (Oct 1936): 417. Thus, the Sermon on the Mount is not for the Church, Charles C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, p. 108, nor is the Lord's prayer, Lewis S. Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 4: 221-222. There are also other divisions made in the New Testament. (4) contrast between the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God, John F. Walvoord, *The Church in Prophecy*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 1976), p. 25. (5) There is a spiritual as well as a natural seed of Abraham, John F. Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom*, (Grand Rapids, MI, Dunham Pub. Co., 1966), p. 144. (6) There is a new covenant for Israel and a new covenant for the church, Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom*, p. 210. It is understandable that the second coming is divided into two, a secret rapture for the church, and the second coming to earth to reign over Israel.

31 The four options for beginning the church age are Acts 2 (Scofield, Ryrie), Acts 13 (Moderate Ultradispensationalists), Acts 28 (Extreme Ultradispensationalists) and with Paul, before writing his first epistle (Baker). See Baker, pp. 4-6.

32 The three views are pre-tribulation, mid-tribulation and post-tribulation, with the majority of Dispensationalists supportive of the first view.

33 C. I. Scofield, *Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth*, (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1896).

34 C. I. Scofield, *Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth*, p. 5.

35 Ralph Earle, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Frank E. Gaebelin, ed., (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 1978), 11:402.

36 Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, (Leicester: IVP, 1988), p. 148.

37 "The truths of the Bible must be rightly interpreted so that no part of the Scriptures will be set in opposition to the picture presented by the Bible as a whole." *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, F. D. Nichol, ed., (Washington D. C., Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1957), 7:336.

38 Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, p. 89; Chafer, *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 93 (1936): 400; John F. Walvoord, *The Blessed Hope and the Tribulation*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 1977), p. 28.

39 The only exception to this is the obvious use of symbols, Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom*, p. 130.

40 They claim that "A method of interpretation which is free to spiritualize or overlook important revelations in doctrine has led the way for others to deny the authority of Scripture" Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 4:267.

41 Chafer says "The liberal theologian spiritualizes both the virgin birth and the Davidic throne. . ." "Dispensationalism," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 93 (1936): 00. He is right in the first, but overlooks the fact that the New Testament does the second (see Acts 2:33-36; 13:22-37; 15:13-19; Rev 3:7).

42 "The prophecies concerning the King and His earthly kingdom remain unfulfilled to this hour. They are not forgotten or abandoned. Neither are they receiving a spiritual fulfillment. They are yet to be fulfilled when the King returns to the earth," Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 4:176. This overlooks the present fulfillment in the reign of Christ at the throne of God which is an important spiritual interpretation of the New Testament (Acts 2:25, 33-34; 5:31; 7:55-56; Rom 8:34; Ephes 1:20; Col 3:1; Heb 1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2 and 1 Pet 3:22).

43 A literal interpretation of 1 Thess 4:1-18 places the ascension of the church at the

time of Christ's descent, to meet Him in the air. This is clearly a second advent passage, not some prior rapture built partially upon a seventieth week taken out of its literal context (Dan 9:24-27). Against this Biblical view of the two simultaneous events, Walvoord dubs the interpretation of the rapture and second advent together as "spiritualization," *The Church in Prophecy*, p. 116.

44 John F. Walvoord, *The Rapture Question*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 1976), p. 8.

45 "All of the apostles give spiritual interpretation of the Old Testament prophecies, and literalists do not find fault with them for that. It is universally agreed that the chief cornerstone laid in Zion is to be interpreted as Jesus Christ. Peter likens Christians to living stones built up into a spiritual temple. The apostle Paul, speaking of the experiences of Israel in the wilderness says, 'And did all eat the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ' (1 Corinthians 10:3-4)." George L. Murray, *Millennial Studies, A Search for Truth*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1948), p. 40.

46 Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom*, p. 130.

47 George E. Ladd, *Crucial Questions about the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1968), pp. 135-141.

48 Charles Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, p. 10.

49 J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come, A Study in Biblical Eschatology*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 1978), p. 9.

50 George N. H. Peters, *The Theocratic Kingdom of our Lord Jesus, the Christ, as Covenanted in the Old Testament and Presented in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Pub., 1952), 1:192.

51 John F. Walvoord, *The Blessed Hope and the Tribulation. A Historical and Biblical Study of Posttribulationism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 1977), p. 7. A Spirit-led study of Scripture brings the student to the unifying truth that unites all prophecy in a harmonious whole.

52 Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 1:6.

53 Raymond E. Brown, *The Sensus Plenior of Sacred Scripture*, (Baltimore, MD: St. Mary's University 1955): p. 125.

54 Simon Kistemaker, *The Psalm Citations in the Epistle to the Hebrews*, (Assen: Van Gorkum, 1961), p. 13.

55 Kraus, p. 132.

56 Note what Pentecost, *Things to Come, A Study in Biblical Eschatology*, p. 61, claims, "In the field of fulfilled prophecy it is not possible to point to nay prophecy hat has been fulfilled in any way other than literally."

57 Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, p. 88.

58 Certainly some details appear to differ in fulfillments. For example, the weeping in Jeremiah 31:15 was in Ramah (north of Jerusalem) whereas in Matthew 2:17-18 the weeping was in Bethlehem (south of Jerusalem). Assumably there may be the understanding that Ramah may be a distich which includes Bethlehem.

59 Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 4:204.

60 Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 1:xxx.

61 Walvoord, *The Church in Prophecy*, says, "It is a major error to make the word kingdom, which is a common term, always mean the same in all its uses. Rather, it must be interpreted by its context" p. 26). He should have applied this to the word Israel. Walvoord "Christ's Olivet Discourse on the End of the Age," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 128 (1971):113 says, "The study of prophecy in any area necessarily has to be subject to the context of the entire revelation of the Word of God" This would remove the Israel/church dichotomy. Walvoord, *The Rapture Question*, p. 16, again notes, "It is therefore not too much to say that the rapture question is determined more by ecclesiology than eschatology" This admits the Israel/church presupposition behind the rapture is not rooted in eschatology. Walvoord, "The Resurrection of Israel," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 124 (1967):5. says that "prophecy should be interpreted literally unless there is good evidence to the contrary" This opens up the possibility of transcending literalism. Walvoord, *Millennial Kingdom*, p. 251, says, "The partial-rapture theory is also



objectionable because it divides the body of Christ and ignores plain teaching of Scripture. . . Apply this to the Israel/church dichotomy, for the same reason, and Dispensationalism ceases to exist. Pentecost, *Things to Come*, p. 63, says, "The central theme of all prophecy is the Lord Jesus Christ." This insight would radically change Dispensationalism.

62 In my research in the NSB, I discovered the following 30 types of Christ, and there may well be more. (1) skins of Gen 3:21 NSB, p. 8, (2) Lamb NSB, p. 8, (3) Adam NSB, p. 10, (4) Ark NSB, p. 11, (5) Melchizedek NSB, p. 22, (6) Isaac NSB, p. 32, (7) Ram NSB, p. 32, (8) Joseph NSB, p. 53, (9) Benjamin NSB, p. 62, (10) Moses NSB, p. 72, (11) Passover NSB, p. 84, (12) Manna NSB, p. 91, (13) Rock of Exod 17:6 NSB, p. 92, (14) Shewbread NSB, p. 103, (15) Lampstand NSB, p. 103, (16) Acacia wood NSB, p. 104, (17) Inner veil of Exod 26:31 NSB, p. 105, (18) Aaron and sons NSB, p. 106, (19) Altar of incense NSB, p. 111, (20) Laver NSB, p. 112, (21) Burnt offering NSB, p. 127, (22) Bullock/Ox NSB, p. 127, (23) Sweet savor offering NSB, p. 128, (24) Meal offering NSB, p. 128, (25) Peace offering NSB, p. 129, (26) Sin offering NSB, p. 130, (27) Slain a live bird of Lev 14:4 NSB, p. 144, (28) earthen vessel of Lev 14:5 NSB, p. 144, (29) living goat of Lev 16:5 NSB, p. 147, (30) Feast of First Fruits of Lev 23:10, NSB, p. 157, (31) Boaz NSB, p. 161, and (32) Nazarene NSB, p. 175.

63 NSB, p. 705.

64 The church is considered a "parenthesis," "an unforeseen age," not even within the purview of the Old Testament. Walvoord, *Millennial Kingdom*, pp. 231, 247; Chafer in *Bibliotheca Sacra* 93 (1936):404.

65 Erickson, *Christian Theology* p. 1163.

66 NSB, Gen 2:23, p. 6.

67 NSB, Gen 21:3, p. 30.

68 NSB, Gen 24:1, p. 34.

69 NSB, Exod 259, p. 101.

70 NSB, Exod 28:1, p. 106.

71 NSB, Lev. 23:17, p. 157.

72 NSB, Song of Solomon, p. 706.

73 George N. H. Peters, *The Theocratic Kingdom*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1952), 1:212.

74 A few examples include Sarah as a type of grace NSB, p. 30, unnamed servant (Gen 24:1) as a type of the Holy Spirit NSB, p. 34, Asenath (Gen 41:45) as a type of the church NSB, p. 59, rods becoming serpents as symbols of Satan NSB, pp. 78-79, manna as a type of Christ's humiliation, giving His flesh that believer's may have life, NSB, p. 91.

75 Allis, *Prophecy and the Church*, p. 21.

76 We have already noted how one of the three methods of interpreting the Song of Solomon is allegorical, and that Ryrie opposed the allegorical method.

77 Leonhard Goppelt, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, eds. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, Editors, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Translator and Editor, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans), 8:246-259; Richard M. Davidson, *Typology in Scripture: A Study of Hermeneutical Types Structures* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1981), pp. 15-111; John E. Alsup, "Typology," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, David Noel Freedman, ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 6:682-685; Hans K. LaRondelle, *The Israel of God in Prophecy. Principles of Prophetic Interpretation* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1983), pp. 35-59, and Anthony C. Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), pp. 163-164.

78 Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), p. 27.

79 Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics*, p. 27.

80 J. Barton Payne, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy, The Complete Guide to Scriptural Predictions and Their Fulfillment* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1973), p. 388. "Dispensational writers commonly take Dan 9:27 as separated from, and subsequent to, v. 26 rather than as an explanation of it; and the subject who confirms the testament (or covenant) is held to be the prince of v. 26, meaning the Antichrist. Serious problems, however, beset such a reconstruction. These problems include (1) no interval between the 69 and 1 are hinted at in Scripture, (2) "it assumes an unprecedented covenant-making by the

Anti-Christ" with no hint of such in Scripture, and (3) "it transforms a past prince of Rome into a future deputy of the devil," Payne, p. 389.

81 See the forthcoming study by Gerhard F. Hasel, "The Plural of the Term for 'Weeks' in Daniel 9:24," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* (1993).

82 Allis, *Prophecy and the Church*, p. 118.

83 (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., 1945).

84 (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co.)

85 Ibid.

86 (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press.)

87 (Wm. B. Eerdmans.)

88 (London: S.P.C.K.)

89 (Berkeley, CA: Univ. of California Press.)

90 (Wm. B. Eerdmans.)

91 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press.)

92 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.)

93 Bruce K. Walke, in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church. The Search for Definition*, eds. Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), p. 353.

94 Ibid.

95 I have read LaRondelle's book more than once, and gained many insights behind ideas presented in this article. The book helped launch me some time ago into an in-depth study into Biblical and Dispensational and non-Dispensational sources relative to the topic. For this I am indebted to Hans LaRondelle.

96 For further reading on this question, see Gerhard F. Hasel, "Israel in Bible Prophecy," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 3/1 (1992): 120-155.

97 The modern state of Israel is considered "the great sign." Alexander Wachtel, "Why Did the Jews Have to Return to Israel?" in *Prophecy in the Making*, Carl F. H. Henry, ed. (Illinois: Creation House, 1971), p. 158. Walvoord, *ibid*, p. 341: "God's principal sign" It is the "paramount prophetic sign," and "most important prophetic sign" of Christ's imminent return according to Hal Lindsey, with C. C. Carlson, *The Great Late Planet Earth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1974), pp. 43, 57.

98 Robert L. Evans, *The Jew in the Plan of God* (New York: Loizeaux Brothers, Inc., 1950), p. 176.

99 NSB, p. 251.

100 For example, the following (note the order or sequence) "restored (to land) and converted" NSB, pp. 716, 747, 974, parenthesis supplied, "a partial restoration of Israel to the land in unbelief has already taken place in accordance with prophecy" NSB, p. 446. No biblical evidence is given. There is none. See Deut 28.

101 Cf. Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages*, p. 577, *idem*, *Great Controversy*, p. 19.

102 I agree with DeCaro, *Israel Today: Fulfillment of Prophecy?*: p. 21: "Any return to the land would be predicated upon the same conditions necessary to retain possession of the land—faith, obedience, and covenant renewal."

103 "The return in unbelief notion was not in the theology of the prophets, neither is it consistent with the whole of the biblical context" (DeCaro, p. 32). Alexander Wachtel, *Prophecy in the Making*, p. 152: misses this fact. He claims that the return in Deuteronomy. . . is precipitated by repentance. . . In Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel the return is precipitated by the pardoning act of God."

104 DeCaro, *Israel Today: Fulfillment of Prophecy?*, p. 35.

105 Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom*, p. 177.

106 Walvoord, *Armageddon, Oil and the Middle East* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 1990), p. 66, considers the return of Israel to Palestine as "one of the greatest miracles of world history" He further believes that "the history of Israel since 1948 is a remarkable record of divine providence as God has miraculously preserved Israel, in spite of her unbelief in Christ. . ." (p. 32). Such a preservation in unbelief is contrary to the biblical history between God and Israel in the Old Testament. Walvoord is inconsistent in holding

to the conditions (repentance, Deut 30:2-3, see footnote 106) for returning to the land with the unconditional land promise, (p. 69). These positions are mutually exclusive.

107 Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom*, p. 182 (parenthesis supplied).

108 Wachtel, "Why Did the Jews Have to Return to Israel," pp. 157-158.

109 Walvoord in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 103 (1946) 21, turns the Biblical data upside down, and calls this a literal interpretation. For example, instead of the condition for the return of the land to be a return to God, he says, "The fulfillment of the new covenant is conditioned on the regathering of Israel from their world-wide dispersion. . ."

110 Duane L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy. Word Biblical Commentary*, Vol. 6A, (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1991), p. 184.

111 See *NSB*, p. 1322. In comment on Rev 21:2, the *NSB* says, "The new Jerusalem is the dwelling place throughout eternity for the saints of all ages and fulfills the hope of Abraham for the heavenly city, Heb 11:10-16; cf. Heb 12:22-24." *NSB*, p. 1375. The implications of this fact are never spelled out or taken seriously.

112 George E. Ladd, *Jesus and the Kingdom, The Eschatology of Biblical Realism* (London: S. P. C. K., 1966), p. 126.

113 Ladd, *Jesus and the Kingdom*, p. 21.

114 Ladd, *Jesus and the Kingdom*, p. 162.

115 John Bright, *The Kingdom of God. The Biblical Concept and its Meaning for the Church* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1953), p. 197.

116 Calvary is Christ's last word about Israel in His human history, although later words He gave the Holy Spirit in the New Testament (John 16:12-14).

117 Lewis Chafer, *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 93 (1936): p. 403, says, "The rejection of the divine offer at Kadesh corresponds to the rejection of the King." He concludes that just as Israel entered the land forty years later, so "Israel will yet be regathered into her own land. . ."

118 Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 21: "When Christ should hang upon the cross of Calvary, Israel's day as a nation favored and blessed of God would be ended."

119 For those believing, the church is a continuation of Israel. Chafer asks a series of questions, including "why the rent veil?" Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 1:xix. This reveals that Chafer did not understand the significance of this act.

120 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 756-757.

121 Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, eds, *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church. The Search for Definition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992) (afterwards cited as *DIAC*).

122 According to a report given to this writer by Darrell Bock, one of the editors of *DIAC*, after presenting a paper at the Adventist Theological Society meeting, November 20, 1992, Airport Hilton, San Francisco. However, I asked Dr. Bock if they ever planned to put out a revised edition of the popular *New Scofield Study Bible* incorporating the advance positions taken in their book. He did not believe they would. If Dispensationalists continue to look to the *NSB* as their Bible, one wonders what impact Progressive Dispensationalists will have on them in the long run. It is significant that John F. Walvoord updated his *Armageddon, Oil and the Middle East Crisis* (1974, 1976) in 1990 at the time of the Gulf War without changing any of the traditional Dispensational views. The cover claims that over one million copies are in print. One wonders how many of these readers have been affected by Progressive Dispensationalism? This is why I have presented traditional Dispensational thinking in this article, as it still remains a formidable challenge despite the changes made by Progressive Dispensationalists.

123 *DIAC*, p. 379, cf. p. 15.

124 *DIAC*, p. 15.

125 *DIAC*, p. 33.

126 For example, *DIAC*, pp. 46-51, 224.

127 *DIAC*, pp. 253-254.

128 *DIAC*, p. 58.

129 *DIAC*, pp. 39-43.

130 *DIAC*, pp. 46-55.

131 *DIAC*, p. 91.

132 *DIAC*, pp. 93-97.

133 *DIAC*, pp. 303.

134 *DIAC*, p. 224.

135 In his response found in *DIAC*, p. 373.

136 *DIAC*, p. 385.

137 Progressive Dispensationalists believe that God's kingdom comes in three stages, inaugurated at Christ's first advent, the millennial phase to begin at Christ's second advent, and the third phase will be the eternal reign, *DIAC*, pp. 290-291. They believe in a "greater continuity between the Millennium and the eternal kingdom" (*DIAC*, p. 383) and that at His second advent Christ "will do all that the prophets of the Old Testament promised," (*DIAC*, p. 66). Hence they look for a Millennium with special significance for Israel. Concerning the land promise they ask, "If Christ reigns from *Israel* and has authority over the whole earth, does this not solve the question about the land promised to Israel?" (*DIAC*, p. 390).

138 In *DIAC* Old Testament passages of the eternal state are read into the Millennium (see p. 284), in a similar way to imposing Old Testament prophecies about Israel onto the Millennium (see p. 392).

139 See Joel Badina, "The Millennium," *Symposium on Revelation*, 2 vols., Frank B. Holbrook, ed. (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1992), 2:240, 241.

140 See also William H. Shea, "The Parallel Literary Structure of Revelation 12 and 20," *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, 23 (1985):37-54.



## JOHN THE BAPTIZER AND JESUS CHRIST: WHEN SYMBOL MEETS SUBSTANCE

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In his poetic piece, "Conversion," early this century, Andrew Young sets up a conversation between Nicodemus and one of the disciples of Jesus.

Nicodemus: 'Tell me one thing; why do you follow Jesus?'

The Disciple: 'It was because of John the Baptist first.'

Nicodemus: 'But why because of him?'

Disciple: 'One day when we were standing by the Jordan,  
John and. . . myself,  
We saw a man pass by, tall as a spirit;  
He did not see us though he passed quite near;  
Indeed we thought it strange;  
His eyes were open but he looked on nothing;  
And as he passed, John, pointing with his finger,  
Cried—I can hear him cry it now—  
'Behold, the Lamb of God!'

Nicodemus: 'And He, what did He say? What did He do?'

Disciple: 'Nothing; we watched Him slowly climb the hill;  
His shadow fell before Him; it was evening.  
Sometimes He stopped  
To raise His head to the home-flying rooks  
Or greet a countryman with plough on shoulders.'

Nicodemus: 'John said, 'Behold, the Lamb of God?''

Disciple: 'He said so.'

Nicodemus: 'And from that day you followed Him?'

Disciple: 'No, that was afterwards in Galilee.'

Nicodemus: 'But tell me why; why did you follow Him?'

