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The President's Page

Norman R. Gulley, President
Adventist Theological Society

The 1998 double issue of *JATS* you hold in your hands contains some of the best papers and addresses from the 1998 Jerusalem Bible Conference, all peer-reviewed by two or more referees. Those who were there will never forget that wonderful week, but memories of papers heard is fleeting. Now all subscribers can read the complete versions, including notes. Many are groundbreaking. All are useful and interesting. May you be blessed as you study.

I'm pleased to welcome Ed Christian as the new editor of *JATS*. He was elected managing editor in Jerusalem and brought the 1997 double issue on Revelation to completion. Last summer, following Frank Holbrook's retirement, he was elected editor. Like C. S. Lewis before him, he is an English professor by occupation who brings that literary training to his teaching and writing about the Bible, approaching it, as it were, on its unprotected flank rather than head on through the usual well-armed medium of seminary studies. I think you'll find that, also like Lewis, he helps us see the Word in fresh ways.

I'm also pleased to welcome two new associate editors on whom Dr. Christian will be leaning for technical and theological expertise: William Shea, recently retired from the Biblical Research institute, and Roy Gane, Old Testament professor at the SDA Theological Seminary at Andrews and also associate editor of *AUSS*. They are among our denomination's most capable scholars.

You may notice some stylistic changes in this issue. The type is smaller, which means we can include more articles. We have switched from endnotes to footnotes, as this is more convenient for readers, and we have begun hyphenating. You might discover some minor stylistic quirks in some articles with things like quotation marks and spacing, due to authors using a large variety of word processing programs, some of which don't translate perfectly to the Macintosh computers and programs used by the staff. We hope you will bear with us as knowledge increases and the editors run to and fro learning new technologies.

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A Tribute to Frank Holbrook, JATS Editor, 1993-1997

Norman R. Gulley, President
Adventist Theological Society

It is a pleasure to dedicate this issue of the *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* to my friend Frank Holbrook in thanks for the eight years he has devoted to the journal—three as Associate Editor and five as Editor, all unpaid. Few realize the thousands of hours he has spent in his study considering each article, editing, polishing, turning it into something as close to perfection as possible. Given his humble character, Frank may take little pleasure in this tribute, but the officers of the Adventist Theological Society think it important that the truth be known and our appreciation publicly attested.

Frank Holbrook began his ministry in 1950 as an evangelist in the Potomac Conference. He was the tent master, led song service, and played his violin.

One of Frank's first sermons was on the four horsemen in Revelation 6. The tent they were using for the evangelistic meetings was old and rotten in places. While Frank was preaching, a storm came up and the wind started to howl—a proper setting for his topic. Frank looked around for his colleagues, wanting help with the tent, but they were nowhere to be found. Finally he asked some of the men in the audience to drop the sides and help tighten up the tent. The winds increased, and they finally had to abandon the tent and cancel the meeting. After Frank had taken his carload of people home, he stopped by his little apartment and changed out of his one good suit, then went back to the tent. The tent had collapsed. He found his colleagues hammering in pulled-up tent stakes. He asked them where they had been, and they told him they were under the platform praying the Lord would stop the storm. There is a time for action as well as for praying.

In the summer of 1953 Frank was given his first district, in Winchester, Virginia. Over the next five years he pastored in various districts in the Potomac Conference. In 1958 Frank's brother offered to send him to the Seminary, which was located in Takoma Park, MD, at that time. When the Seminary moved to

GULLEY: A TRIBUTE TO FRANK HOLBROOK

Berrien Springs, MI, he moved his family there to continue his studies. In four years he completed three graduate degrees: Master of Archeology and History of Antiquity, Bachelor of Divinity, and Master of Theology. Upon graduation he was offered his first teaching position: at Shenandoah Valley Academy, where he taught from 1962–64.

During the summer of 1964 Frank moved his family again, this time to Southern Missionary College, where he spent the next seventeen years teaching in the Religion Department. Over the years he taught many courses: Old Testament, Church History, Prophets, New Testament, Pauline Epistles, Sanctuary, Teachings of Jesus, Adventist Heritage, Bible Doctrines, Methods of Bible Study, and seven years of Greek I, II, and III.

Frank Holbrook was a colleague of mine when he taught at what is now Southern Adventist University. His classes were famous as in-depth biblical studies of important doctrines like the Sanctuary, and he was well versed in Hebrew and Greek. He gave evidence of a great grasp of biblical truths. Those taking classes from him always got their money's worth, receiving insights into Scripture which carefully grounded them in Seventh-day Adventist beliefs. Religion majors were well prepared for the ministry.