Disciple: 'I think it was our feet that followed Him;

It was our **feet**; our **hearts** were too afraid . . ."<sup>1</sup>

Following the Lord by feet or by heart could very well depict ultimate choices facing the disciples of Christ in all ages. For example, to the degree that God is transcendent, "wholly other,"<sup>2</sup> and beyond time and space, our knowledge of God even when experiential often nourishes itself through inspired symbolism appealing to human senses and allowing a more eminent understanding of Deity. I am proposing that the utilitarian values of symbolism notwithstanding, the life of the believer often experiences inevitable tension between symbols and their intended signification because symbolic import may not always be inherent in the events or significations themselves.<sup>3</sup>

Consequently, given the relative convenience and ease of being grasped and understood and given their practical usefulness, symbols tend to assume primary prominence in the lives of believers and are not easily relinquished even in the face of having reached their "fulfillment" or met their essence. Such a predicament may be described as following God with "feet" rather than with "heart," i.e., clinging to empty symbols long after they have outlived their usefulness.

### Of Symbols, Types, and Representations

Any serious use of the term "symbol" in connection with theological reflection would do well to define boundaries and relationships. What is a symbol? How does symbol compare or contrast with type? Does John the Baptist qualify as symbol or type? And if either, what does he symbolize or typify? What implications are there for Seventh-day Adventist Christians nearing the twenty first century?

Simply stated for our present consideration, a *symbol*, on the one hand, is "something which stands for or represents something else. The two may have an inherent connection but are not literally equivalent."<sup>4</sup> It helps to understand further that a symbol "suggests meaning rather than stating it" and is "itself a literal object . . . to convey some lesson or truth."<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, a *type*

assumes more organic connection with its signification by being a "preordained representative relationship which certain persons, events, and institutions bear to corresponding persons, events, and institutions occurring at a later time in salvation history."<sup>6</sup> A basic assumption of typology declares that a pattern in the redemptive acts of God exists throughout salvation history and designates prefigurement as *type* and fulfillment as *antitype*. Furthermore, in summary, traditional understanding of typology comprehends "divinely ordained, detailed OT predictive prefigurations of Jesus Christ and Gospel realities brought about by Him."<sup>7</sup> Albeit that types and symbols have similarities, two important differences must be noted, namely; 1) *Type* usually resembles in one or several aspects the thing it prefigures while a *symbol* serves as a pointer without necessarily bearing outward similarities to that which it points (viz., bread and wine symbolizing the body and blood of Christ in Matthew 26:26-29 or the seven golden lampstands symbolizing the seven churches in Revelation 2:1); and 2) *Type* points forward in time while a *symbol* may precede, proceed simultaneously with, or succeed that which it symbolizes or represents. The symbol, however, partakes of that to which it points. The lion is a symbol of courage because it is courageous. The oak is a symbol of strength because it is strong, etc.

### John as Symbol

With the preceding definitions as backdrop, I am suggesting that John the Baptist be viewed as symbolic rather than typical of the mission and life of Seventh-day Adventists. Although he might be or most certainly is antitype to Elijah (Malachi 4:15; Luke 1:17; Matt 11:13, 14; 17:12, 13), nevertheless, John does not typify Christ though John's divine purpose blossoms and comes to fruition by preparing for and prefacing, without prefiguring, Jesus Christ. Similarly, the relationship between the Baptizer and Seventh-day Adventists eludes typology and rests more on emblemology—a symbolic juxtaposition whereby the call and work of the former analogizes the rise and work of the latter especially with reference to the Second Advent.

Quite consistent, I believe, is the thinking of Ellen White on this symbolic connection according to the following statements:

As a prophet, John was 'to . . . make ready a people prepared for the Lord.' In preparing the way for Christ's first advent, he was a *representative* of those who are to prepare a people for our Lord's second coming.<sup>8</sup>

In this age, just prior to the second coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven, such a work as that of John is to be done. God calls for men who will prepare a people to stand in the great day of the Lord. The message preceding the public ministry of Christ was: 'Repent, publicans and sinners; repent, Pharisees and Sadducees; repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' As a people who believe in Christ's soon appearing, we have a message to bear—'Prepare to meet thy God.' Amos 4:12. Our message must be as direct as was the message of John.<sup>9</sup>

Today, in the spirit and power of Elias and of John the Baptist, messengers of God's appointment are calling the attention of a judgment-bound world to the solemn events soon to take place in connection with the closing hours of probation and the appearance of Christ Jesus as King of kings and Lord of lords.<sup>10</sup>

Having John as representative and model of gospel service from the first century, A.D., should prompt us to study his life and labors for possible guidelines in witnessing to Jesus Christ during the waning hours of our nineteenth century when standards and lifestyles are being arraigned before the bar of relevance. What was the emphasis of the message of John? What methodology did he choose to convey that message? How did the standard of his behavior or lifestyle relate to his mission? What can we learn from John's moment of truth, his kind of "crisis theology" situation, his confluence of convictions when all that he preached seemed to have met with meaninglessness and disappointment and urged him to send and inquire of Jesus, "Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?" (Luke 7:20, NIV).

### John Meets Jesus (. . .the Second Time Around)

Dedicated to God as a Nazarite from birth (Luke 1:15), John lived a life subject to the vow of strict abstinence as did Samson (Judges 13:4-7) and Samuel (I Samuel 1:11). His dress sounded the note of ancient prophets (2 Kings 1:8), and his diet consisted of "locusts and wild honey" (Matt 3:4; Mark 1:6) and pure water from



the hills.<sup>11</sup> Wilderness dwelling would characterize his general lifestyle, and from this setting he preached repentance while emerging and standing tall as an effective reformer sent of God to "rebuke the excesses of his time."<sup>12</sup>

The belief that John may have been at one time connected with the Essenes, the Dead Sea Scroll (Qumran) sect, emanates from their both residing in the Judean desert and possessing other similarities. However, similarities notwithstanding, John's role was essentially prophetic, the Qumran sect's role esoteric.

The mission of John as "a voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord'," (Matt 3:3, NIV) reached its apex at the Jordan River when Jesus submitted to baptism at the hand of John and the approving voice from heaven was heard (Matt. 3:17). With the same outstretched hand subsequently pointing to the Messiah, John would cry, "Behold the Lamb of God" (John 1:29). What a beautiful blending of two lives in harmonious purposes and divine destinies!

Nevertheless, from this point on in their congruent mission of proclaiming the kingdom of God, John the Baptizer and Jesus the Christ appear to travel divergent paths toward identical goals. John, the way of sharp distinction through ruggedness, austerity, unceremonious speech, and social distance—all according to divine plan. Jesus, the way of clear distinctiveness through tact, counterpoise, authoritative speech, and friendliness.

Basic similarities prevail between them to be sure. Both were relatives and from the same biological family (Luke 1:26-45). Both preached repentance (Matt 3:1-2; 4:17). Both suffered for their faith and divine mission (Matt 14:1-12; 17:12; Mark 6:17-29).

Nevertheless, for all their inherent correspondence, John and Jesus are better known for *contrasts* in lifestyles which not a few observers prefer calling contradictions. At best, such contrasts assume veins of tension clearly noted in the Gospels. To begin with, John took the Nazirite vow, but Jesus did not. The disciples of John were known to fast and pray often while those of Jesus were described as eating and drinking (Luke 5:3). The ministerial district of John centered in the Judean desert (Matt 3:1) while that of Christ embraced also cities and towns (Matt 9:35; Luke 13:22). The diet of John restricted itself to "locusts and wild honey" (Mark 1:6) al-

though food eaten and/or provided by Jesus included corn or grain, fish, bread and wine (Matt 12:1; Luke 24:42; John 21:13; 2:1-10). John dressed in ultra conservative "clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist" (Mark 1:6, NIV) while Jesus wore normal garb of the day (Matt 9:20-21; John 19:23). The lifestyle of John generally appeared not very sociable when at the same time Jesus can easily be characterized as winsome if not gregarious (Matt 11:16-19; Mark 10:13-16; Luke 10:38; 19:5-7; John 12:2).

I am submitting that John's most critical moment of *truth* came when, languishing in Herod's dungeon, he had solitary moments of reflection about his work of fearlessly reproofing iniquity and rebuking sin, and he expected Jesus the Messiah to cast down the oppressor, deliver the oppressed, and usher in the Kingdom. Without a doubt, John fulfilled quite well the purpose for which he was called and born, the part he was to play in that first century drama of salvation. His was the rare privilege of announcing, personally introducing and baptizing the promised Messiah, and preaching the need for repentance in preparation for the messianic Kingdom. Most assuredly, as Ellen White summarizes: "The prophet John was the connecting link between the two dispensations. As God's representative, he stood forth to show the relation of the law and prophets to the Christian dispensation. He was the *lesser* light, which was to be followed by a *greater*. The mind of John was illuminated by the Holy Spirit, that he might shed light upon his people; but *no other light* ever has shone or ever *will shine so clearly* upon fallen man as that which emanated from the *teaching and example of Jesus Christ* and His mission had been but dimly understood as typified in the shadowy sacrifices. Even John had not fully comprehended the future, immortal life through the Savior."<sup>13</sup>

So now, in Herod's prison alone with his own thoughts, John meets Jesus for the second time. Their first meeting took place a year earlier on the banks of the Jordan with the mission of the Messiah in prospect. Now much of that mission in the lifetime of the Baptizer is retrospect, allowing him to contrast his purpose and preaching with the unexpected observable outcomes apparent in the life and ministry of Jesus. Can this Jesus of Nazareth, who does not entirely fulfill John's messianic expectations, really be the

Messiah? In answer to this inquiry put to Jesus by way of John's disciples, Jesus had only responded: "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: how the blind recover their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are made clean, the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life, the poor are hearing the good news—and happy is the man who does not find me a stumbling-block" (Luke 7:22-23, NEB). Having received this answer from Christ, an answer denoting "evidence of His divinity. . . in its adaptation to the needs of suffering humanity" as also "His glory. . . in His condescension to our low estate," to John "it was enough."<sup>14</sup> His view of the true meaning of the Kingdom rights itself, and his questionings melt into the higher purposes of God. In this sense, John meets Jesus the *second* time around—through this last word of Jesus he has an experience of personal disclosure, of coming through a maze, a "wilderness" of honest misconceptions and emerging victorious as one who finally sees the more complete truth as it is in Jesus Christ the Lord.

What can we learn today from the John the Baptizer experience? As symbol or representative of Seventh-day Adventists especially in relation to "preparing a people for our Lord's second coming,"<sup>15</sup> John's overall ministry is undoubtedly a worthy model. A closer look, however, at how he practiced certain lifestyle *standards* in the context of his mission of heralding the Christ brings us to an awareness of how standards are sometimes more relative than absolute and more symbolic than substantive.

*Standards* find their purpose in relationship to *principles*. While principles are "universal rules, usually given in the abstract, such as courtesy, obedience, love, equality," standards are "specific applications of these principles."<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, principles know no cultural or time boundaries though standards generally vary from culture to culture. Honoring the principles of modesty and temperance, for example, John was led of God to dress in camel hair with a leather belt and subsist on locust and wild honey—symbolic applications utilitarian for a local purpose. That John's symbols were not the *norm* for all persons becomes clear if only you compare him to Christ, his contemporary, who honored identical principles but with a different dress and diet. Yet both John and Jesus

promoted the same spiritual Kingdom. The pattern is set, and we learn particularly two lessons from the John-Jesus portraiture.

First, a given standard at a precise time in history might take on a feature dissimilar to that found in the known lifestyle of Jesus Christ Himself. The prime challenge facing such a standard, as also all standards, nonetheless, is to validate its qualification as the will of God. Even with Christ as the ideal and norm, God might countenance a standard which proceeds along a course differently, in the literal sense, from that which one might normally have visualized for Christ Himself. In the mind of the practitioner or observer of such a standard, a kind of crisis tension understandably surfaces.

Secondly, whatever construct a standard may take in a given generation or culture, be that standard ever so commendable and pragmatic, any tension real or imaginary between that standard and known facts from the life and teachings of Christ must ultimately surrender to Him who is "the way, the truth, and life" (John 14:6).

Inevitably, the reality of the human condition thrusts believers into the fray of having to re-interpret standards following years of attachment. By then, lines of distinction between standards and principles have blurred, and standards themselves are mistaken for principles. Facing pressures to reassess or change, in their critical moment of desperation, the axiomatic moment of an immovable object colliding with an irresistible force, not a few believers cry out like John and his disciples, "Art thou he who should come or should we look for another?" With us as with John, the solution must find its roots in a clearer vision and understanding of the real mission of Christ to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10; Luke 22-23; Isaiah 61:1-2); and then our part in the picture comes more into focus. Like the proverbial "all roads lead to Rome," all religious aspirations, standards and lifestyles must point a clear path to the Savior and His salvific mission or they eventually sink to the level of vacuous traditions—nothing more. The symbols must partake of that to which they point or they are indeed pointless. Advises our prophetess:

Let those who talk of principle as if they would not on any account depart from it be sure that they understand the principles laid down in the Word of God for our guidance. There are some who follow false



principles. Their idea of principle is misleading. Following right principle means the faithful doing of the first four and the last six commandments. In obedience to these divine commands, we eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ, appropriating all that is embraced in the atonement made on Calvary. Christ will stand by the side of all who receive Him as their Saviour. To them He will give power to become the sons of God.<sup>17</sup>

John as symbol met Jesus the Substance, and that which threatened disaster or impediment resulted in the prophet's attaining fuller knowledge of his God and his place in God's scheme of things. So for the latter day heralds of a coming King, standards and policies can be a way of reflecting our journey with God. Following them, however, in disjunction from God is to follow Jesus Christ with our *feet* rather than with our *hearts*.

#### Endnotes

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## LIVING WITH MORAL ISSUES

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Melanie works at a very prestigious firm and holds a highly responsible, respectable position, and has been recognized several times with honors and awards. Her integrity and faithfulness to Christian principles earned her a good name at all levels, from the CEO to the last worker in the enterprise.

Lately she has noticed her immediate supervisor cheating on investment funds, making a lot of money at the expense of the company and the shareholders. What should she do? Blow the whistle? But how? How do you blow the whistle in a loving and redemptive way? If she remains quiet she will not discharge her responsibility, and besides, she will feel like a cheat herself. If she does speak up she will lose many friends, perhaps even her job, and potentially hurt her career, her marriage, and her family.

Melanie is faced with a moral issue. But how do we know that? When is an issue a moral issue? What Melanie's colleague is doing may not be illegal, and no one would find out if she cooperates. But her conscience is uneasy. In order to handle her situation with love, firmness and adroitness, she needs to be clear on two points.

1. She must be able to discern the moral aspects of this complex situation from the legal or the morally neutral ones. This distinction is essential for devising the right strategy and priorities for her action.

2. Furthermore, she must prepare herself for the consequences of action she takes. There is always an element of unknown when we deal with consequences, and the fear of the unknown affects the strategy and priorities of action. Yet, what can be known about

consequences might be liberating and inspiring. Doing the right thing is often an act of faith.

These two points come repeatedly to the front when moral decisions are made, and it is our intent here to elaborate on them. In the first part of this essay we define a moral issue, and in the second part we discuss how to manage a moral issue.

### Defining a Moral Issue

**What is a Moral Issue?** A moral issue can be defined as a problem, dilemma or a condition resulting from a direct threat to the three fundamental constituents of the moral structure of life: human nature, human moral values, and human rights. This means that whenever an action, attitude, or a word attacks human dignity, limits religious experience, violates the free exercise of conscience and self-determination, and impairs reasoning powers, then such an action, attitude or word is morally reprehensible. This is so because such factors as human dignity, religiosity, conscience, freedom and reason are the essential attributes of human beings and an assault on them threatens the human quality of both the attacker and the victim. The sense of "belonging together," or the sense of identity, which depends on the affirmation of others, is diminished.<sup>1</sup> That is what de-humanization is. That is when the image of God is altered. That is what immorality is, and that is when an issue becomes a moral issue.

Another avenue for entering the moral realm of human existence is through human values. The Bible indicates that God endowed His creation with good things (values) such as beauty, good food (Gen 2:9), fertility and order (Gen 1:21, 22). However, human beings received special treatment. Their unique capacities required a more favorable context than plants and animals. In order to reach their full potential, humans needed specifically human values, such as companionship and caring (Gen 2:18), loyalty, security and intimacy (Gen 2:23, 24), freedom, peace and integrity (Gen 2:15-17). The access to these values was free and unrestricted. God remained the owner of everything and humans became the beneficiaries.

However, when an action, attitude or word restricts the free access to, and enjoyment of, human values, thus jeopardizing this essential human need such conduct is immoral and we are faced

with a moral issue. For example, no good and loving person should willfully behave in a deceitful way, because the frame of reference is falsified, and human relations become impossible. When Mr. Cheat embezzles money, he appropriates what belongs to Melanie and other investors. She does not have equally free access to her values and her trust in, and relationship with, Mr. Cheat and the company are under attack. Suddenly, nothing stands firm anymore, and any future moves become unpredictable and uncertain. Humans cannot grow nor be creative under the tyranny of lies and deceit.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, God bound Himself to human life and through His infinite love became involved in the moral context. He knew that the unique attributes and precious human values could not be left in the open, vulnerable to the whims, weaknesses, and basic selfishness of the sinful human heart. He decided to protect both human attributes and human values with His authority. One by one, His "thou shalt not" commands rise as a shelter for the human family, life, marriage, property, integrity and neighborliness (Exod 20:12-17). We call this decree of protection the moral law. Unambiguously, His imperative stands as a norm for human behavior, decreeing that we have the right to full humanness and to unrestricted access to essential, human values. Whoever tampers with these rights will have to deal with Him (Gen 9:5-7).<sup>2</sup>

Thus human nature and values were enshrined in the human moral rights. Therefore, an issue becomes a moral issue whenever an action, attitude or word transgresses these rights. One's responsibility then is not only to fellow human beings but, via human rights, to God as well.

In summary then, healthy and fulfilling human conduct affirms the basic human dimensions of life. Such an existence consists of free participation in the bounties of God-given human values, respecting and safeguarding all human rights under God.

Melanie is, therefore, definitely faced with a moral issue. Her values and rights are being infringed upon, and her actions could contribute to the restoration of moral credibility and a healthy frame of reference within her company.

**The Dynamic Nature of Moral Issues.** Melanie is much



closer now to deciding what to do. She knows that Mr. Cheat is being morally unfair. This moral dimension makes things even more urgent, and further inactivity is not neutral. Even in the everyday routine flow of situations, where quick choices and evaluations are required, no decision is insignificant. All choices, even the choice not to decide, are consequential: whatever one sows one will reap (Gal 6:7-10). Just like the slight and almost imperceptible movements of the steering wheel, these moral decisions orient the course of our lives.

Melanie finds herself faced with a choice that is very difficult. Only by intense searching to know God's will, and with rigorous deliberation, can she come to some hopeful plan of action. She is faced with the realization that moral issues are dynamic situations—unresolved, undecided, such issues can become more complex and often harder to resolve. For the sake of clarity we propose three levels of moral issues in ascending order: moral problems, moral dilemmas and moral conditions.

**Moral problems.** At the onset, Melanie's situation can be called a *moral problem*. She cannot maneuver out of her predicament and stand firm on her moral allegiance. Her commitment to business above board provides her with an internally firm basis and with a general orientation, on the basis of which to make her decision. Whatever she does and however she acts, she knows that the cheating needs to stop. She would rather not lose friends, or lose her job and her security. She would rather Mr. Cheat responded to her hints indicating very clearly that she knows what is going on. But, because no change is evidenced, she acts.

Upon consultation with her family and after carefully weighing the alternatives, she requests an early auditing of certain accounts at a meeting of the executive board of the company. Once this is done, she feels relieved. She carefully watches the events which follow. Her concern is about Mr. Cheat, his career, his family and his future. True, her own future is at stake as well, but she is willing to take the risk. Thus the problem is solved at least as far as Melanie is concerned.

**Moral Dilemmas.** The situation could become much more difficult for Melanie. A *moral dilemma* would occur if Melanie values her job security, or the position she has, so much that her

professional concerns compete with her responsibilities for moral integrity within her firm. The way out is either to choose the risk of losing her job and maintain her own integrity and the reputation of her company, or to remain quiet and secure but guilty of cooperation with evil. Compromise, in the sense of having it both ways, cannot work in the context of a real moral dilemma.

Melanie's situation does not illustrate a dilemma created by the conflict between two absolute norms. For example, if someone lied about hiding Muslims from persecutors in order to save their lives, the norm of truth-telling appears to conflict with the norm of life-preserving.<sup>3</sup> Possible responses are:

1. Because there are no absolute norms (relativist) and, therefore, no dilemmas, any action is possibly good.
2. Do whatever love dictates in the situation (situationalist), no dilemmas, action clearly determined by love.
3. Saving life is a higher norm than truth-telling (hierarchicalist), no dilemmas, thus life saving action is required.
4. Do what your Christian intuition urges you to do (*prima facie*), no dilemmas.
5. Refuse to lie no matter what consequences follow. This is the best alternative. But how should one relate to such a dilemma?

Instead of giving concrete answers to hypothetical situations, it is more prudent to articulate principles which can inform the course of action while remaining faithful to the principles of integrity.

a. The ninth commandment does not require us to answer whenever and whoever asks us about what we know.

b. Not everybody is entitled to know, nor worthy of knowing, all the truth we know.

c. The decision of what to do must be agreed upon before the confrontation, so that all parties know what is at risk. In other words, Muslims must know that their protectors will not lie, but rather be silent.

d. For special and exceptionally hard situations, God's intervention must not be ruled out. He must be given the opportunity to intervene.

e. Instead of planning to transgress any norm for whatever

reason, it is more consistent with Christian principles to face the dilemma with a bias against compromise. After all, the ninth commandment is clear and unambiguous.

f. Such dilemmas are extremely rare and exceptional, and exceptions cannot be codified without altering their exceptional status.<sup>4</sup>

g. Even benevolent lying is addictive, corrodes the character of the liar, and breaks the trust which a community needs for survival.

A brief excursus is in order here. In some Christian circles the existence of moral dilemmas is challenged. If God is a coherent and logically consistent being, it is claimed, the moral life which He requires must be possible. If His demands were to contradict each other, it would cast a shadow on God and open the floodgates of relativism and anarchy. No coherent, moral life would be possible. For that reason, God has built into His norms a safety mechanism preventing His norms ever from conflicting, so that in actuality, we are never faced with a real dilemma. We might be ignorant or unwilling to be made wise, but there is actually no situation where two norms must clash. There is no issue where we are forced into sin in order to find a way out.

This is an attractive approach. It affirms, as we all should, God's loving and consistent law of love. A moral framework must be consistent if it is to work. Obedience to it must not lead us to sin. It did not lead Jesus to sin. Try as they would, His contemporaries could not corner Him nor lead Him into an activity that would result in a dilemma. Even the experience in the garden of Gethsemane does not illustrate an impasse resulting in disobedience to God's will.

This one life alone is sufficient proof that obedience to God's will does not necessitate sin. The point is well made. But I do not know of too many lives like this. In ignorance, in carelessness, in stubbornness, a word or an action may result later in consequences which could create a conflict of norms—not because norms are conflicting in nature, however, nor because God's law is imperfect.

I can think of at least two causes for moral dilemmas.

1. Our moral insufficiency. Our sinfulness, our lack of faith,

the absence of courage and our limitations blur the vision and weaken commitment. In such conditions *we* see dilemma, *we* perceive a conflict of norms. Rightly or wrongly, they appear real to us and spur us to action. This is how I understand Abrahams behavior with Pharaoh (Gen 12:10-20) and Abimelech (Gen chapter 20). The real cause for moral dilemmas stems from within the person.

2. The consequential nature of moral decisions and actions. Is it possible to make several wrong decisions which later in time produce conflicting consequences? Polygamous marriage is based on honest promises to at least two wives. When confronted with the gospel the family is faced with a dilemma; which promise to keep? The courage and commitment of many Christian families who take their stand for monogamy is to be admired. Yet, no one can deny the heart wrenching dilemma with which such families must struggle.

Moral problems and moral dilemmas require a resolution, a decision. Inaction in this context produces consequences which may create a new form of moral issues: moral conditions.

**Moral Conditions.** The word "condition," as used here, is borrowed from medical terminology and indicates the existence of a disturbing state of affairs with no immediate solution. The difficulty is often generated by decisions or activities in the past, whose consequences must be faced later.

Let's suppose that Mr. Cheat admits to Melanie that his scheme is not the "cleanest," but that now very little can be done. Several lower echelon employees are involved, and they do not know the extent and outcome of the scheme. But Melanie knows that they will be the scapegoats and that Mr. Cheat will not hesitate to sacrifice them if the scheme miscarries. Melanie is blocked. As soon as other innocent people are threatened, she cannot take unilateral decision. Without the willing and free consent of all concerned to take the risk, Melanie must postpone her plans. Postpone but not abandon. At one moment, however, after a proper warning of all implicated, Melanie will have to blow the whistle. The issue will remain unresolved for now and she must learn to live with it. This is a moral condition. Unwanted pregnancy, adultery, divorce, murder, etc., often create such conditions.

Problematic pregnancy, for example, is not a problem which simply needs a solution. A nine-year old mother is also still a child.



There are really no solutions to such a tragedy, and abortion is certainly not one of them. Nothing can undo the motherhood of such a child. Abortion only removes the fetus, and that only from the mother's body, not her psyche as well. Her identity has changed forever. Therefore, problematic pregnancy is a condition which must be creatively managed.

### Managing Moral Issues

Just as responsible dealing with moral problems and moral dilemmas involves solving them, so also a responsible handling of a moral issue means managing it. Originally, the word "to manage" came from the context of training horses, so as to make them perform the exercises of *manège*. The trainer of the horse gains control over all its movements. Therefore, to "manage" a condition means to develop skills necessary for performing a difficult task, for taking charge of the situation. But even that involves at least two problems.

**The Issue May Never Be Solved.** The first step in managing a moral issue is to look at the situation squarely and admit that the issue may never be solved. For Melanie it means to pass by Mr. Cheat's office everyday, to smile, to receive assignments from him, and to uphold him in the esteem of subordinate employees. It also means that Mr. Cheat may try to discredit her, to get rid of her any way he can because she is a thorn in the flesh. As are all Christians with strong principles. Her subordinates may, as a result, become suspicious of her, with their loyalties gravitating to higher superiors.

The pressure can become so strong that one wonders: "Am I normal? Do I exaggerate? Is there something wrong with me when I insist on standing for principle? Why does no one else do it?" In fact, one might also be surprised to know how many are still standing for the right and refusing to become accustomed to what is wrong. Elijah certainly did not know of the seven thousand committed and faithful friends.

**The Feeling of Guilt.** A more difficult problem comes from the feeling of guilt. What if I am not standing for the right? What if in fact my action is all wrong? What if I should have known better, or did know better and still acted foolishly? When other's look down

on me, become suspicious of me, and mistreat me, but I know I am standing for the right, that's much easier. When, however, what my critics and enemies say about me is right and true, what then?

The feeling of guilt is a healthy and healing reaction to wrongdoing. It expresses negative feelings towards the misbehavior, motivating the person to take the necessary precautions to prevent its reoccurrence. It seeks to heal the breach of trust. When I hurt you, only you hurt, I do not. I may enjoy the feeling of having the advantage over you. But, when I feel bad in repentance, I hurt too. We both feel the same—we feel the right way about the wrong action. Now we are on the same wave-length and we can build the bridge and communicate.

Not all guilt is beneficial however. Sometimes guilt becomes an overbearing tyrant, creating an unhealthy feeling of worthlessness. Whether the exaggeration goes towards inferiority or superiority, the reaction becomes an obstacle to managing the issue. The post-abortion syndrome, for example, often creates the feeling of inferiority, and a new pregnancy may just be another effort to regain some attention and feeling of worth. Thus, instead of managing the issue at hand, the person creates a new problem and new dilemmas. On the positive side of managing moral issues are forgiveness and the Church as a community of faith.

**Forgiveness.** We are not alone, however. Guilty or not, God is the ever present help in trouble. Right through the ordeal and until the time we face the nagging, oppressive state caused by a moral issue, God is the ever present help. He does not visit us only when we are nicely dressed and well-behaved. He does not claim us only when He can be proud of us.

A relationship with God becomes crucial here. If friendship with Him is our most important relationship, then managing a moral issue becomes a much easier task. If we go astray and hurt people, we hurt God, to whom all people belong. But when we seek forgiveness in repentance, God is the very first person who releases us from guilt. From that moment onwards, the business of rebuilding one's life with humans—who are much slower at forgiving—has a firm foundation in our peace with Him; that is, peace with the one who is the most important person in our life.

**The Church as a Community of Faith.** Our lives are

nestled within the community of faith. Communities are made up of people. Some of them are managing, or at least trying their best. Others have gained victory. Some, however, are in the middle of trials, decisions and choices. Seen from the angle of moral engagements, the church is a busy place, and its chief function is to rebuild bruised and shattered lives. It is called to serve in the ministry of forgiveness, assisting those who face moral issues and must manage moral conditions.

If Melanie does lose her job, and if a nine-year old girl must have an abortion, both of their conditions will be managed more easily within the church. First of all, the church will communicate forgiveness and acceptance. Melanie needs that. Her professional world has collapsed. The young mother needs it even more acutely. Melanie should not get all the support only because she is suffering for being faithful, and her condition is clean and honorable. However, acceptance does not mean compromise, nor does support imply encouraging sin.

The young girl, whose condition is much less attractive, and whose healing process will take much longer, needs more than acceptance. She needs a caring environment, in a context away from temptations—a home, a spiritual home where we keep our shames and our honors, and love each other anyway.

### Conclusion

Because we are moral beings, and because we live in the fallen sinful world we must live with moral issues, confronting situations which demand solutions. They are not always nice, friendly situations. Nor are they neutral, so that we can safely overlook them. Instead, they demand an answer, perhaps even require engagement in a struggle; they are intersections on the road, where making a choice and a decision is inevitable. They touch our essential human being, our basic human needs and rights. Which means they are moral in nature. Their solution will depend greatly on our understanding of them, recognizing those issues which cannot be solved without serious consequences, or those that might remain a part of our cross. Such burdens can become manageable when we deal with our self-image and guilt, and when we accept and offer forgiveness.

Christians are not exempt from such burden-bearing. "If any

man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Matt 16:24). Christ's call to discipleship is a call to responsibility with the moral issues of life. But it also is a call to "Take my yoke upon you. . . for my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matt 11:28-30).

### Endnotes

1 M. Heidegger, *Identity and Dependence*. (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), pp. 38, 39.

2 This is why one cannot reject a normative approach to ethics and at the same time lay claim to human rights. This is the Christian and biblical rationale for the existence of moral norms, and at the same time a motivating factor for Christian obedience.

3 See for example S. Bok, *Lying*. (New York: Vintage, 1979). Also L. B. Smedes, *Mere Morality*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), p. 211-238.

4 M. M. Kis, "Moral Rules and Exceptions," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 30/1 (1992)15-33.



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## THINKING ABOUT THINKING: AN ASSESSMENT OF CERTAIN PRESUPPOSITIONS UNDERLY- ING SOME ADVENTIST LIFE- STYLE ISSUES

By Ron du Preez

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You have probably heard some of these slogans or statements: "Don't drink and drive!" "Practice safe sex—use condoms!" "Abort defective fetuses!" "Must polygamists divorce?" "Competition is a fact of life." "A woman has the right to control her own body." "We live in a fallen, sinful world." "Sometimes you have to choose between two evils."

Besides being aware of these concepts, we are certainly conscious of the concomitant implications for lifestyle issues that these ideas suggest. Now, before getting into a consideration of some of these concepts, mention should be made of the fact that the last time some of the thinking patterns undergirding certain lifestyle issues were assessed, the ideas proposed were roundly attacked as being out of touch with the times,<sup>1</sup> asleep to the facts of reality,<sup>2</sup> completely irrelevant, abominably callous, pious, rigid, and condemnatory.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps Harry Blamires was correct when he noted:

The thinker challenges current prejudices. He disturbs the complacent. He obstructs the busy pragmatists. He questions the very foundations of all about him, and in so doing throws doubt upon the aims, motives, and purposes which those who are running affairs have neither time nor patience to investigate. The thinker is a nuisance. He is a luxury that modern society cannot afford. It will therefore

naturally, and on its own terms justifiably, strive to keep him quiet, to restrict his influence, to ignore him. It will try to pretend that he does not exist.

Since the lot of the thinker in the secular world is so unattractive and frustrating, it is not surprising that we lack thinkers. But the Church cannot do without thinkers.<sup>4</sup>

### The Indispensability of "Right Thinking"

The wise man Solomon indicates that thinking clearly influences action: "For as he thinks within himself, so is he" (Prov 23:7).<sup>5</sup> In *The Making of a Christian Mind*, theologian and ethicist Arthur Holmes concurs by stating that "what we think and what we value guide what we do."<sup>6</sup> Christian psychologist Gary Collins agrees, saying: "In large measure, how we think with our minds determines how we live."<sup>7</sup> If, as Ellen White indicates, "right thinking lies at the foundation of right action,"<sup>8</sup> it would be instructive to intentionally and intensively analyze the thinking that appears to undergird some of the current views on behavioral standards by Adventists. In addition to this evaluation, alternative approaches will be proposed for consideration.

### Culturally-Conditioned Versus Biblically-Based Thinking

Any serious evaluation of current concerns in some Adventist lifestyle issues must of necessity take into account the views published and expressed by various persons or entities. Since these views are in the public domain and are intended for consumption or consideration, certain concepts and basic presuppositions of these views will need to be carefully analyzed. This assessment, however, is not to be misconstrued as either an attack on the various writers and thinkers whose views will be cited, or as an assault on those responsible for publishing them. On the contrary, what will be assessed here is the "thinking" and not the "thinker."

In Colossians 2:8 (NIV) Paul cautions: "See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ." Is it possible that, instead of depending on a fully Christ-centered philosophy, a certain amount of "deceptive philosophy" has been unwittingly filtering into the very manner in

which some lifestyle issues are now being considered? If this may be the case, then what possible viable alternatives could be considered as sound and biblically valid bases on which to construct one's thinking? Though not necessarily exhaustive, the following modes of thinking will serve to illustrate this concern.

#### Atomistic/Fragmented Thinking

What triggered the production of this paper was a remark once overheard in a conversation among students. One of them said to his friends: "You know, what we should do is discuss the handing out of condoms at the local high school." Apparently, the hallway discussion had been on AIDS prevention and how to combat the problem.

When one thinks about this statement it becomes evident that, whether the student was aware of it or not, certain basic presuppositions undergirded his suggestion, if it was meant to support such action. Is it possible that this comment was based on a fragmented view of humanity—on a perspective that suggests that problems can be addressed in isolation from other elements, and that so-called "solutions" can be arrived at irrespective of other factors?

Consider another example of this type of thinking: For those young people who choose to indulge in premarital sexual relationships, one Adventist family specialist suggests "double protection." She counsels:

If you insist on indulging in sex before marriage, please use birth control measures!

And this means that *both of you should use something*. Unmarried sex calls for *double protection*. Male contraception should consist of condoms. Female contraception may include vaginal jellies or foams, or a physician might recommend an IUD, a diaphragm, or the Pill. (Do not try to obtain or use these last three items without medical supervision.) The Pill is the most effective method of birth control (outside of abstinence), but still one to five users in every thousand get pregnant. You could be one of those. So please avoid pregnancy at all costs. Double protect yourselves.<sup>9</sup>

Does this so-called "solution" likewise adopt an atomistic way of thinking? As noted in the above statement, the primary concern

of the advice given was to "avoid pregnancy at all costs." And, in emphasizing this concern to the point where "double protection" was advised, this proposal suggests that premarital relations can be indulged in without any undesired results. Is it possible that this kind of thinking is actually affecting current sexual practices among Adventists, young and old alike? Does this theory, which says that as long as there are no "visible, physical results," subtly influence people to indulge in forbidden sexual activities?

Now it must be admitted, that it is true that there might not be any "physical" evidence of premarital sex if one uses "double protection." However, the type of thinking used in these two illustrations ignores the fact that people are wholistic creatures—that they are integrated beings. This is the clear teaching of Scripture.<sup>10</sup> As G. C. Berkouwer confirms: "The Biblical view of man shows him to us in an impressive diversity, but. . . it never loses sight of the unity of the whole man."<sup>11</sup> Moreover, both medical and social sciences have confirmed that there is an integral relationship between mind and body.<sup>12</sup> In other words, each human being is an indivisible unity in which all parts "function in close cooperation, revealing an intensely sympathetic relationship between a person's spiritual, mental, and physical faculties."<sup>13</sup> Also, since human beings are made in the image of God, they are to reflect that image in all that they do, including the compassionately given biblical mandate of abstinence from sexual relations outside of marriage. This wholistic, integrated approach will bring glory to the Creator, and result in the elevation of the Adventist belief and practice concerning sexual relationships, and other lifestyle issues.

#### Empirical/Pragmatic Thinking

Several years ago a Kinsey Institute study of homosexuals in the San Francisco Bay area concluded that gays involved in reciprocal, permanent, and sexually exclusive relationships tended to be the happiest, healthiest, and most successfully adjusted people of the entire group being analyzed. Based on this empirical evidence, an Adventist ethicist concluded: "Christians therefore have every reason to encourage homosexuals who are honestly convinced that they should neither attempt to function heterosexually nor remain celibate to form Closed-Coupled homosexual unions."<sup>14</sup> Notice that



the reason given for this suggestion is the evidence from the study done on homosexuals themselves. In other words, this ethicist proposes that the practice of some persons be based on the conclusions of an empirical study.

A similar kind of reasoning may be apparent in a letter published in the *Lake Union Herald* in 1985. In this letter, the writer discussed the reasons for his change of mind concerning abortion—from an absolute anti-abortion position to a more “pro-choice” stand. One of the major factors that resulted in this changed perspective was the evidence from a 12-year study done by the author of the article, of pregnant unmarried Seventh-day Adventist women, aged 15-20. His findings showed that the women who had had an abortion were much more likely to finish their schooling, and to complete it at an Adventist academy; to form a lasting marriage; and to remain a member of the SDA church. The writer stated: “The thing that has influenced my change more than anything else has not been theoretical arguments, but experience. Too many women and children have been crippled or destroyed because of an unwanted birth.”<sup>15</sup>

It will be noticed that on this issue of abortion, as well as the above question of homosexuality, the primary basis on which thinking was based was the evidence from empirical studies. Furthermore, reasoning from a pragmatic point of view, these writers were able to draw the conclusions to which they came. Is it possible that this type of thinking has nudged some members to become more pro-abortion and more open to accepting the practice of homosexuality?

While it is obvious that Christians need to be warm and accepting of all people, this does not mean that certain practices should be condoned and tolerated merely because empirical/pragmatic thinking suggests that this is the “best” way to go. Irrespective of so-called “statistical” or “scientific” studies, one should reflect whether one could afford to base any thinking or action upon these concepts. On the contrary, the position taken on these and other lifestyle concerns must be based on the Bible itself.