While at Southern he served as acting head of the Religion Department for two years. He also represented the college on the large committee of the Biblical Research Institute. He taught during three administrations: those of Dr. Rees, Dr. Wilber Schneider, and Dr. Frank Knittel.

As a teacher Frank's home was always open for students. There were many lively Sabbath dinner conversations, and Saturday night it was common to have the smell of popcorn in the air and a group of students around the dining room table playing games.

Frank always tried to make his classes practical. Many of his students were theology majors, and he wanted them to be able to make the Bible meaningful to their parishioners. Many of his Greek students have commented that He had a way of making this ancient language practical—it wasn't just verbs, nouns, and tenses.

Frank was also "known" for his tests. Probably his most famous test was in his Pauline Epistles class. It was the first test of the class, and it was over Paul's three missionary journeys. It was such a factual test that it was a disaster for those students who had difficulty memorizing. However, though his tests were hard, he was always fair, and he helped his students in any way he could.

In addition to teaching, Frank also developed another talent, writing and editing. Elder Kenneth Holland, who was then editor of *These Times*, published in Nashville, invited Frank to write a column for the magazine answering Bible questions. This was the beginning of an eighteen year commitment. Frank answered Bible questions from all over the world. He not only wrote his column each month, but he answered each person's question individually.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

In the summer of 1981, Frank and his wife Donna moved to Washington, D.C., where he served as an Associate Director of the Biblical Research Institute until 1993. Frank spent most of this time defending the Seventh-day Adventist Church all over the world, though his primary task was editing and writing.

Over the years he edited or wrote eight books, including the seven volumes of the Daniel & Revelation Committee Series—a ten year project. It was his duty to reconcile contradictory views and make sure each article followed the positions agreed on by the committee. The writers gave him the articles—sometimes in rather rough condition—and he did the rest. What we read as we use these valuable books is not only the work of the scholars who wrote the articles, but Frank's work. The scholars trusted him to do it right. He also wrote six Sabbath School Lesson Quarterlies, six sets of lesson helps, and numerous articles. One notable contribution is his book *The Atoning Priesthood of Jesus Christ*, published by the ATS.

In 1993 Frank retired from the BRI and moved to Dalton, GA. There his dear wife Donna died, but sunshine returned to his life when he remarried. Oddly enough, his new wife, Bonnie, had been a college sweetheart of his back at Washington Missionary College who had never forgotten him. Frank wanted to stay active. He taught a Sabbath School class in Dalton, but he wanted to do more. He and his son and church members who lived in Murray County started holding services in a storefront in Chatsworth, GA. The group has grown with the Lord's blessing, and they now have their own facility and have been organized as a Company, with fifty or more people attending each week.

Frank Holbrook worked on *JATS* from its very first issue, including his five years as editor. He performed a yeoman's task in meticulously working over manuscripts. We always knew that after Frank had finished with an article, its biblical and theological accuracy had been checked and it was ready for publication. With his retirement an era of great scholar-editors comes to an end—Frank Holbrook, Gordon Hyde, Leo Van Dolson, Gerhard Hasel, Mervyn Maxwell—and a younger generation picks up the mantle as best it can.

On behalf of the Adventist Theological Society I want to express our deep gratitude to you, Frank, for the excellence you put into your work of editing the *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*.

We wish you God's continued blessing as you retire from being editor, and we will always be grateful to you for your excellent contribution to the Society. You served with distinction.

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Unchaining the Bible: Putting the Bible Back in the Pew

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While teaching a summer New Testament class, I discovered to my dismay the serious biblical illiteracy among college students. I was teaching in the first epistles of John and simply referred to Nicodemus to make a point. Thinking the reference to Nicodemus needed no further explanation, I continued the lecture.

“Who’s Nicodemus?” came the honest query of a puzzled student. Before I could respond, another student chimed in, “Yeah, who is this Nicodemus?” I was stunned. One student had graduated from one of our academies and the other attended public school until college but had grown up in the church. How could they be so uninformed about the Bible? Probably you have experienced something similar in recent years. The biblical illiteracy among believers is astounding. We see it in the Sabbath School. We see it in Bible discussions. We see it in our academy and college classrooms. To me, this is clear evidence that the Bible is no longer in the pew. Oh yes, the physical display of the Bible is there. The book racks of our pews are filled with Bibles available for use during the service, should there be some call to open them. But who is reading the Bible? Who is studying the Bible? Who really cares about the Bible? If we are honest, we must confess that the Bible has very little real meaning in the life of most affluent Christians.