#### Situational/Teleological Thinking

Over a decade ago an article appeared on the question of

truthtelling. The author maintained that, according to the Bible, it is wrong to tell lies. However, the writer went on to state there are situations in life when it is fully justifiable to tell a lie. It all depended on the situation.<sup>16</sup> In other words, a lie is sometimes wrong, sometimes right. As Norman Geisler put it: A lie is “morally wrong—unless, of course, one is obeying a higher moral law in so doing.”<sup>17</sup> And, how does one determine in which situation it is right to lie, and when it is wrong to lie? Well, that depends primarily, if not solely, on the projected consequences. In this discussion this is called “situational/teleological” thinking.

This type of thinking can be recognized in the deliberations in the Seventh-day Adventist community concerning what to do with practicing polygamists who wish to join the church. Should the polygamist be required to set aside all of his additional “wives” prior to being baptized, or should he and his family be accepted into full and regular church membership just as they are? Several documents have been produced on this issue.<sup>18</sup>

A careful investigation of the position advocating baptism for the entire polygamous family indicates that a great concern exists for the welfare of the family. These authors point out that if the polygamist were required to become monogamous prior to baptism, this would work an incredible hardship on the members of his family who are being set aside—the “wives” would be without the care and protection of a husband; the children would be fatherless; and, in order to make a living, many of these women would probably become prostitutes. Therefore, it is suggested, that in order to avoid the projected trauma for the family, and so as to avert the problem of these women going into prostitution, it would be best to baptize them while permitting them to continue their practice of polygamy.

Now it must be admitted that all of these writers firmly believe that monogamy is God’s ideal for marriage. They also maintain that, if people are already SDA Christians, they may not become polygamous. Their dominant concern is the projected consequences. Therefore, they feel that, in this situation, it would be proper to baptize practicing polygamists.

While it is not possible to enter into a protracted examination of the biblical view of polygamy<sup>19</sup> in this paper, the important issue to note here is the manner in which the decision to baptize the

polygamists is arrived at: essentially by means of "situational/teleological" thinking. Is it possible that this type of thinking may soon begin to undermine certain aspects of the Adventist perspective and position on the whole issue of marriage?

Another issue may confront Adventists. For example, what is the church to do when a gay couple, who have children by adoption, show an interest in joining the church? If, like the polygamists, they had gotten into this "less than ideal" marital union ignorant of the biblical view of marriage, should they be baptized as practicing homosexuals, so as to avoid the trauma of breaking up the family, or in order to prevent the discarded "spouse" from entering a life of crime and misery?

Clearly, for the Christian, the entire approach to such problems must be solidly based upon the mandates of the Word of God, rather than upon the so-called uniqueness of the situation or the projected results of one's actions. And, once these principles have been adequately determined, they should be compassionately and consistently applied in culturally-sensitive and locally-appropriate ways. Instead of depending on the altering opinions of people, and the changing customs of society, Adventists need to base their positions squarely on the Scriptures, since this alone will provide the universal moral norms by which their lives should be guided.

But what about those projected consequences? Erwin Lutzer put it well, when he stated: "We want to be like the most High, subject to none. But can we calculate the eternal results or the rightness of our actions? We cannot predict even the next five minutes, much less the future."<sup>20</sup> Discussing the issue of how results relate to decision-making Ellen White consistently held the following position: "True Christian principle will not stop to weigh consequences."<sup>21</sup> In further detail she stated: "In deciding upon any course of action, we are not to ask whether we can see that harm will result from it, but whether it is in keeping with the will of God."<sup>22</sup> "Christ's ambassadors have nothing to do with consequences. They must perform their duty and leave results with God."<sup>23</sup> In other words, "we should choose the right because it is right, and leave consequences with God."<sup>24</sup>

Admittedly, this type of thinking runs counter to a culturally-

conditioned, results-oriented, rationalistic mind. The statements by Ellen White seem almost to suggest a kind of "blind faith." But this is not so! On the contrary, this is a clarion call for a complete commitment to the Creator of the universe. As those three Hebrew men attested when speaking to Nebuchadnezzar: "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king" (Dan 3:17). Then they added: "But even if He does not, . . . we are not going to serve your gods" (Dan 3:18).<sup>25</sup> These were men whose thinking and action were based on divinely-given universal principles. They acted out of love for God, regardless of the consequences.

Chuck Colson is correct when he asserts in his book *Loving God*: "What God wants from His people is obedience, no matter what the circumstances, no matter how unknown the outcome."<sup>26</sup> As Ellen White put it: "We should look to the revealed will of God, and walk according to His definite commandment, no matter what circumstances may surround us. God will take care of the results."<sup>27</sup> This is the type of right thinking that will enable us to correctly address critical issues such as polygamy and homosexuality, as well as other lifestyle concerns in the Adventist church.

### Moral Dilemma/Sinful World Thinking

So often one hears the term "moral dilemma" being used. While this term can obviously be understood in a variety of ways, this concept will be used in its narrower meaning here: that is, as occasions where one is forced to choose between two morally evil options. Or, as Christian anthropologist and missionary Walter Trobisch put it: "Situations in life where we have the choice between two sins."<sup>28</sup> Theologian John Warwick Montgomery stated it more bluntly: "The individual is often at the point of violating a command of God, not because he wants to, but because he's damned if he does and damned if he doesn't."<sup>29</sup>

The question is, how has this type of thinking affected Seventh-day Adventist lifestyle? Before answering that question, it should be noted that the idea of conflicting and clashing moral principles can, without much difficulty, be found in SDA publications. A classic example of this is in a recent book on the subject of



biblical interpretation. The author says: "In a sinful world, conflict is possible at every level below the one great command [to love God supremely]. For example, should one obey God or parents (first commandment versus fifth)? Should one preserve life or tell the truth (sixth commandment versus ninth)?"<sup>30</sup>

The issue of "moral dilemmas" and life in a "sinful world" seems to surface in the recent "Seventh-day Adventist Guidelines on Abortion."<sup>31</sup> Since guideline #7 states that "church members should be encouraged to participate in the ongoing consideration of their moral responsibilities with regard to abortion in light of the teaching of Scripture," it would not be inappropriate to examine part of the thinking that apparently undergirded some of the decisions made with regard to this volatile subject.

Notice the following statements: After expressing the fact that "prenatal life is a magnificent gift of God," guideline #1 posits: "However, decisions about life must be made in the context of a fallen world." Guideline #2 adds: "Abortion is one of the tragic dilemmas of human fallenness." It is guideline #4 that brings out the issue of "moral dilemmas" most clearly: "Women at times however, may face exceptional circumstances that present moral dilemmas, such as significant threats to the pregnant woman's life, serious jeopardy to her health, severe congenital defects carefully diagnosed in the fetus, and pregnancy resulting from rape or incest. The final decision whether to terminate the pregnancy or not should be made by the pregnant woman after appropriate consultation."

When one critically examines the so-called "moral dilemmas" listed, not one of them appears to be a genuine moral dilemma, in the sense that if the woman does not abort the fetus she would be guilty of doing a moral wrong for which she would need to repent and seek God's forgiveness. Thus it would not be incorrect to suggest that the term "moral dilemma" is used in this document in a rather loose manner to encompass all difficult decisions to be made under the circumstances.

Is it possible that the term "moral dilemma" is being used more and more in order to make allowance for certain actions that would otherwise be considered wrong by Christians? And what about the statement that "abortion is one of the tragic dilemmas of human

fallenness?" Does this suggest that since life is lived in a sinful world abortions are inevitable? Does this type of thinking influence Christians to become more accepting of this and other practices that at one point in time would have been quite strongly rejected as being unbiblical?

Perhaps more than any other issue, this concept of "moral dilemma/sinful world" thinking needs to be critically investigated. Are there times in life when one is forced to choose between two moral evils? Because life is lived in a fallen, sinful world, are people ever faced with having to choose to violate any of God's eternal moral laws? Do occasions arise, as our author of the book on biblical interpretation suggests, when there is a conflict between two of the ten commandments and it is possible to keep only one command thereby breaking the other?

The basic question is: Do divinely-given, biblical moral requirements ever contradict or conflict?<sup>32</sup> To question this almost universally-accepted notion of "moral dilemmas" might seem unreasonable and senseless. However, it must not be forgotten that it was the questioning of "obvious" facts that led to the "discovery" that the earth is a sphere and not flat.

The study of the existence of moral dilemmas in a sinful world needs to take into consideration the following factors:

1. The moral law is a transcript of God's character,<sup>33</sup> and therefore cannot contain any flaws or contradictions.

2. Whatever God requires people to do, He enables them to accomplish through His power (Phil 2:12, 13). "All His biddings are enablings."<sup>34</sup>

3. God has promised to keep His children from falling (Jude 24), and to provide a way of escape when trials come (1 Cor 10:13).

4. Human beings were created as free moral agents (Gen 2:15-17); thus one "is never brought into such a position that yielding to evil becomes a matter of necessity."<sup>35</sup>

5. There can only be a fair judgment if there is a clear standard that can be followed (Eccl 12:13, 14).

6. Though tempted in all points, Jesus was never forced to break a moral law (Heb 4:15); His disciples are to follow His example (1 Pet 2:21, 22).

7. In the cosmic controversy it is Satan who suggests that

God's word cannot be trusted (Gen 3:1-5), and that His law cannot be kept. Ellen White says: "From the first, the great controversy had been upon the law of God. Satan had sought to prove that God was unjust, that His law was faulty, and that the good of the universe required it to be changed."<sup>36</sup> She indicates that, "Satan had claimed that it was impossible to obey God's commandments; and in our own strength it is true that we cannot obey them. But Christ came in the form of humanity, and by His perfect obedience He proved that humanity and divinity combined can obey every one of God's precepts."<sup>37</sup>

It is concepts such as these that provide evidence for the view that there is never a time when one is forced to violate a divine moral norm. In other words, it is impossible for moral dilemmas, as defined here, to force us to act against God's will! Indeed, a careful, comprehensive search of the biblical evidence reveals that an all-wise God graciously established coherent, non-conflicting moral obligations that can, by means of His power and to His glory, be consistently obeyed by all humanity in this sinful, fallen world. To suggest otherwise, appears to be tantamount to supporting "Satan's claim that the law is unjust and cannot be obeyed."<sup>38</sup>

Admittedly, some have posited that the brokenness of this world and the tragedies of our existence may on occasion coerce us into less than optimal choices. At such times, it is said, the most "loving" thing to do in view of one's concern for the welfare of others might be to transgress a divine moral principle, because relationships take precedence over regulations. As a preacher once put it: "Need supercedes creed."

However, this idea of setting aside one of God's moral norms in view of a perceived human need seems to be a rather questionable position to hold. First, it assumes an almost superhuman ability to think clearly enough to correctly assess what is the most so-called "loving" thing to do in the distress of the situation. Second, it suggests a virtual prophetic foresight to predict that disobedience to God's laws in this specific case will bring about the "best" possible results. And third, it appears to imply the concept that the person setting aside any moral requirement is more wise and loving than God Himself!

The reality and truth is that all of God's moral creeds fully

meet human needs! And the very best way for any person to be truly loving in all relationships is to kindly and loyally obey every one of God's moral principles. Indeed, "our only safe course is to render obedience to all His requirements, at whatever cost."<sup>39</sup>

Once this type of thinking is whole-heartedly accepted, it seems best and wisest to abstain from using "moral dilemma" arguments, or "sinful world" conditions as justifications for making certain lifestyle decisions. Rather, thinking and action will be entirely based on the firm premise that the Christian "can do all things through Christ" (Phil 4:13 KJV), and that, as Scripture indicates, "we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Titus 2:12 KJV). Then, aware that "His commandments are not burdensome" (1 John 5:3), the believer will be able to say with David: "I delight to do Thy will, O my God" (Ps 40:8 KJV).

Obviously there are other kinds of thinking which have not been discussed here. For example, elitist/selectivist thinking, hedonistic, subjectivistic, materialistic, and relativistic thinking. Yet all of these kinds of thinking affect to a greater or lesser degree the presuppositions underlying lifestyle issues. These will have to be considered at some other time.

### Summary and Conclusions

Is it possible that in some ways the thinking patterns of some Adventists have unwittingly been taken "captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ"? (Col 2:8 NIV). If atomistic/fragmented thinking, empirical/pragmatic thinking, situational/teleological thinking, and moral dilemma/sinful world thinking is permitted to influence the basis of methods of approaching Christian lifestyle issues, does the believer not follow human traditions rather than the Word of God?

Recognizing that "the Bible is the great standard of right and wrong, clearly defining sin and holiness,"<sup>40</sup> all Christians are called to base their thinking and action squarely on the principles derived from this guide to life (Ps 119:105). The apostle Paul makes this challenge: "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Rom 12:2 NIV).



As Blamires said: "The Christian mind is the prerequisite of Christian thinking. And Christian thinking is the prerequisite of Christian action."<sup>41</sup>

Indeed, "right thinking lies at the foundation of right action."<sup>42</sup>

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things (Phil 4:8 KJV).

### Endnotes

- 1 Laurena Parris, "Everything in Our Power," *Student Movement*, 16 November 1987, p. 6.
- 2 Todd Gardner, "Education Is the Key," *Student Movement*, 16 November 1987, p. 5.
- 3 Laurie Wiss, "Completely Irrelevant," *Student Movement*, 16 November 1987, pp. 5, 6.
- 4 Harry Blamires, *The Christian Mind: How Should a Christian Think?* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Books, 1963), p. 50.
- 5 Unless otherwise noted, all references are from the New American Standard Bible.
- 6 Arthur F. Holmes, "Toward a Christian View of Things," in *The Making of a Christian Mind*, ed. Arthur F. Holmes (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), p. 17.
- 7 Gary R. Collins, *The Magnificent Mind* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1985), p. 36.
- 8 Ellen G. White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1923), p. 248.
- 9 Nancy Van Pelt, *The Compleat Courtship* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1982), p. 134 (emphasis original).
- 10 See, for example, Gen 2:7; 14:21; Num 5:6; Deut 10:22.
- 11 G. C. Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1962), p. 200.
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- 13 *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . . : A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines* (Washington, DC: Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1988), p. 84.
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18 See, for example, John A. Kisaka, "The Adventist Church's Position and Response to Socio-Cultural Issues in Africa" (D.Min. project report, Andrews University, 1979); Jean-Jacques Boiut, "A Christian Consideration of Polygamy" (D.Min. project report, Andrews University, 1981); Russell Staples, "Must Polygamists Divorce?" *Spectrum* 13 (September 1982):44-53; Robert C. Kistler, *Marriage, Divorce, and . . .* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1987); Josephat R. Siron, "Polygamy: An Enduring Problem," *Ministry*, April 1991, pp. 23-24.

19 For a biblical perspective on polygamy see Ronald A. G. du Preez, "Polygamy in the Bible with Implications for Seventh-day Adventist Church Membership" (D.Min. project dissertation, Andrews University, 1993).

20 Erwin Lutzer, *The Necessity of Ethical Absolutes*, Christian Free University Curriculum Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), p. 75.

21 Ellen G. White, *The Sanctified Life* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1937), p. 39.

22 Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1958), p. 634.

23 Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1939), pp. 609-610.

24 *Ibid.*, p. 460.

25 The story of Peter's release from prison is an illustration of how to act when one's obedience to God threatens the lives of others. When Peter had been jailed the guards had been expressly warned that their lives would be required for the life of their prisoner if he escaped. As can be seen in other New Testament stories this was quite normal. Nevertheless, God rescued Peter from prison. As a result, when Peter could not be found in the morning, Herod ordered the execution of the 16 guards. God, the angel who released Peter, and Peter, all did what was right, even though it resulted in the loss of 16 lives. See Acts 12:1-19; Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1911), pp. 143-154.

26 Chuck Colson, *Loving God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1983), p. 36.

27 White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 622.

28 Walter A. Trobisch, "Congregational Responsibility for the Christian Individual," *Practical Anthropology* 13 (September-October 1966):211.

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30 Alden Thompson, *Inspiration: Hard Questions, Honest Answers* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1991), p. 117. See also, Bouit, pp. 102-103; Gerald Winslow, "Abortion and Christian Principles," *Liberty*, March/April 1989, pp. 10-13; Beverly Rumble, "Letters," *Ministry*, March 1993, pp. 2, 23; Keith W. Johanson, "Letters," *Ministry*, March 1993, p. 23.

31 See "Seventh-day Adventist Guidelines on Abortion," *Insight*, 24 November 1992, pp. 7, 15.

32 The question has sometimes arisen concerning Paul's statement that "the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life" (2 Cor 3:6). Does this mean that a Christian is justified in breaking the letter of the law as long as the spirit of the command

is upheld? Careful study of this passage indicates that Paul is not depreciating the decalogue or the Old Testament. Rather, what he is emphasizing is that what God requires is not simply right action, but right action as the product and evidence of a right relationship with Him. In other words, the "spirit" of the law does not abolish its "letter;" instead, it is complementary to its "letter" and tends to magnify it.

<sup>33</sup> See Ps 19:7, 8; Rom 7:12; White, *The Great Controversy*, 434; Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1985), p. 803.

<sup>34</sup> Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1941), p. 333.

<sup>35</sup> White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 331-332.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

<sup>37</sup> White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 314. In another place White stated that Jesus Christ "came to demonstrate the fact that humanity, allied by living faith to divinity, can keep all the commandments of God." (*Review and Herald*, 11/15/98, p. 730).

<sup>38</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1940), p. 309.

<sup>39</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9 vols. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing, 1948), 5:365.

<sup>40</sup> Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1943), p. 422.

<sup>41</sup> Blamires, p. 43.

<sup>42</sup> White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 248.

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## CONTEMPORARY CULTURE AND CHRISTIAN LIFESTYLE: A CLASH OF WORLDVIEWS

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### Introduction

**Definition of Terms:** In this paper, I will adopt J. H. Bavinck's definition of culture and, therefore, define contemporary culture as society's "common attitude of life, its style of living and thinking, rooted in its apprehension of reality."<sup>1</sup> By Christian lifestyle, I will be referring to the manner of life or way of life which agrees with and expresses the principles of Biblical faith. In the New Testament, the word which frequently expresses this concept is *anastrophē*, and it is often qualified as "holy" (2 Pet 3:11), "pure" (1 Pet 3:2), or "good" (1 Pet 3:16, James 3:13), to suggest that the fruit of such a life is godliness or piety.<sup>2</sup> Thus, without the adjectival qualifiers, the two terms—culture and lifestyle—may be used synonymously, to mean the typical way of life of an individual or group of people, based upon their perception of reality. This is the manner in which I am going to employ the terms.

The challenge of the topic arises from the fact that Christians hold dual citizenships in the world and in the kingdom of God. This naturally raises questions about the relationship of Christians to their respective cultures. How can they be in the world, yet, not be of the world? The specific question evoked by the topic—"Contemporary Culture and Christian Lifestyle"—is: Are there aspects of the Christian lifestyle that may be regarded as supra-cultural within our modern context of cultural diversity? In other words, are there some basic principles of attitude and behavior which apply to



all cultures that are represented in the worldwide Christian family? Can Christianity's call for a godly and holy lifestyle be actualized in all societies of our pluralistic world? The response to the above question may be partially determined by whether or not one adopts a descriptive or prescriptive approach to the issue.

**Descriptive or Prescriptive Approach?** If the topic—"Contemporary Culture and Christian Lifestyle"—requires a discussion of the relationship between today's culture and Christian lifestyle, then the treatment of the subject will suggest a *descriptive* approach, in which one would go into a historical and sociological analysis of *how* modern culture and Christian lifestyle have impacted upon each other. This kind of approach will call attention to the distinctive practices of Christians that set them apart from other religions or the general public. For Seventh-day Adventists, these practices will include such things as, Sabbath observance, healthful living, modesty in dress, in amusement, and in entertainment, and an abstinence from tobacco, alcoholic beverages, and the irresponsible use of drugs and narcotics. In the descriptive method, the measuring instrument of Adventist lifestyle is usually by means of opinion polls, surveys, or referenda.<sup>3</sup> While this approach may be helpful in describing past or even the existing condition within Adventism, it must be remembered that behind the distinctive practices of Adventists, anywhere in the world or at any time in its history, lie some specific ethical and theological beliefs.<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, if the topic requires an address of what Christian lifestyle *must be* within the different cultural matrices it finds itself, the preferred method will be primarily *prescriptive*, and therefore, will involve an ethical or theological reflection. This method seeks to understand the beliefs undergirding the Christian lifestyle by exploring the ethical and theological foundations of their practices and ascertaining whether or not those practices *must be* maintained. Since "eating and drinking and whatsoever things we do" should all be expressions to the glory of God (1 Cor 10:31), common things, such as greeting, eating, building, dressing, etc. that may appear neutral can assume theological significance. This may explain why a hamburger from McDonald's may have a different meaning in a Hindu culture, and also why bowing, prostration, or kissing as forms of greetings may raise ethical issues

in different cultures. Even the every day building of skyscraper towers on the plains of modern Shinar (cf. Gen 11:1-9), as well as assertive statements or "high-powered" resumes of one's accomplishments (cf. Dan 3:28) may all have religious significance.

Since Christian orthopraxy (right living) is rooted in its orthodoxy (right doctrine), a discussion of the topic—"Modern Culture and Christian Lifestyle"—from an ethical and theological perspective, rather than a historical-sociological viewpoint, is the method I intend to follow in this paper. I would be particularly concerned with the foundations upon which the two cultures—Christian and non-Christian—are based, and how these philosophical foundations affect their respective lifestyles. My paper will be organized in the following manner:

1. World View: The Philosophical Foundation of a Culture
2. Communicators: The Shapers of World Views
3. Contemporary Culture & Christian Lifestyle: A Clash of World Views
4. Characteristics of Modern Culture
5. Abortive Lifestyle: The Fruit of Modern Culture
6. Adventism's Challenge: A Counter Lifestyle

#### Worldview: the Philosophical Foundation of a Culture

To understand the lifestyle of any society—Christian or non-Christian—one must first identify the worldview that is held by that society. By worldview, I am referring to the "set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true or entirely false) which we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic make-up of our world."<sup>5</sup> A worldview is, therefore, the conceptual framework through which a person or a group views life. Although every group has a world view, a group is not always aware of it until that world view is challenged by a foreigner from another ideological universe.<sup>6</sup>

According to Charles Kraft,<sup>7</sup> a world view serves five major functions in any given society: (1) It explains how and why things got to be as they are and how and why they continue or change; (2) It is the basis of evaluation and validation of all values and goals of a society; (3) It provides psychological reinforcement (security and support) for the group, especially during times of crisis. For example

in times of birth, marriage, illness, uncertainty, death, etc., the reinforcement may take the form of a ritual (prayer, scientific experimentation, rational analysis, etc.) or ceremony (initiation, funeral, graduation ceremony, etc), in which many people participate; (4) It integrates the society, systematizing and ordering the culture's perceptions of reality into an overall design; (5) It provides, within its conservatism, opportunities for adaptation or perceptual shifts in times of disequilibrium thereby enabling the society to reduce cultural dissonance when a need comes for a change in perception or behavior.

To understand the lifestyle of any society, and even to attempt a change of the ethos of that group of people, one must first have a grasp of their worldview. There can only be lasting changes in a society's behavior if the desired changes first take place at the foundational level of the community's assumptions regarding reality. Since the Bible teaches that what a person "thinketh in his heart" is what he is (Prov 23:7), Christianity's call for repentance (*metanoia*-change of mind) is actually a call for a change in worldviews from the secular world's to that which is characteristic of the kingdom of God (Matt 3:8; Acts 20:21; 26:20; cf. 1 Thess 1:9). Thus, when the apostle Paul urges the readers of his epistle to the Romans to adopt a certain lifestyle—"present your bodies as a living and holy sacrifice to God"—this is linked with his call for a transformation that is effected "by the renewing of the mind"—a change in worldview (Rom 12:1, 2). Consequently, repentance must be seen as a miraculous event in which God supernaturally intervenes in a person's life, changes that person's worldview, resulting in a change in that individual's behavior (Acts 5:31; 11:18; Rom 2:4; 2 Tim 2:25). Thus, a change in worldviews becomes evident in a change in lifestyle. This is why John says, "Bring forth, therefore, fruits worthy of repentance" (Luke 3:8). It should be noted that while repentance initiates the change in a person's worldview, this one-time event has to be sustained on a daily, moment by moment basis until we come to a full knowledge of Jesus Christ. The process of Christian sanctification may thus, be defined as the daily, moment by moment change in believers' worldviews until they are conformed to the image of Christ. Of the many precious gifts given Christians, the most effective one that helps in re-shaping

worldviews is a daily reading, studying and meditation upon the written Word of God.

With this brief discussion of the relationship between worldviews and lifestyle, it may be necessary now to mention the human agents who serve as catalysts in the shaping of worldviews, and hence, the lifestyle of various societies.

#### Communicators: the Shapers of Worldviews

If it is difficult to accurately describe the lifestyle of any given society without first understanding its worldviews, it is equally hard to perceive the full dynamics of any group's worldviews unless one is aware of the people in that group who shape that society's views. A *Newsweek* (October 5, 1992) cover article refers to these guiding spirits of culture as "The Cultural elite." They come from every academic discipline—science, history, psychology, politics, technology, economics, religion, art, etc. The one word that I would use to describe all members of the cultural elite is *communicators*.

In all societies—whether they be oral, literate, or visual—it is communicators who enjoy the status of shaping and perpetuating the values of the ambient cultures. For example, in oral cultures, the principal actors are the verbal "story tellers." The story tellers may be the African or Asian parents instructing their children in their homes; they may be teachers in some Russian or Australian classrooms; or they may be the eloquent politicians or preachers in Europe or America. In literate and visual cultures, it is through books, magazines and TV that contemporary values are communicated. Thus, the shapers of contemporary culture are not only those who control the news media, but also includes all authors, editors, cartoonists and publishers—whether the individuals involved are religious or secular.

If communicators are the major shapers of culture, the best instrument to measure the ethical temperature of any group of people is in their music. It has been said that music is not only a thermostat that regulates cultural values, but also a thermometer that reads that condition. The ancient Chinese philosopher Confucius is quoted as saying: "If one should desire to know whether a kingdom is well-governed, if its morals are good or bad, the quality of its music will furnish the answer."<sup>8</sup> Therefore, in seeking to know



something about contemporary culture, one should not only be aware of the books and magazines people are reading, but also the kinds of sermons being listened to, TV programs being watched, and the kinds of music that are in the air.

The realization that communicators are the major shapers of the ethos of society has two important implications for Christians. First, it suggests that while every believer is a "salt of the world," the most effective shapers and propagators of the Christian worldview are parents, teachers, preachers, authors or musicians, all of who, in one way or the other, are actively involved in the theological enterprise. Second, if it appears that the entertainment industry is winning the battle over worldviews, it may be because Christians are failing to communicate effectively their Christian values. This fact ought to challenge Christian theologians to seek skills that would equip them to be effective communicators. What this means, in our case, is that we must not only examine the content of the material we teach or write about but also, we should re-evaluate our teaching and writing styles, to ensure that we replace our tendency to communicate in esoteric terms, with an intentional effort to present profound theological concepts in a language that can be understood by the average person on the street.

With the above in mind, we are now in a position to discuss the undergirding worldviews of Christian and non-Christian cultures, and how these worldviews impact on their respective lifestyles.

#### Contemporary Culture and Christian Lifestyle: A Clash of Worldviews

Although the Bible often presents many individuals as models of Christian living (Phil 3:17; 1 Tim 4:12; James 5:10, 11; Heb 11), Christian lifestyle is not based on the empirical study of the sum-total of the behavior of Bible believers—that is to say, Christian lifestyle does not take its prescriptive cue from the lives of Bible characters or nations, however noble they may have been. The lifestyle of Bible characters can only be emulated if, and only if, those lifestyles conform to either the prescriptive teachings of the Scriptures or the perfect life of Jesus Christ (1 Cor 10:1-11, 11:1; Heb 4:16-18; 1 Pet 2:21-22).<sup>9</sup> Because an empirical foundation does

not adequately take into consideration the fact of sin and inconsistency in the lives of the believers, the only true foundation upon which Christian lifestyle must be based is that demanded by Biblical revelation (2 Tim 3:15-17). As explained by John Murray, in the Bible are to be found standards of behavior "for the creation, direction, and regulation of thought, life, and behavior consonant with the will of God."<sup>10</sup> The study of these principles of Christian conduct constitutes Christian ethics—described by Ellen G. White as "the science of holiness."<sup>11</sup> Let me now briefly state the essential contours of Biblical worldview, as it is generally held by Seventh-day Adventists and other Evangelicals.

Despite some differences, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has a lot in common with other Evangelical churches. Together, they uphold the authority of Scripture as God's propositional revelation, and hence, the basis of all doctrines and practices. Based on their understanding of the Bible:

(1) they affirm the existence of a transcendent God who is the Creator, Owner, and Sustainer of the universe; (2) they teach that Satan, the adversary of God and His people, is a living being who, since his fall, has challenged the authority, veracity and claims of the triune God; (3) they also believe that while man was created in the image of God, he is not morally good or neutral; the fall of our first parents introduced sin into our world—sin that has affected the whole being of humanity and brought moral depravity upon the entire human race; (4) they affirm the truthfulness of the virgin birth, the substitutionary life and death of Jesus Christ, His bodily resurrection, ascension, high-priestly ministry in heaven, and His glorious second coming; (5) they maintain that the only realistic hope for helpless humanity lies in conversion—a transformation process that is effected by the Holy Spirit; and (6) they uphold the Decalogue as the clearest and most definitive moral code for all humanity; these Ten Commandments are rooted in the character of a good, holy, and loving God and they were exemplified in the perfect life of Jesus Christ, who is presented to us in the Bible as humanity's best Example.

Even though the above essentials of Christian worldview have always been challenged, in one way or the other by unbelievers throughout the centuries of time, since the Enlightenment, these contours of Christian worldview have been under severe attack from the naturalistic worldview—a worldview that is built on an

assumption that nothing exists outside the material mechanical natural order. "Born in the eighteenth century, it came of age in the nineteenth and grew to maturity in the twentieth."<sup>12</sup> According to Ronald H. Nash, naturalism offers "the major competition" to the Christian worldview.<sup>13</sup>

In his book *The Idea of Progress*, J. B. Bury argues that the two major foundations upon which modernism is built are (1) the idea of progress—the suggestion that humanity is inherently good and capable of improvement if only given opportunity—more time and (2) the belief in the invariable order of nature—that is, the view that the only thing that is unchanging and unchangeable is the physical laws of nature.<sup>14</sup> These two pillars of modern worldview, run at variance with the essentials of Biblical worldview enumerated above. First, modern worldview greatly limits, if not totally denies, the existence of supernatural realities—God, Satan, angels—and miracles. Second, it leads to a denial of human sinfulness, and hence the need for Christ's atonement and second coming. Finally, modern culture's acceptance of physical laws as the unchanging and unchangeable laws in the universe runs contrary to Biblical teaching that the only unchanging and unchangeable laws in the universe are God's Moral Ten Commandment Laws (Ps 19:7, 8; Matt 5:17-19; Rom 7:12), which therefore, serve as the basis of ethical conduct.

Thus, we see that there is a clash between Biblical worldview and the contemporary naturalistic worldview. How this difference in worldviews plays out in lifestyle will be discussed in the next section.

#### Characteristics of Contemporary Culture<sup>15</sup>

**Self-deifying Culture: We Are Gods.** One characteristic of modern society is its deification of self. Words such as "self-discovery," "self-affirmation," "self-esteem," "self-actualization," "self-expression," and "self-acceptance" could reflect this mood. With an uncertainty regarding the existence of supernatural realities and even the existence of God, "Self" has been exalted as the new god for many people.<sup>16</sup> Credit for this modern outlook goes not only to the pervasiveness of the New Age philosophy, but also to the anthropology of liberal theology. John Shelby Spong, the

Episcopal bishop of Newark, echoes the views of liberal thought when he dismisses the Biblical worldview as "pre-scientific." He writes in his 1991 bestseller: "We look for and find meaning and divinity, not always so much in an external God as in the very depths of our humanity, but it is divinity nonetheless. We discover transcending spirit within ourselves." He continues thus: "We have come to the dawning realization that God might not be separate from us but rather deep within us."<sup>17</sup>

On the personal level, self-deification makes it possible for one to cure one's ills by looking within, and even big enough to forgive one's sin (how often do we not hear the expression, "forgive yourself?"). On a group or societal level, self-deification assumes a corporate identity in which tribalism, nationalism, patriotism, and racism become the highest human authorities commanding wholehearted allegiance. Despite the fact that the Bible condemns all forms of self-deification as selfishness, pride, or idolatry, and presents self-denial as the hallmark of Christian discipleship (Luke 14:26ff), modern culture has made a science out of self-worship. Based on an individualistic philosophy, this cult of the self basically states that every human being is an end in himself, and that each person must live for his own sake, neither sacrificing himself to others, but rather, the achievement of his own happiness is man's highest moral purpose.<sup>18</sup> Mike Yaconelli refers to this as "the legitimization of self-interest"—one of the hallmarks of the modern worldview that has infiltrated and tainted our Christian thinking, lifestyles, and everyday existence."<sup>19</sup>

Given the fact that in this modern worldview, self is now the king, it should come as no surprise to anyone when George Barna, in his 1991 survey of values and religious views in the USA reports that 63% of adults in the USA say that the purpose of life is enjoyment and the pursuit of fulfillment.<sup>20</sup> This fact may also partly explain the statement in the cover article of *Newsweek* (December 17, 1990) that the baby boomer generation that goes to church today has as its aim, "support not salvation, help rather than holiness, a circle of spiritual equals rather than an authoritative church or guide. A group affirmation of self is at the top of the agenda, which is why some of the least demanding churches are now in greatest demand."<sup>21</sup>



The point being made here is that the reason why the cult of self is held as a sacred tenet of contemporary culture is because of a worldview in which the Lordship of the triune God of the Bible has been replaced by the reign of the human self.

**Normless Culture: We Can Decide What is Right and Wrong.** One of the most incisive analysis of our modern culture is that given by Will Herberg over half a decade ago. Writing on the "Moral Crisis of Our Time," Herberg describes our contemporary society as coming very close to a "non-moral, normless culture." He explains that the crisis does not consist so much in the flagrant violation of morally accepted standards of behavior, but rather, in the fact that "in the modern world, for the first time, at least on a mass scale, the very possibility of such standards has been thrown into question, and with it all essential distinctions between right and wrong."<sup>22</sup>

Recent writers concur. Allan Bloom, for example, opens the introduction of his 1987 best seller, *The Closing of the American Mind*, with the statement: "There is one thing a professor can be absolutely certain of: almost every student entering the university believes, or says he believes, that truth is relative."<sup>23</sup> George Barna's 1991 report confirms this. His survey reveals a "most disheartening" discovery:

Two-thirds of adults (66%) agree that there is no such thing as absolute truth. . . . Even a majority of born again Christians (53%) and adults associated with evangelical churches (53%) concur with the sentiment. Unexpectedly, among the people groups most ardently supportive of this viewpoint are mainline [liberal] Protestants (73%).<sup>24</sup>

Not a few in modern society believes anymore that there is absolute right and wrong. Speaking about the relativistic mood that is dominant in our contemporary society, Thomas Howard says that we all "have been schooled in the tradition of moral and intellectual democracy."<sup>25</sup> Rightness is defined as what is right *for me* or *for my society*. Group morality, ascertained by public opinion polls, surveys, referenda, etc., is that which governs the ethos of society. Nothing is a simple black and white issue anymore; everything is a shade of gray and in the words of Kenneth Greet, "The man who sees everything in black and white is morally color-blind."<sup>26</sup> In

other words, tolerance and pluralism are the crowned values of contemporary society and anyone who teaches that there are absolutes standards for human behavior is stereotyped as a bigot.

It must be pointed out, however, that the normless culture today is the direct result of a modernistic worldview in which the existence of God, as a transcendent Being who determines the norms of morality is down-played. This is aptly pointed out by the *Barna Report*, which reveals that although 64% of Americans claim to believe in God, they are not sure whether that God is an impersonal force or a real being, and that 60% of Americans (and nearly half of all Christians) think Satan is just a symbol of evil and not a living being.<sup>27</sup> With such an uncertainty about the existence of a personal God and Satan as a living being, modern culture has little concept of the cosmic conflict between Christ and Satan, truth and error, and right and wrong. Not unexpectedly, the Biblical teaching that God is truth, Jesus is truth, the Holy Spirit is truth, the Bible is truth, and the Law is truth, are all being questioned within and without the Church.

Thus, while a *Self-deifying Culture* maintains that "We are Gods," a *Normless Culture* asserts that "As Gods, We know what is right and wrong." It is not surprising then, that the next characteristic of modern culture is the belief that "We are capable of doing whatever we want to."

**Power-Conscious Culture: Can Do Anything We Want to.** Much of our contemporary culture is bathing in the quest for power. We talk about "power brakes" for our automobiles, "power-pak" computer programs, "power communication," "power dressing," and "power politics." A recently published book, appropriately titled *Power Religion* (1992), has discerned the signs of our times and therefore, raises alarm over the fact that evangelical churches are falling to the temptation of contemporary culture's quest for power.<sup>28</sup>

How did we come to this lust for power? One possible answer is the technological spirit of our time. First, it was a quest for power of *man over nature*. The technological imperative at this stage was: "Whatever technologically *can* be done, *should* be done."<sup>29</sup> This was a mixed blessing. For along side the beneficial inventions we are also left with unresolved ethical issues ranging from artificial

insemination, in-vitro fertilization, sex selection or selective breeding, surrogate parenting and some difficult environmental concerns.

Following on the heels of the quest of power of *man over nature* is the quest of power of *man over man*. This was fueled by the survival-of-the-fittest ethic, which today has filtered down as *the quality-of-life-ethic*, an ethic that seeks to respond to modern social and economic problems by arguing that "some humans are (a) not really true 'persons,' and are (b) a great hindrance to a better lifestyle for individuals and society, thus, (c) it is not wrong to kill them because their death enhances (in an expedient and cost effective way) the quality of life for those who are true persons."<sup>30</sup> The result of this ethic is war, violence and bloodshed. Walter Wink summarizes the situation thus: "Violence is the ethos of our times. It is the spirituality of the modern world. What is generally overlooked is that violence is accorded the status of a religion, demanding from its devotees an absolute obedience unto death."<sup>31</sup> Philip Lee concurs; his description of the cultural reality of Western nations as a "culture of war"<sup>32</sup> is applicable to every society in which war is glorified, rather than the Biblical ethic of peace, love, forgiveness, and non-violence (Matt 5:43-48; Rom 12:14-21; etc.)

Besides the quest of power of *man over nature* and *over man*, we now have moved into a new quest of power—this time, the quest of power of *man over himself*. The philosophy here is that any decision or obligation that involves costly discipleship is not worth pursuing. It is more "humane and honorable," we are told, for one to take one's own life than to endure suffering, or that sometimes, the most loving act is to kill a person for his own sake, if not for the sake of his family, or community. The "trickle down" effect of this pleasure-pain principle on Christian lifestyle is the belief shared by many Christians that a believer cannot and must not suffer pain—a philosophy that runs contradictory to Biblical teaching that sometimes obedience to Christ may involve suffering (1 Pet 2:20; 3:13-17; 2 Tim 3:12; Rev 2:10).