The spiritual lethargy and illiteracy that haunts our churches and schools testifies to the modern-day chaining of the Word of God. Something has bound the Word and is keeping it out of the pew. Uncovering and breaking the chains that shackle Scripture, I believe, is the primary work of today’s Bible teachers. We need to break the fetters that are holding believers back from the serious study of God’s Word. Putting the Bible back in the pew is not just something nice, but it is necessary. Revival and reformation will only come as we unchain the Bible and get God’s people back into the diligent study of God’s Word.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Satan understands how powerful the Bible is in the pew and has worked through the centuries to keep the Bible away from believers. It was his demonic workings that brought on the darkest period of the Christian church.

Satan well knew that the Holy Scriptures would enable men to discern his deceptions and withstand his power. It was by the word that even the Savior of the world had resisted his attacks. At every assault, Christ presented the shield of eternal truth, saying, 'It is written.' To every suggestion of the adversary, He opposed the wisdom and power of the word. In order for Satan to maintain his sway over men, and establish the authority of the papal usurper, he must keep them in ignorance of the Scriptures. The Bible would exalt God and place finite men in their true position; therefore its sacred truths must be concealed and suppressed. This logic was adopted by the Roman Church. For hundreds of years the circulation of the Bible was prohibited. The people were forbidden to read it or have it in their houses, and unprincipled priests and prelates interpreted its teachings to sustain their pretensions.¹

Historians record that during the Dark Ages, in many instances the Bible was chained to the walls of church libraries to keep it from the laity. The chaining of the Bible during this dark period of Christianity resulted in the widespread ignorance that characterized the people of that time.

Are we not experiencing a similar blight of blindness and biblical illiteracy among believers today? Of course, there are no prohibitions against having the Bible in the home or studying the Bible, but it is evident, as mentioned earlier, that the Bible in the pew is rarely opened. It seems to me that there is a black cloud over the Word in this so called age of enlightenment. I seem to hear the rattling of chains in the distance. Could it be the sounds of the modern-day chains that are keeping the Bible out of the pew?

Three Chains that Enslave

I believe the rattling that we hear in the distance are those chains that have enslaved the people of God. In fact, I believe I have caught sight of three of those chains: the chain of affluence, the chain of academia, and the chain of apathy. Let's consider each chain separately.

The Chain of Affluence. First, let's look at the chain of affluence. There is a liberating aspect to God's Word. As believers search the Scriptures, many experience both spiritual and financial freedom. The liberating message of the Bible causes many to ascend the economic ladder, moving from the bottom rungs to at least the middle rungs. But the very prosperity that becomes a testament of the liberating power of God's word ends up placing a person at the point of thinking he doesn't need God's Word. The very gift of prosperity, which God intends to bring freedom and endow His work, ends up enslaving.

God warned about the perils of prosperity.

¹ E. G. White, *The Great Controversy*, 51.

HILL: UNCHAINING THE BIBLE

When you have eaten and are satisfied, you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land which He has given you. Beware lest you forget the Lord your God by not keeping His commandments and His ordinances and His statutes which I am commanding you today; lest, when you have eaten and are satisfied, and have built good houses and lived in them, and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and gold multiply, and all that you have multiplies, then your heart becomes proud, and you forget the Lord your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. (Deut. 8:10-14)

As the chain of affluence tightens, the tendency to spend less and less time with the Word becomes noticeable. Affluence gives rise to self-sufficiency and self-sufficiency moves believers to trusting more in self than in Scripture.

The Chain of Academia. Then there is the chain of academia. Whether intentional or unintentional, we pastors, teachers, and administrators have communicated to students that studying about the Bible is more important than studying the Bible. We have conveyed to students that reason is higher than inspiration. We have transmitted to our students the concept that the laity will never mature in the Word. We have spoken loudly, “You will always need a scholar.” One former professor stated it this way, “the teacher must always be the teacher and the student, the student.” Our constant references to what the scholars say elevates mere men as the ultimate authority. Therefore, students feel as if they cannot do serious Bible study without the support of scholars. We have allowed church members to think that real Bible study is reserved for scholars only. E.G. White makes this statement: “The Bible was not written for the scholar alone; on the contrary, it was designed for the common people.”²

I believe the following incident highlights this intellectual chain. Shortly after beginning my teaching career I attended my first theological society meetings. While meeting other participants, I was confronted about my credentials to teach New Testament on the college level. I was asked, “What subjects do you teach?” I sheepishly replied, “I teach New Testament and Applied Theology.” “And what degree do you have?” my scholar interrogator retorted. I admitted that I had only a Doctor of Ministry degree. His intimidating reply still rings in my ears, “I thought they only allowed Ph.D.s to teach New Testament at the college level.” The message was clear— only scholars can really understand the Bible.