It needs to be emphasized again that the lifestyle exhibited by this power-conscious culture is firmly rooted in a worldview in which an all-powerful creator God has been replaced by invincible

"supermen" who believe that they can do anything they want to—without being held accountable to anyone.

**Deterministic Culture: We Are Not Responsible for Our Actions.** Endemic in contemporary culture is the belief that the individual has no choice in his moral actions, and therefore, must not be held accountable for them. One symptom of this modern outlook is the way in which certain phrases have gained currency—phrases such as, "it's not my fault. . .," "I had no choice. . .," etc. Not unexpectedly, it has become very fashionable for people to shift responsibility from themselves and blame it on either their environment, backgrounds, parents, governments, or even church. Sometimes even the "Devil" is blamed for this ("the Devil made me do it"), and some Christians respond that "It is the Spirit who led me to do it."

This is rather ironical. For at a time when people talk about "alternative-lifestyle," "sexual preference" and "pro-choice," all of which imply freedom of choice, when it comes to accepting full responsibility for their actions, they maintain that they have no choice and are therefore, inculpable. This contemporary cultural outlook may be traced to the naturalistic worldview that has been popularized by the teachings of behaviorism.

Behavioral scientists like B. F. Skinner and Leslie White have been so impressed with the influence of cultural, social, and psychological factors on our lives that they teach that attitudes and actions which in the past were attributed to free will, are now believed to be almost determined. Skinner, for example maintains that the concept of "autonomous man" (that is, the idea that man has freedom of choice or self-determination) is a "pre-scientific" notion that must be abolished. He maintains that "a scientific analysis of behavior dispossesses autonomous man and turns the control he has been said to exert over to the environment."<sup>33</sup>

Following the same thought of behaviorism, the cover story of *Time* magazine (August 1, 1977) introduced, to the world, a new and highly controversial scientific discipline, called sociobiology, which seeks to establish that human behavior is genetically based. Hailing this theory as "the completion of the Darwinian revolution," advocates explain that all human beings have been programmed like computers according to some blind physical and



chemical laws. We cannot, therefore, be held accountable for our actions since they are all dependent on our genetic code. Operating on this naturalistic-materialistic worldview, some sociobiologists argue that lying and extramarital sexual relationships are not morally wrong, but simply ways in which the genes survive.

In response to critics of this doctrine of "genetic determinism," Robert Trivers, a leading sociobiologist at Harvard University, counters that this theory "has spread too far, to too many people, and to far too many studies" to be easily ignored. Trivers is quoted in the *Time* article as making this bold prediction: "Sooner or later, political science, law, economics, psychology, psychiatry and anthropology will all be branches of sociobiology." Could it be that the "discoveries" being made in recent times, by researchers, that some individuals are "Born to Smoke,"<sup>34</sup> "Born Gay,"<sup>35</sup> and even "Born murderers"<sup>36</sup> are partial fulfillments of Trivers' predictions?

It may probably be obvious that, those who accept this naturalistic worldview have no place for Biblical anthropology which teaches that human beings are created in the image of God, and endowed with freedom of choice. This modern worldview also, in effect, denies the possibility of divine judgment of human conduct.

#### Abortive Lifestyle: the Fruit of Contemporary Culture

What happens when a society adopts and lives out the life demanded by modern worldview? What happens when a person adopts a life in which God is left out? What quality of life results from an un-Biblical worldview? Martin Weber responds to these questions when he describes the life of modern man as an "abortive lifestyle." He maintains that this "abortive lifestyle" has become the preferred lifestyle for many in our society—the way they cope with any problem that comes their way. "Is there trouble at school? Don't bother to study harder, just abort your education. That's the take-it-easy attitude we have today. Are you having problems at work? Quit—abort your job. Has holy wedlock become unhappy deadlock? Divorce—abort your vows. Are you faltering in your Christian experience? Take the easy way out and abort your relationship with Jesus."<sup>37</sup>

We are harvesting the fruit of a Godless existence—a lifestyle

predicated on modern worldview. According to the late British journalist Malcolm Muggeridge: "Just when happiness seems most accessible, in the happy lands—Scandinavia and California—many jump after it from upstairs windows or gulp it down in colored barbiturates or try to tear it out of one another's bodies or scatter it in blood and bone on the highways, along which, with six lanes aside and Muzak endlessly playing, automobiles roll on from nowhere to nowhere."<sup>38</sup>

I have briefly described the "abortive lifestyle" of our modern culture, by explaining that this is the result of a modernistic worldview in which humanity claims to be, and even attempts to assume the role of God. The Bible describes this kind of lifestyle, in 1 Peter 1:18, as an empty or a vain way of life (*anastrophē*) that is characteristic of an unconverted human existence (Gal 1:13; Eph 4:22). In contrast to this "abortive lifestyle," I would now, in the next pages, discuss how the Biblical worldview may lead to a "holy" (2 Pet. 3:11), "pure" (1 Pet 3:2), or "good" (1 Pet 3:16, James 3:13), lifestyle.

#### Adventism's Challenge: A Counter Lifestyle

We began our discussion with a statement of fact, namely, the Bible has a *prescribed* way of life (*anastrophē*) for Christians, qualified by such words as holy, pure and good. I would continue by saying that this "Christian lifestyle" is rooted in two unchanging facts about the nature of God and human beings: (1) God does not change—His character of love, mercy, justice, etc., do not change; His knowledge and His power do not change; His Word and His moral Law do not change; (2) Human beings do not change—their finiteness as created beings does not change; their nature as sinners does not change; and their need for guidance and help does not change.

These two unchanging facts about God and humanity raise some major questions: (a) How can God's demand for godliness, piety and holiness in life, be actualized in sinful human beings? (b) How should Christians—citizens of two different kingdoms—relate to the two different cultures? In short, how can Christians follow the imperative of Paul given in Titus 2:12: "*Denying ungodliness and worldly lusts [the results demanded by a modernistic*

*worldview], we should live soberly, righteously, and godly lives in this present world [the demands of a Biblical worldview]”?*

God’s solution to this dilemma is bound in One particular individual, Jesus Christ—who once came to the world to show us that holiness in life is possible, and who also will come again to receive those who follow in His steps. The answer to this seemingly impossible expectation of godly lifestyle in an “evil and crooked generation” is still bound to that One individual—who is currently performing experiments on human hearts, form a secured laboratory in the heavenly sanctuary where He serves as our Mediator and High Priest. And the complete blueprint of how God deals with this problem is best explained by a particular worldview within Christianity, known as Seventh-day Adventism.

Of all the Evangelical churches, the Adventist church is the most equipped to offer a Biblically consistent response to modern culture. Adventists have their own unique culture. Its people comprise of individuals from “every nation, kindred, multitude, and tongue” (Rev 14:6). They see themselves as active participants in the cosmic conflict (the great controversy) between Christ and Satan—a conflict that involves the character of God and His plan for the universe. It is their understanding of this cosmic conflict that has given birth to that system of theology which is reflected in the Adventist church. Their very name—Seventh-day Adventists—captures the scope of the cosmic conflict. The weekly seventh-day Sabbath points backward, reminding the world of the power of the transcendent God as the Creator and Sustainer of the universe, thus, undercutting the evolutionary foundations of modern culture. The “Adventist” component of their name is a daily reminder to Christians that their true citizenship is in the kingdom to come. Between the expanse of Adventist *protology* and *eschatology* is what Paul describes as “this present world” (Titus 2:12)—the period in which Christ’s experiment on human hearts is taking place.

The organizing principle of Seventh-day Adventist worldview may be termed *the great controversy*. Let me briefly state, in this ongoing clash of worldviews, two major issues in “the great controversy.”<sup>39</sup>

(i) The character of God, as is reflected in the sinless life of Jesus Christ and expressed in the Moral Law, is the focal issue at

stake. On the one hand, Satan maintains that God is unjust, His Law is faulty and that a loving obedience to Him is impossible in a sinful world. On the other end, God points to the Savior’s life of obedience as a proof that even in this sin-marred world believers, who rely solely on the merits and power of the living Christ, can exhibit in their lives the same excellence of character that Jesus revealed in His earthly life.

(ii) Human beings are at the center of this great controversy, since it is they who must *choose* who to believe. They must answer the following questions: Is God to be trusted? Is His Word truth? Does God know what is best for humanity? Does God have enough power to help anyone who chooses to follow Him—power to transform his/her life, power so great that if possible He can miraculously intervene in behalf of His people, and even if death is permitted to occur, He can resurrect the Christian?

The Adventist’s response to the above questions in the great controversy may be summarized as follows:

1. Since human beings are sinners and cannot trust their own judgment on what is right and wrong, true Christian principle does not follow human impulse nor judgment. Instead, the Christian looks to the revealed will of God in Scriptures, and seeks to walk according to the definite commandments of God, no matter the circumstances and the cost. For them, the only unchanging and unchangeable law in the universe is not physical laws (which can be transcended by God), but God’s Moral Ten Commandment Law. This Law is the only unerring standard of right and wrong (Ps 19:7, 8; Matt 5:17-19; Rom 7:7, 12; 1 John 3:4).

2. Those who accept the one principle of making the service of God supreme will never be placed in situations for which God has made no ample provision (1 Cor 10:13). Not only can God help them overcome all cultivated and hereditary tendencies to sin (contra the behavioristic philosophy), but also, the weakest and most helpless human beings who spread their trials, anxieties and perplexities before God will find enough help to meet their needs.

3. The fact that human beings were created as *free moral agents*, and the fact that God has made ample provision for their needs, imply that human beings are never brought into such situations that yielding to sin becomes a matter of necessity. Not even



the strongest temptation is an excuse to sin. Christians who know the power of Christ and His Word will, therefore, not follow suggestions of Satan to lie, to steal, commit adultery, kill, etc. in order to save their lives or other's lives. As Ellen G. White puts it, whenever we face difficult situations—even life-threatening ones—"our only questions will be, What is God's Command? and what is His promise? Knowing these, we shall obey the one, and trust the other" (*Desire of Ages*, p. 121).

4. True Christian lifestyle takes seriously Christ's statements in Luke 14:26-27—"If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple." Adventists understand this to mean that they must be willing to die, if necessary, than to sin against their Savior. They know that "the deepest poverty, the greatest self-denial, with His approval, is better than riches, honors, ease, and friendship without it" (*Great Controversy*, p. 622). They know that death is but sleep, and the One who holds the key of life and death will resurrect them at His coming (John 5:25-29; 1 Thes 4:13-18). Therefore, Adventist Christians seek to be faithful unto death (Rev 2:10).

### Conclusion

The contours of Christian worldview that I have sketched above has some far reaching implications regarding how Adventists ought to look at some contemporary issues such as war (personal, tribal, national, international), abortion (even in cases of rape, incest, and deformity), marriage and divorce, polygamy, homosexuality, eating and drinking, dressing, entertainment, etc., all of which are included in Christ's demand for a godly and holy lifestyle (2 Pet 3:11; 1 Cor 10:31; cf. Col 3:17). Even more, the trying circumstances of everyday life ought to be viewed as God's preparation of His faithful people for the final eschatological conflict between God and Satan.

Concerning this impending cosmic conflict, E. G. White Writes: "The season of distress before God's people will call for a faith that will not falter. His children must make it manifest that He is the only object of their worship, and that no consideration, not even

that of life itself, can induce them to make the least concession to false worship. To the loyal heart, the commands of sinful, finite men will sink into insignificance beside the word of the eternal God. Truth will be obeyed though the result be imprisonment or exile or death." She continues with this assurance: "As in the days of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, so in the closing period of earth's history the Lord will work mightily in behalf of those who stand steadfastly for the right. He who walked with the Hebrew worthies in the fiery furnace will be with His followers wherever they are. His abiding presence will comfort and sustain. In the midst of the time of trouble—trouble such as has not been since there was a nation—His chosen ones will stand unmoved. Satan with all the hosts of evil cannot destroy the weakest of God's saints. Angels that excel in strength will protect them, and in their behalf Jehovah will reveal Himself as a 'God of gods,' able to save to the uttermost those who have put their trust in Him."<sup>40</sup>

This counter lifestyle of Seventh-day Adventists is both a challenge and a promise. If, for whatever reason, the Church prunes this aspect of its message and compromises its obedience in order to become acceptable and respectable in modern society, it runs the risk of losing its christian identity and also its saving influence in the world. On the other hand, if Seventh-day Adventists live the kind of life demanded by the Biblical worldview, we can only faintly speculate on what will happen!

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> J. H. Bavinck, *The Impact of Christianity on the Non-Christian World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1949), p. 57, also defines culture as "religion made visible; it is religion actualized in the innumerable relations of daily life" (ibid.). For a critical review of concepts and definitions of culture, see A. L. Kroeber and Clyde Kuckhohn, *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions* (New York: Vintage Books, 1963), pp. 75-154.

<sup>2</sup> In contrast to the empty or vain way of life characteristic of an unconverted heart (Gal 1:13; Eph 4:22; 1 Pet 1:18; 2 Pet 2:7), the remaining nine out of the thirteen occurrences of *anastrophē* in the New Testament employ the term in the positive sense of godliness or piety, a prescriptive lifestyle worthy of emulation (1 Tim 4:12; Heb 13:7; Jas 3:13; 1 Pet 1:15, 18, 2:12, 3:2, 16; 2 Pet. 3:11).

<sup>3</sup> For examples of works that adopt the descriptive method, see Roger L. Dudley and Edwin I. Hernandez, *Citizens of Two Worlds: Religion and Politics Among Seventh-day Adventists* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1992); Roger L. Dudley and V. Bailey Gillespie, *Valuogenesis: Faith in the Balance* (Riverside, CA: La Sierra University Press, 1992). See also Michael Pearson's *Millennial Dreams and Moral Dilemmas: Seventh-day Adventism and Contemporary Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990)

for a descriptive analysis of how certain lifestyle issues have been dealt with in Seventh-day Adventist history.

<sup>4</sup> For a detailed discussion of the Biblical basis for Seventh-day Adventist lifestyle see, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe. . . A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1988), pp. 232-309.

<sup>5</sup> James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door: A Basic World View Catalogue*, Updated and expanded edition (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 17. This work is an excellent introduction of alternative worldviews—Christian theism, deism, naturalism, nihilism, existentialism, Eastern pantheistic monism, the New Age—and how these worldviews result in different kinds of ethics.

<sup>6</sup> A person's worldview covers such basics as ontology (space, time and existence), epistemology (basis of knowledge), metaphysics (how different realities relate to one another) and ethics (how humans ought to live). See Ronald H. Nash, *Worldviews in Conflict: Choosing Christianity in a World of Ideas* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), pp. 16-33.

<sup>7</sup> Charles H. Kraft, *Christianity in Culture*, (New York: Maryknoll, 1979), pp. 53-57.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Wolfgang Hans Martin Steffani's, "Music and Character," an unpublished manuscript (Andrews University, 1988), p. 3.

<sup>9</sup> John Jefferson Davis, *Evangelical Ethics: Issues Facing the Church Today* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1985), p. 78, states: "Not all practices described by Scripture are thereby endorsed by Scripture as moral ideals. Solomon had many wives, but that constitutes no endorsement of polygamy; monogamy is clearly the divine standard. . . . The precepts and commands of Scripture have priority over the narrative passages in discerning the moral law."

<sup>10</sup> John Murray, *Principles of Conduct: Aspects of Biblical Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), pp. 13-14.

<sup>11</sup> See E. G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 10 vols (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), 7:276, where she writes: "The ETHICS inculcated by the gospel acknowledge no standard but the perfection of God's mind, God's will. God requires from His creatures conformity to His will. Imperfection of character is sin, and sin is the transgression of the law. All righteous attributes of character dwell in God as a perfect, harmonious whole. Everyone who receives Christ as his personal Savior is privileged to possess these attributes. This is the science of holiness."

<sup>12</sup> James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, p. 82. He describes the persistence of naturalism in modern culture thus: "While signs of age are now appearing, naturalism is still very much alive. It dominates the universities, colleges and high schools. It provides the framework for most scientific study. It poses the backdrop against which the humanities continue to struggle for human value, as writers, poets, painters and artists in general shudder under its implications. No rival world view has yet been able to topple it, though it is fair to say that the twentieth century has provided some powerful options and theism is experiencing somewhat of a rebirth at all levels of society." (Ibid.)

<sup>13</sup> Ronald H. Nash, *Worldviews in Conflict*, p. 116.

<sup>14</sup> J. B. Bury, *The Idea of Progress* (New York: Dover Publications, 1932). Using the phrase "the idea of progress" for modern worldview, Bury argues: "It may surprise many to be told that the notion of Progress, which now seems so easy to apprehend, is of comparatively recent origin" (ibid., 6). Describing the evolutionary basis of modern worldview, Bury continues by saying that one cannot fully understand "the idea of Progress" until one goes on "to conceive that it [the world] is destined to advance indefinitely in the future" (ibid., p. 7).

<sup>15</sup> I would like to point out that there is not a single worldview that is predominant in contemporary society. What I attempt to do here is to show that an un-Biblical worldview does have a profound impact on one's lifestyle. In discussing the characteristics of modern culture, I would limit myself to four characteristics that are prevalent in western societies. These are going to be illustrative of the argument in this paper—that a person's worldview determines his or her lifestyle.

<sup>16</sup> Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987), 173, describes the essence of "the self" in this way: "mysterious, ineffable, indefinable,

unlimited, creative, known only by its deeds; in short, like God, of whom it is the impious mirror image. Above all, it is individual, unique, it is *me*, not some distant man in general or man-in-himself."

<sup>17</sup> John Shelby Spong, *Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism: A Bishop Rethinks the Meaning of Scripture* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), p. 33.

<sup>18</sup> Dennis P. Hollinger, *Individualism and Social Ethics: An Evangelical Syncretism* (Landham, MD: University Press of America, 1983), pp. 13, 16, argues that individualism, which is "one of the prominent traits of American ethos," contains three distinct types: individualism as a metaphysic, a value system, and a social philosophy. Although these three categories are not mutually exclusive, our discussion is more concerned about metaphysical individualism, defined as "a view of reality in which the individual is the most basic entity and the defining principle of all existence" (ibid., 16-17). For a brief discussion of an individualistic philosophy, see Roger H. Crook, *An Introduction to Christian Ethics* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1990), pp. 15-18.

<sup>19</sup> Mike Yaconelli, "Becoming Pagan," *The Wittenburg Door*, 98 & 99 (Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov. 1987):61, explains the meaning of the phrase "The legitimization of self-interest" thus: "We no longer believe that Jesus is first, others are second, and ourselves, last. Jesus is first as long as Jesus benefits ME. Others are second as long as putting others second makes MY personal situation better. We are even willing to put ourselves last IF putting myself last guarantees that I will be first. We are more than glad to follow Jesus as long as Jesus puts MY wants and needs as His first priority. Self-interest is no longer contradictory to serving Christ, it is complimentary to serving Christ: Of course Jesus wants me to be happy. Jesus wants me to be fulfilled. Any talk of "losing oneself" is meaningless because people are incapable of understanding that Christianity costs them anything."

<sup>20</sup> George Barna, *What Americans Believe: An Annual Survey of Values and Religious Views in the United States* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1991), p. 36.

<sup>21</sup> *Newsweek* (December 17, 1990), p. 56.

<sup>22</sup> Will Herberg, "The Moral Crisis of Our Time," *Intercollegiate Review* (Fall 1986):9.

<sup>23</sup> Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987), p. 25.

<sup>24</sup> George Barna, *What Americans Believe*, pp. 36-37.

<sup>25</sup> Thomas Howard, "The Touchstone: Orthodoxy Guides Us through the Data," *Christianity Today* (January 5, 1979):12.

<sup>26</sup> K. G. Greet, *The Art of Moral Judgement* (London: Epworth, 1970), pp. 88.

<sup>27</sup> George Barna, *What Americans Believe*, pp. 299-300.

<sup>28</sup> Michael Scott Horton, ed., *Power Religion: The Selling Out of the Evangelical Church?* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1992). The authors discuss the dangers of familiar "power" themes in today's Christian circles—topics such as: "power evangelism," with its emphasis on spiritual warfare and the need to "bind" and exorcising all the demons plaguing Christians; "power growth," in which prayer, Bible study, fellowship, and witnessing has given way to "celebrations," and megachurch strategies and programs; "power within"—in which psychologists tell us we have answers to our problems within ourselves; "power preaching"—whether it is done by charismatic televangelists, or some cultic "prophets"; and "power politics" that seeks to change public morality "by the legislation of ideology" rather than "by the proclamation of theology." (Ibid., pp. 13-20).

<sup>29</sup> Edwards Stevens, *Making Moral Decisions*, enlarged & Revised ed. (New York: Paulist Press, 1981), p. 56.

<sup>30</sup> See the excellent article by Richard Fredericks, "Who Deserves to Live?: Toward an Ethic of Compassion," *Signs of the Times* (April 1990):3, in which he has explained how this ethic is amplified in the abortion issue.

<sup>31</sup> Walter Wink, "The Myth of Redemptive Violence: Exposing the Roots of 'Might



Makes Right," *Sojourners* (April 1992):18. He continues by remarking: "The myth of redemptive violence inundates us on every side. We are awash in it yet seldom perceive it. Its simplest, most pervasive, and finally most influential form, where it captures the imaginations of each new generation, is children's comics and cartoon shows" (ibid., p. 20).

32 Philip Lee, "Images of a Culture of War," *Media Development* 4 (1991):12ff. In this work, Lee argues that many dimensions of Western society—education, religion, and government—from cradle to grave, subtly strengthen people's acceptance of, and weaken their resistance to, violence and war.

33 B. F. Skinner, *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* (New York: Knopf, 1971) [ref. from Bantam edition of 1972], pp. 21, 96. Leslie White, *The Science of Culture* (New York: Grove Press, 1949), p. 167, also states: "the individual. . . is merely an organization of cultural forces and elements that have impinged upon him from the outside and which find their overt expression through him. . . the individual is but the expression of a supra-biological cultural tradition in somatic form."

34 Quoting a study that appeared in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, a *Time* magazine article in the September 28, 1992 (p. 33) issue reports that chromosomes are the reason why some people are "Born to Smoke."

35 See a discussion of this issue in *Christianity Today* (June 22, 1992):20-23.

36 Refer, for example, to Brian Nomi, "Murder and the Christian Faith: A Study for the Church's Reflection and Deliberation," *Dialogue* 31 (Summer 1992):231-233, where the author seems to offer a theological justification for psychopaths. Following the argument similar to that employed in the justification of homosexuality, the author writes: "Scientific data has shown that murder is often inevitable for some individuals in society. On the one hand, we have heard that murder is sin. On the other hand, some confessing Christians are murderers and testify to the signs of God's gracious love in their lives. How do we deal with these conflicting messages? Murderers are also children of God who need the means of grace and the community of faith. After all, if we decide murder is not a sin, then there will be less sin in the world and less need for God's grace."

Our baptism makes us children of God. God does not revoke our baptism when we commit murder. We need to realize that what we find personally repulsive is not necessarily sinful. Furthermore, we need to realize that if we categorically condemn all murder, we may be deeply offending and alienating the murderers in our congregations, implying that their status is determinative of their character" (ibid., p. 232).

37 Martin Weber, "The Abortion Dilemma," *Ministry* (September, 1992), p. 15.

38 Malcolm Muggeridge, *The Portable Conservative Reader* (New York: Penguin Books, 1982), p. 617.

39 The significance of the doctrine of the great controversy lies in the fact that (1) it produces a constant state of watchfulness among believers, (2) it explains the mystery of suffering, (3) it displays Christ's present loving concern for the world, and (4) it reveals the cosmic significance of the cross. See *Seventh-day Adventists Believe. . .*, pp. 98-105. For a detailed and authoritative discussion of Seventh-day Adventists' understanding of the "great controversy" theme, see the five volume *Conflict of the Ages* series by Ellen G. White [*Patriarchs and Prophets, Prophets and Kings, Desire of Ages, Acts of the Apostles, & the Great Controversy*] (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1890-1917).

40 E. G. White, *Prophets and Kings* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1917), pp. 512-513.

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## EARLY ADVENTIST TIMES SETTINGS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR TODAY

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A few Seventh-day Adventists interpret the time prophecies of Daniel and Revelation in a futuristic way. They view "prophetic days," not in years as historical Adventists have done, but in literal days. A major reason for this approach is that they do not see much relevance in the way the prophecies have been interpreted. Consequently, these individuals are looking with great anticipation to a flurry of current events that they integrate into a final events prophetic scenario. Through this futuristic method they feel confident that they are accurately predicting major events in the great controversy that will usher in the Second Advent within a very short time (usually thought to be before the year 2000).

These futuristic proposals have their parallels in similar occurrences among the Advent believers immediately following the Great Disappointment of October 22, 1844. This study investigates the major timesetting thrust from 1843 to 1845 to better evaluate the present interpretations that are very confusing for believers unfamiliar with Adventist prophetic heritage. Ellen Harmon White gave her first warning against timesetting during this time and we will briefly examine its context.

### Timesettings From 1843 to the First Disappointment

During the first part of the 19th century many Protestants were studying the time prophecies of Daniel and Revelation an-

icipating imminent climactic events in the history of salvation. They felt the long-expected millennium was about to break upon humanity and bring a time of unprecedented peace and prosperity. To others the purification of the church and the destruction of false religions was imminent. Still others looked with eagerness to a personal Second Advent of Jesus Christ. The times that these events were generally anticipated to take place spanned 1843 to 1847.

Some have called these Christians who thus predicted Christ's return "Adventists" and their movement the "Second Advent Movement." Toward the end of 1843 a large contingent of believers were quite united in their belief that Christ would return in the Spring of 1844. This position was based on "the best chronological authorities" who held that the 1335 years (Dan 12:12), the 2300 years (Dan 8:14), the Seven Times, and the Great Jubilee "all point to about the Spring of A.D. 1844."<sup>1</sup> The following is a description of how they established their positions.

*The Dating of the 1335 Years (Dan 12:12).* The prevailing views in 1843 of Daniel 12 advocated a close relationship between its time prophecies. Expositors felt the 1335 years and the 1290 years had the same beginning, while the 1290 years and the 1260 years the same ending: The "time of the end" (Dan 12:4-7, 9-11).

The 1260 years began in A.D. 538, when the armies of Justinian conquered the city of Rome and brought it under the jurisdiction of his famous Constitution which in A.D. 533 had legalized papal supremacy.<sup>2</sup> They ended when Rome was conquered by the armies of Napoleon and "the supremacy given to the Pope by 'the Justinian Code' was abolished." This event occurred in February of 1798 and marked the beginning of the "time of the end."<sup>3</sup>

Since both the 1260 and 1290 year periods ended in 1798 it followed that the 1290 years began in A.D. 508—30 years before the beginning of the 1260 years.

The 1335 years, therefore, began at the same time as the 1290 year period in A.D. 508. This particular year was significant in the rise of the Roman Catholic Church. Then "the balance, which had so long swung by turns in favor of Christianity and paganism, preponderated finally in favor of the former in the reign of Clovis" achieved through his military victories as leader of "Catholic fac-

tion" in 508. Upon his return from the battle field the ambassadors of Anastasius, the Emperor of the East [Roman empire], conferred on him the titles of Consul, Patrician, and August. From that time on the Franks devoted their powers to the "establishment of 'Catholic' Christianity."<sup>4</sup>

The end of the 1335 years was expected in February of 1843, which is 45 years after the end of the 1290 years (February 1798).

*The Dating of the 2300 Years (Dan 8:14).* The crucial chronological events in the dating of the 2300 years were the 70 weeks of Daniel 9, the year of the crucifixion, and its placement within the 70th week. These data were believed to point to the end of the 2300 years in the Spring of 1843.

The beginning of the 70 prophetic weeks or 490 years began with the decree to restore and build Jerusalem. Authorities like "Blair, Prideaux, Ferguson, Horne, Watson, Ptolemy, and the great majority of commentators" dated the issue of the decree in the 7th year of Artaxerxes Longimanus in 457 B.C.<sup>5</sup> This date was established by the Canon of Ptolemy.<sup>6</sup> The 69 weeks ended with the commencement of Christ's ministry at His baptism. "Dr. Hales and others" placed this event in A.D. 27.<sup>7</sup>

In harmony with prominent expositors like "Ferguson, Prideaux, Bullinger, Blair and others," Adventists terminated their 70 week calculations at the crucifixion. They also accepted the widespread view of Christ's death in A.D. 33. This was advocated by authorities like "Scaliger, Usher, Pearson, Bacon, and others."<sup>8</sup>

*The Dating of the "Seven Times" (Dan 7:25).* Miller and others interpreted the Sabbatical cycle as a type of the good things to come (Col 2:16, 17). As, in the type, at the end of every seven year period the Israelites had to release their servants (Exod 21:2, Deut 15:1, 2), so Miller assumed that Christ would deliver His people from bondage at the end of these seven prophetic years (calculated as 2520 literal years—7 x 360). The Seven Times of oppression, Miller understood, began with the scattering of Israel by Babylon, the first of Daniel's four Gentile kingdoms that were to dominate God's people. It would end with the coming of the Ancient of Days (Dan 7:22).<sup>9</sup>

Miller dated the scattering time from the year that the last of the ten kingdoms were carried away and Israel ceased to be a nation.



This, he assumed, happened in the 22nd year of wicked Manasseh when, in harmony with prophecy (Isa 7:8) God began the final dispersion of His people with the captivity of the king into Babylon.<sup>10</sup>

The 22nd year of Manasseh's reign was dated by "Dr. Prideaux, Arch. Bishop Usher, Jackson, Playfair, Blair and others" in the year 677 B.C. (or the year 4037 of the Julian Period).<sup>11</sup> It was to terminate in 1843 (2520-677).

*The Dating of the Great Jubilee.* The feast of Jubilee in the 50th year Miller saw as a type of the year of release and deliverance of the saints from all captivity, bondage, and death (Lev 25:8-13). The 50th Jubilee or Great Jubilee he viewed as the antitype of all Sabbaths and would begin at the conclusion of the 49th Jubilee after 2450 years (49 x 50 years). Considering Moses' prophecy on the captivity of God's people (Lev 26:33-35), Miller began the Jubilee period with the Babylonian captivity of Jehoiakim in the 4th year of his reign when the Jubilees could no longer be kept regularly.<sup>12</sup> Following "Ptolemy Petavius, Usher, &c." he dated this captivity from the year 607 B.C.<sup>13</sup> and terminated it at the Great Jubilee in 1843 (2450-607) which was to be the complete release, deliverance and redemption of God's captives.<sup>14</sup>

*The Spring Disappointment of 1844.* Most Adventists thought that the end of the Jewish year 1843 in which the time periods were to terminate would expire on March 21, 1844.<sup>15</sup> When their expectations of Christ's return were not fulfilled the believers experienced a disappointment, often called the "first disappointment."

#### Timesettings from the First to the Second Disappointment

After this Spring disappointment Adventists intensively restudied the chronology of the time periods to find clues to enlighten them on why their predictions had failed. They soon discovered some flaws in their calculations. They felt these corrections placed the calculation of the 2300 years on a firmer Biblical foundation.

*Corrections in the Calculations of the 2300 Years.* The following improvements after the first disappointment especially involved the calculations of the 2300 years:

1. They noticed that there was no year zero when going from

1 B.C. to 1 A.D. In order for the 2300 years to be fulfilled, 2300 *full years* must pass before there could be a fulfillment of Daniel 8. This meant they had to add one extra year to their previous calculations. This brought the end of the time period from 1843 to 1844.

2. They discovered that there were two methods to determine the Jewish year. One method used astronomical calculations to determine the beginning of the new year. It was developed by Rabbis. It began the year with the first new moon nearest the vernal equinox and Jews living outside Palestine used it most. On the basis of this "Rabbinical" Jewish calendar chronologists had determined A.D. 33 as the year of the crucifixion because in that year the 14th of Nisan—the day of the crucifixion—fell on a Friday.

The second method was advocated by Karaite Jews, a strict community adhering to Biblical guidelines. These began the new year, as did the ancient priests of the Jerusalem temple, with the new moon nearest the barley harvest to be able to present the wave sheaf as the first fruit of the Spring harvest on the 16th of Nisan (Lev 23:10, 11). Favoring this more literal Scriptural approach, Adventists adopted the Karaite reckoning that moved the calculation of the end of the 2300 years up one month later than the Rabbinical calendar.<sup>16</sup>

3. Other changes were hinged to the adoption of the Karaite calendar. They realized that the year A.D. 33 could not be the year of Christ's death, and could not determine with absolute precision the crucifixion date through Karaite reckoning because no record remained of barley harvests in Judea during the time of Christ. Consequently, now Adventists adopted the more reliable position of Dr. Wm. Hales who advocated A.D. 31,<sup>17</sup> which he linked to historical evidence of the supernatural darkness.<sup>18</sup>

4. Adventists fully endorsed Wm. Miller's insights into the chronology of the types of the Lord's feasts to determine the precise end of the 2300 years. Miller had observed that the antitypes of the Spring festivals of the Lord's feasts (Passover, Feast of the First Fruits, and Pentecost) had been fulfilled at the First Advent as to the exact day in Christ's crucifixion, resurrection, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. He concluded that the Fall types, which symbolized events connected with the Second Advent, would have their fulfillment with exactly the same precise manner. This meant

that the antitype of the Day of Atonement and the cleansing of the sanctuary of Dan. 8:14 would have its fulfillment on the 10th day of the 7th month of the Jewish year in 1844. According to Karaite reckoning this was October 22.<sup>19</sup>

The Advent believers accepted these corrections as fully in harmony with Scripture and they readily incorporated them into their calculations. Hope and expectancy renewed as numbers grew of those expecting Jesus to come on October 22, 1844. These new insights caused such a surge of missionary enthusiasm that it was called the Seventh Month Movement.

*The Fall Disappointment of 1844.* When at last October 22 arrived the anticipation of believers as well as unbelievers peaked. Would this be their last day? Would judgment break in upon the world? Would Jesus truly return? Believers answered all the above questions affirmatively. Others took a "wait and see" attitude.

At the sound of the clock at midnight an indescribable feeling of disappointment came over the Advent believers. Many mourned throughout the night, weeping, praying, searching, and hoping for some quick answer to the truth about the prophetic time periods. Because their views were so closely connected to their Christian experience, the disappointment tore at their very fabric of faith. Their experiences of expectation had been so sweet, but had so utterly failed. Could Scripture even be relied upon now? What was the meaning of these prophetic time periods? Had they calculated wrong again?

Now we will consider the Adventist reaction to the Great Disappointment and the solutions that the leadership proposed to the disappointed faithful.

#### Reaction toward the Second or Great Disappointment

There was a mixed reaction among the Adventists. Some deplored their experience and refused to have anything to do with time calculations again. Others were so much shaken that they were thoroughly confused and afflicted with doubts. Many, however, were not yet ready to give up their prophetic time calculations.<sup>20</sup> It is with this last class that we will occupy ourselves.

*Attitudes towards the Seventh Month Movement.* Adventists related to the Seventh Month Movement in different ways. Some

considered it a fulfillment of prophecy.<sup>21</sup> Other ones felt God's approval even though Christ's return did not occur.<sup>22</sup> Others rejected it as inaccurate because the Bridegroom did not appear.<sup>23</sup> A few associated it with mesmerism.<sup>24</sup>

Believers who continued to express confidence in prophetic time viewed the Seventh Month Movement in two conflicting ways. One group believed that the time calculations of the Seventh Month Movement were correct. They concentrated their attention on the *manner* in which these prophecies were fulfilled. Yet even many of these continued further timesetting until one of them received a vision not to do so in the Fall of 1845. They based their calculations on the belief that October 22 was a fulfillment of prophecy.

By contrast, the other group approached Scripture with yet new timesettings on the presupposition that October 22 must not have been the end of the 2300 years because the anticipated event did not occur. This latter group continued to preoccupy themselves with a quest for the correct time.

*The Seventh Month Movement was Correct.* Adventists with confidence in the calculations of the Seventh Month Movement did not wait long for an answer to their questions. The solution to their dilemma came on the morning of October 23. Following a prayer meeting for new light, Hiram Edson received an insight that proved the key to why Christ had not returned. He saw that the sanctuary of Daniel 8:14 was not the earth or church but the heavenly sanctuary. Instead of coming to earth on October 22, he observed that Christ had begun His final ministry of cleansing the heavenly sanctuary to fulfill the antitypical Day of Atonement in heaven.

The fog of confusion began to clear among believers who prayerfully pondered the heavenly ministry of their Lord. They discovered the significance of the prophetic periods to Christ's present intercessory ministry and full assurance of His Second Advent and their salvation. This was the essential theological framework for the foundation of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.<sup>25</sup>

*The Seventh Month Movement was Incorrect.* There were Adventists, however, who continued to express confidence in their prophetic predictions felt that something in the calculation of October 22, 1844, was incorrect. They continued further timeset-



ting for the Second Advent. Because of the relevance of this movement to today's scenario we will now especially focus on this group's reaction to the Seventh Month Movement and the solutions they offered through their new time settings.

*Defense of Timesetting—Admission of Mistakes.* In response to the jubilant attitude of the critics, following the Great Disappointment, this group of Adventists defended their position by appealing to "the great Protestant principles of interpretation" and the best authorities of chronology.<sup>26</sup>

On December 28-29, 1844, at the first Adventist conference after the Disappointment, Miller and others admitted a mistake in their previous timesetting, but they affirmed the correctness of their basic view on prophetic time.<sup>27</sup> They felt that their present problem was only a problem of minor discrepancies "as there are four of five years in dispute among our best chronological writers."<sup>28</sup> Many were convinced that "it was only a matter of time" and the prophetic time periods would be fulfilled.<sup>29</sup>

*Reasons for Rejecting the Seventh Month Movement.* Adventists who had given up faith in the Seventh Month Movement used two major lines of reasoning to reject it as of God. The first objection was that the argument of the types must be incorrect; the second, that the previous calculations were faulty because the anticipated events did not take place.

a. Arguments of the types were incorrect. Three weeks after the Disappointment an editorial of the *Advent Herald* stated that because the antitypes of the Spring festivals were fulfilled exactly as to time, it did not necessarily follow that the antitypical fulfillment of Fall festival of the Day of Atonement had to occur in chronological sequence in the Fall. It favored the widely held view that Christ began His ministry in the Most Holy at His ascension and not more than 1800 years later.<sup>30</sup> Consequently the end of 2300 years was still in the future.

b. Inaccuracies of previous calculations. At the beginning of 1845 an editorial expressed the sentiment of many: As the end of the prophetic periods had been reached without Christ's return "we must therefore acknowledge that we were either premature in those dates, or that human chronology is not perfectly accurate."<sup>31</sup> The publication of the scholarly disagreements on the chronology

of the events marking the beginning of the prophetic time periods of the 2520 years,<sup>32</sup> 2450 years,<sup>33</sup> 1335 years,<sup>34</sup> 2300 years,<sup>35</sup> and the end of the 6000 years<sup>36</sup> seemed to support this sentiment and did much to weaken the confidence of the believers in prophecy altogether.

The message was clear: In 1844 prophecy was not fulfilled because Christ the Bridegroom had not returned to earth.<sup>37</sup> Joshua Himes strongly warned that any other interpretation of Christ's coming was "mystical" and "would overthrow our hope entirely, and leave us little else than Swedenbourgianism!"<sup>38</sup>

### Timesettings from the Great to the Third Disappointment

During the next six months some Adventists developed another series of timesettings. Although many articles stressed the imminence of the Second Advent, this time the timesetting thrust was on events related to the antitype of the Great Jubilee year and Passover that symbolized the universal liberation of the captivity of God's people.

*Anticipation of the Imminence of Christ's Return.* In the weeks and months following the Great Disappointment there was still a powerful sense of the imminence of the Second Advent. Faithful Adventists were "daily looking," for Christ could return any day, any hour, any moment.<sup>39</sup> Miller wrote: "I have a strong expectation that Christ will come before the Jewish year will expire; but let us all see to it, that we are ready every day."<sup>40</sup>

Believers felt they were in "a waiting and watching position,"<sup>41</sup> fully convinced that the great events predicted by the time periods were "now near, 'even at the door.'"<sup>42</sup>

*Expectations of Christ's Return in the Spring of 1845.* Some Adventists expected the time periods to terminate at the end of the Jewish year 1844 "at the commencement of the next Jewish year, on the second day of the [New] Moon, April 7th, according to the Caraites reckoning."<sup>43</sup> Of special interest were the Great Jubilee year and Passover, events associated with the theme of liberty and redemption.

*The Jubilee Year.* Miller now predicted that Christ's return would be in April [1845] "before the Jewish year [of 1844] will expire." He based his conviction on the assumption that (1) the

present Jewish year of 1844 was the year of Jubilee; (2) the seventh trumpet began to sound in the seventh Jewish month Karaite reckoning (October 1844); (3) freedom from captivity came during the last month of the Jewish year (Adar); (4) the present deliverance is the antitype of that of what the Jews in the days of Esther experienced during the 13th and 14th day of the month of Adar (Esther 8 and 9).

Deliverance of God's people would come at the end of the year of Jubilee. The reason for this, he said, was that on the first and tenth day of the seventh month the trumpets (October 1844) were to proclaim liberty throughout the whole land (Lev 23: 24; 25: 8-10). This, however, was only a proclamation. Freedom from captivity came at the end of the year (Deut 15:1; Jer 34:14-18). Consequently "we cannot expect deliverance until the last month of the [Jewish] year."<sup>44</sup>

The editor of the *Day Star*, Enoch Jacobs, placed the deliverance at the beginning of the 50th Jubilee year. As the Jubilee trumpet sounded on the 10th day of the seventh month (Lev 25:9) so its antitype sounded a proclamation of liberty through the Midnight Cry in the 49th year of Jubilee. The actual deliverance however would not take place until six months after October 1844 with the arrival of the Great Jubilee.<sup>45</sup>

In April, Appolos Hale modified Miller's expectations by stating that it was the sealing of spiritual Israel, not Christ's coming, that would begin "the present month—at the beginning of the [50th] Jubilee year."<sup>46</sup>

*The Passover.* The theme of deliverance was also expressed by the Passover feast. No wonder there were Adventists that had high hopes on the anniversary of the Passover day during the first month of the Great Jubilee of the Jewish year.<sup>47</sup> When that time also passed uneventfully, Jacobs wrote, "Our third disappointment was a trying one."<sup>48</sup> Hale observed that this disappointment was to many "as great a trial as the passing of the seventh month."<sup>49</sup> Jacobs, however, quickly saw beyond the trials and felt that this Passover was the beginning of a fulfillment in the Kingdom of God.<sup>50</sup>

### Timesettings from the Third to the Fourth Disappointment

*Christ's Return in the Fall of 1845.* The next season that drew the attention of the Adventists was the Fall. This timesetting was primarily derived from Christ's exhortation to constantly *watch* for His return.

*The Chronology of the Watches.* Christ's encouragement to believers to watch during the four watches covering evening, midnight, the cock crowing, and the morning (Mark 13:35, Luke 12:38) some Adventists interpreted as four definite periods of watching for His return. This view made sense after the third disappointment. Looking back over their history Adventists could distinguish four major periods of watchfulness and expectation.

The fulfillment of the first watch was the time of anxious expectation at the close of the Jewish year 1843 in the Spring of 1844. The second or midnight watch was identified with the period of six months following the first disappointment when Adventists proclaimed the True Midnight Cry, "Behold the Bridegroom cometh." It ended with the fulfillment of the antitype of the Jubilee trumpet on the 10th day of the seventh month (October). The third or cock-crowing watch covered a similar period of six months, culminating in a third period of "strong and general expectation of Christ's return." This was the anticipated Great Jubilee of the Spring of 1845. Thus, some Adventists felt they were "unquestionably in the morning watch" and may with confidence expect that He would return before the morning watch would run out.<sup>51</sup>

The *Day Star* editor expected the morning watch to last six months and to close with "the 10th of 17th of the next seventh month, or in the latter part of October" 1845.<sup>52</sup>

One month before the expected termination of the watches James White submitted a revision of the chronology of the watches to the *Day Star*. He had "strong objections" to the above view and said that the Advent experience clearly demonstrated that believers had been in the waiting, watching time since October 22. The period of watching, he expected to last for one year, which he divided into four equal watches of three months each.

The first, White said, began on October 22 and "reached to January, when we got light on the shut door. The second brought us to the Passover. (Midnight, or midway in this watching night.)



The third brought us to the supposed end of the 1335 days in July, since we have been in the morning watch."<sup>53</sup> With full confidence he wrote that "all who see this light will receive a certainty that before the 10th day of the 7th month 1845, our King will come, and we will watch, and like Noah, know the day (Rev 3:3). Awake, awake! awake!! ye heralds of the Jubilee, and tell the scattered flock, The morning cometh!"<sup>54</sup>

*Modifications of the Prophetic Periods.* When Fall approached, some adjusted the chronology of the 2300 years and the Jubilee year to have an October fulfillment, but there was definitely no widespread endorsement or consensus on the matter.

Throughout 1845 there were suggestions as to when the 1335 years would end. Would it be in the Spring, Summer, or Fall? All were sure about the fulfillment of these years before or at the Second Advent because most believers, following an ancient Christian tradition, connected the special blessing (Dan 12:12) with the first resurrection (Rev 20:6). Again Adventists disagreed on the precise historical details of the beginning and end of the 1290 years which determined the end of the 1335 years.

*Christ's Return beyond 1845.* During 1845, besides the major timesetting thrusts, articles appeared pointing to the possibility of a Second Coming beyond the present year. The basis of these predictions was the minor differences among chronologists. These new time theories especially abounded in the *Advent Herald*, the leading paper of Adventists who had rejected the Seventh Month Movement as a fulfillment of prophecy.

Most of these articles pointed to the Fall of 1846 for Christ's return and focussed on adjustments of the 2300, the 1335, and the 2520 years. Several correspondents mentioned the year 1847 as a result of further modification of the 2300 and 1335 years. However, it seemed that the Fall of that year was the extreme limit of the time periods.

In spite of these suggestions and cautions, others stretched the time periods to 1850.

#### A Prophetic Warning Against Timesetting

This climate of continuing timesetting and mounting disappointments brought confusion and uncertainty to many Adven-

tists. What should they believe? Whom could they trust? Could one have confidence in the prophetic messages of the Bible? Was there any way to interpret prophecy with any kind of assurance? Prophecy was such an integral part of Scripture, if it was so obscure, what about the rest of Scripture? These and many other questions haunted the Adventists.

A few days before the passing of time in October 1845, in Fairhaven, Massachusetts, James White was preaching Christ's return in the seventh month. In Carver, just a few miles distant, another Adventist, Ellen Harmon, received a vision that warned that again they "should be disappointed."<sup>55</sup> A few years later she related another vision with a message on timesetting, warning against "false excitement arising from preaching time" because the Lord had shown, "Time will never be a test again." Believers should go "to God daily to know their present duty"<sup>56</sup> instead of looking into the future and being involved in speculations.

Most Adventists, however, did not pay attention to this warning. Their subsequent history showed the devastating effects that timesetting can have. Within a few years the once powerful missionary thrust of the Advent Movement had vanished.

Adventists who heeded her message against timesetting generally worked through the fanaticism and undue excitement accompanying these timesetting movements. Instead of focusing on time, they concentrated on the significance of the prophetic events that had transpired. These were of such relevance that they formed the core of one of the most active and successful missionary organizations the world has ever witnessed: The Seventh-day Adventist Church.

#### The Impact of Time Settings on Adventist Lifestyle

In evaluating the role of timesettings on Adventist lifestyle one observes that there were significant differences between timesetting before the Great Disappointment and after that period. These can be helpful in understanding the characteristics of timesetting currents among Adventist futurists today.

The timesettings during 1843-1845 affected the believers' lifestyle in several ways, the most prominent being the areas of unity and love, evangelism, and Christlikeness.

*Unity and Brotherly Love.* The prophetic and theological messages of Adventists had a broad ecumenical appeal that attracted members from many different churches. The closer they came to 1843 the faster the movement grew and the stronger the opposition became. When churches closed doors against their message and many Adventists were disfellowshipped, they experienced such a bond of unity and love with one another that many compared themselves with the Philadelphia church of brotherly love. Thus instead of being divisive, their prophecies and theology brought about a closeness, eagerness, and unity that was rare.

After the Fall 1844 disappointment, however, timesettings became a source of controversy. The Great Disappointment became a watershed among the believers. One group of Adventists based their approach to time on the understanding that the *calculation* of October 22 as the end of the 2300 years was incorrect and thus the cleansing of the sanctuary was still future. The other group accepted these calculations as indeed correct but admitted that the *view* of the cleansing of the sanctuary was incorrect. Instead of a cleansing of the earth the prophecy predicted the beginning of Christ's cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary.

This fundamental difference led to constant strife and sharp divisions that destroyed loving fellowship that had made it previously so attractive.

*An Evangelistic Lifestyle.* Before 1844 timesetting produced a powerful motivation for an evangelistic lifestyle. Within a few years Adventists had established a mission thrust that reached out on a world-wide scale through their publishing work.

It was *not so much the time prophecies themselves* but their connection with a *Biblical message* of Christ's imminent return that made the Adventist appeal so forceful and effective. Other Christians involved in similar time calculations predicting the end of their time periods during 1843 and 1845 failed to have the same significant impact on the population. Why? Their interpretations failed to arouse or captivate the attention.

The post-1844 timesettings had a negative affect on the evangelistic thrust of the movement. If in doubt, how could others be persuaded? Instead of an outward orientation there was a turn inward. Precious energies were used by in-fighting. How could they

proclaim a message that lacked a solid prophetic foundation? Thus evangelism gave way to internal polemics.

*Christlike Lifestyle.* At first Adventists longed to participate in Christ's Great Commission by proclaiming the "hour of His judgment" to as many as they could reach before it was too late. Consequently the demands for funds were immense. Christ's unselfish life of love and sacrifice for the salvation of humanity, coupled with the shortness of time, inspired many with such an attitude of love that they were willing to make any sacrifice.

During the Seventh Month Movement many, convicted by the prophetic message, were even willing to sacrifice their health destroying habits to live a more Christlike lifestyle in preparation for meeting Him.<sup>57</sup>

After 1844, relentless attacks in most Adventist periodicals became common place on those who believed that the time-prophecy ended in Christ's coming as the Bridegroom to the Ancient of Days. They accused them of being spiritualizers who were burning the truth of Christ's literal return in the fire of spiritualism. Gone was the Christlike lifestyle of love to and self-sacrifice for fellow-believers.

*Reflections on Adventist Futurists.* Among the Adventists who rejected the past fulfillment of prophecy there was no end to timesetting speculations. Each new disappointment left them in a more depressed condition. No wonder that many Adventists lost faith in the prophecies after 1844. At the end of this decade the movement had declined to a small and insignificant group.

The only Adventists who successfully emerged out of this climate of confusion and speculative timesettings were the pioneers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. They continued to believe that the Lord was in the 1844 experience and accepted the warnings against timesetting by Ellen (Harmon) White. Their amazing history is the result of the promise: "Believe in the Lord your God, and you shall be established; believe His prophets, and you shall prosper" (2 Chron 20:20).

Not all Seventh-day Adventists accepted the warning against timesetting. Throughout their history some individuals or small groups have discarded that counsel and proposed new interpreta-



tions of the time prophecies of Daniel and Revelation. But they all failed.

The present interest of some in interpreting the prophetic time periods as literal time to be fulfilled in the near future instead of considering it symbolic time has a number of factors. It just could be that these sincere individuals have no clear understanding of the past experience of the Advent movement. Consequently they are repeating some of the same mistakes as the Adventists after 1844.

Again we see emerging the same sad results on the lifestyle of these modern futurists. Among them flourish many conflicting speculations that have a very destructive impact on the unity of the church. Their constant (and sometimes insidious) criticism of the historicist view of prophecy has fueled distrust toward the "way God has led us in the past" and thus the church and its leadership. This criticism has had a strong negative effect on their evangelistic focus because they are not turned outward.

One of the most powerful arguments against these speculations is to reveal what difference the Biblical view of the fulfillment of the prophetic time periods has made and continues to be making in our lives. If Adventists have the correct prophetic understanding they will reveal it in their lifestyle through their conversations, preaching, and writing. In all these things the matchless love of Christ will be the central focus. It is only in this light that others can see the relevance of the true interpretation of prophecy.

### Endnotes

- 1 Editorial, "When do the Periods End?" *Advent Herald*, April 2, 1845, p. 61. All further references to this periodical are abbreviated as *AH*.
- 2 A. Hale, "The Last Experiment on Definite Time," *AH*, June 18, 1845, p. 149.
- 3 Hale, "Definite Time," p. 149.
- 4 Lt., J. Litch to Himes, *AH*, Nov. 27, 1844, 123; Hale, "Definite Time," p. 149.
- 5 [Bliss], "The Termination of the Prophetic Periods," *AH*, Jan. 1, 1845, p. 165.
- 6 Response to Lt., C. B. Hotchkiss to Himes, *AH*, Feb. 12, 1845, p. 8.
- 7 [Bliss], "Prophetic Periods," p. 165.
- 8 *Ibid.*
- 9 William Miller, *A Lecture on the Typical Sabbaths and Great Jubilee*, (Boston: Joshua V. Himes, 1842), pp. 15-16.
- 10 *Ibid.*, pp. 18-21.
- 11 Editorial, "Address to the Public," *AH*, Nov. 13, 1844, 108; Editorial, "The

- Time Again," Dec. 18, 1844, 152. For the authorities see [Bliss], "Prophetic Periods," p. 165.
- 12 Miller, *Typical Sabbaths and Great Jubilee*, pp. 27-31.
  - 13 "Address to the Public," p. 108; For authorities see [Bliss], "Prophetic Periods," p. 165.
  - 14 Miller, *Typical Sabbaths and Great Jubilee*, p. 31.
  - 15 "Address to the Public," p. 108; Lt., Barnet Matthias to Bliss, Nov. 27, 1844, 122; [Himes], *AH*, Feb. 12, 1845, p. 8.
  - 16 [Bliss], "An Astonishing Ignorance of the Millerites," *AH*, Nov. 27, 1844, p. 124.
  - 17 [Bliss], "Prophetic Periods," p. 165.
  - 18 P. Gerard Damsteegt, *Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1977; reprint ed., Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1990), p. 90.
  - 19 "Address to the Public," p. 109.
  - 20 Lt., Hale to Bliss, *AH*, Sept. 10, 1845, p. 40.
  - 21 Damsteegt, pp. 104-135.
  - 22 Hale, "Definite Time," *AH*, May 7, 1845, p. 100.
  - 23 Editorial, *AH*, June 4, 1845, p. 136.
  - 24 George Storrs in Hale, "Definite Time," *AH*, May 21, 1845, p. 118.
  - 25 Damsteegt, pp. 103-146.
  - 26 J. V. Himes, "A Word to the Advent Brethren Scattered Abroad," *AH*, Feb. 19, 1845, p. 12.
  - 27 Wm. Miller et. al., "Low-Hampton Conference," *AH*, Jan. 15, 1845, 183.
  - 28 *Ibid.*
  - 29 F. G. Brown, "The Safe Position," *AH*, Jan. 8, 1845, p. 178; Editorial, "Prophetic Time Not Expired," *AH*, Feb. 19, 1845, p. 12.
  - 30 "Address To the Public," p. 110.
  - 31 Editorial, "Prophetic Periods," *AH*, Jan. 1, 1845, p. 164.
  - 32 [Bliss], "Prophetic Periods," pp. 164, 165; Himes, "Advent Brethren," p. 12.
  - 33 [Bliss], "Prophetic Periods," p. 165; Himes, "Advent Brethren," p. 12.
  - 34 Himes, "End of the Prophetic Periods," *AH*, Dec. 3, 1845, p. 133; Himes, "Advent Brethren," p. 12.
  - 35 [Bliss], "Prophetic Periods," p. 165; F. G. Brown, p. 178; C. Bywater, "On Time," *AH*, Jan. 15, 1845, p. 184; [Himes], Response, p. 8; Editorial, "Time Not Expired," p. 12; Hale, "End of the Prophetic Periods," *AH*, March 12, 1845, p. 38; "Conference of Adventists at New York," *AH*, May 21, 1845, p. 118.
  - 36 Editorial, "The Time in the Year of Creation," *AH*, Jan. 8, 1845, p. 174.
  - 37 Himes, "Advent Brethren," p. 13.
  - 38 *Ibid.*
  - 39 "Address To the Public," p. 110; Editorial, "The Time," *AH*, Dec. 24, pp. 156-157.
  - 40 Lt., Miller to Bliss, *AH*, Feb. 12, 1845, p. 3.
  - 41 Himes, "Advent Brethren," p. 13.
  - 42 Himes, "Prophetic Periods," p. 134. See also Brown, p. 178; Miller, "Elijah the Prophet," *AH*, Feb. 5, 1845, p. 203.
  - 43 Editorial, "End of the Jewish Year," *AH*, April 2, 1845, p. 64. The Rabbinical year had ended on March 9 (*Ibid.*).
  - 44 Lt., Miller to Himes, p. 2.

- 45 E. Jacobs, "Letter to Bro. Storrs," *Day Star*, Feb. 18, 1845, p. 4. All further references to this periodical are abbreviated as *DS*.
- 46 Hale, "Signs and Trials," *AH* April 16, 1845, p. 79.
- 47 [E. Jacobs], "The Passover," *DS*, April, 1845, p. 48.
- 48 See [Jacobs], "The Watches," *DS*, July 15, 1845, p. 38.
- 49 Hale, "Definite Time," p. 100.
- 50 [Jacobs], "Passover," *DS*, April, 1845, p. 48.
- 51 W. Thayer, "The Watches," *DS*, July 8, 1845, p. 34; [Jacobs], "Watches," *DS*, p. 38; Letter, J. Hamilton to Jacobs, *DS*, Aug. 18, 1845, 5; Letter, R. G. Bunting to Jacobs, *DS*, Sept. 6, 1845, p. 18; Samuel Pearce, "The Morning Watch," *DS*, Oct. 11, 1845, p. 49.
- 52 [Jacobs], "Watches," *DS*, p. 38.
- 53 James White, "Watchman, What of the Night?" *DS*, Sept. 20, 1845, pp. 25-26.
- 54 *Ibid.*, p. 26.
- 55 James White, *A Word to the Little Flock*, [Brunswick, ME: J. White], 1847, p. 22.
- 56 Lt., Ellen G. White to Dear Brethren, *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald Extra*, July 21, 1851, p. 4.
- 57 Joseph Bates, *A Seal of the Living God*, New Bedford, [MA: J. Bates], 1849, p. 67.

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