This chain of academic intimidation is used not only in the classroom but in the pulpit. We preachers show off our academic acrobatics in the pulpit, dazzling the saints, causing them to say as they leave the church, “Our pastor is smart. He’s deep. I will never understand the Bible like him.” This academic intimidation becomes an excuse for many to stop studying their Bibles. I cannot imagine that God is pleased with the sounds of the academic chains in our class-

² E. G. White, *Steps to Christ*, 89.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

rooms or pulpits. I believe we need to break the chain of academia. We need to help our students become not only students of the Word but teachers of the Word.

The Chain of Apathy. Finally, we must consider the chain of apathy. Perhaps of all the chains this one enslaves the greatest number of believers. Many have ambivalent feelings about the Bible. They know it is a good book, even God's Word, but they struggle with its relevance for today. There is a listlessness about the sacred things in general and the Holy Scriptures in specific. The old saying, "familiarity breeds contempt," may be a reason for the chain of apathy that chokes so many of today's Christians. With so many Bibles accessible to believers, maybe we have just taken the Bible for granted. Whatever the case, there is so little emotional attachment to the Scriptures that now many believers don't even feel bad for not reading and studying them. Jesus admonished those fettered with the chain of apathy, "I know your works and what you are doing; you are neither cold or hot. Would that you were cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm (apathetic) and neither cold or hot, I will spew you out of my mouth" (Rev. 3:15, 16).

Apathy is a sad spiritual state. It numbs believers, leaving them unaware of their true spiritual condition. This state of limbo keeps them from hearing the rattle of the chains that restrict their Bible study. We Bible teachers have a mammoth job to do. Isaiah summarizes our work as purveyors of God's Word as this: "To open the eyes of the blind, to bring out prisoners from the dungeon, and those who sit in darkness from the prison." (Isaiah 42:7) The clarion call is for teachers who will break the chains, loosen the shackles, and set believers free in the Word of God.

Three Effective Chain Breakers

Who best can break the chains and put the Bible back in the pew? I believe that we teachers have the greatest opportunity to loose the fetters from believers. I believe we have the greatest chance of inspiring students to become serious searchers after truth. My belief is based on what I consider to be Paul's hierarchical list of Spiritual Gifts.

In his first list of spiritual gifts, I Corinthians 12:28, teachers rank number three. But in Paul's second spiritual gifts list, Ephesians 4:11, teachers move to the number five position. Observe though, that whether teachers rank third or fifth, they are listed with the spiritual gifts that may be considered as having the greatest importance to the growth and development of the church.

Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers are all crucial to the well being of God's church. It is interesting, though, that in this list of leading spiritual gifts, all include some aspect of teaching. All are called to be purveyors of God's word. Therefore, I believe that we teachers, whether pastor, college professor, academy Bible teacher, or administrator, must take the lead in breaking the chains that hinder God's people from spending time in the Word. The

HILL: UNCHAINING THE BIBLE

spiritual gift of teaching carries with it the special work of equipping and building believers. Our work builds Bible students. Our work equips believers. Our spiritual gift, more than any other gift, does more, when guided by God's spirit, to lead people into the study of the Word. Therefore, we must be ever mindful of the seriousness of the work we do, for either we will help in breaking the chains or we will assist in tightening them.

Demystify the Tools. What can we do to break the chain of affluence, the chain of academia, the chain of apathy and put the Bible back in the pew? I believe that there are three ways we can break these chains. First, we can demystify the tools of Bible study.

In recent years, there has developed the concept that certain tools hold the key to the complete understanding of the Bible. We, especially in the academic community, have made believers feel that without the facility of the original languages, archeological studies, and systemic theology one can never become a serious student of Scripture. We are often guilty of mystical knowledge of the kind Paul confronted in Corinth. In Corinth, there were Greeks who believed that there was a secret body of knowledge only available to an elite group. Do we consider ourselves an elite group? Are we what W.E.B. Du Bois called the "Talented Tenth"? When it comes to Bible study there are no elite groups. No one group has a corner on the market of Bible study. Paul settled the question of elitism by writing, "For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised, God has chosen, the things that are not, that He might nullify the things that are that no man should boast before God" (I Corinthians 1:26-29).

This is not to question the value and importance of the tools. They are of great help to the sincere searcher after truth. But there is nothing magical or mysterious about the tools. The tools in and of themselves do not insure a proper revelation and interpretation of God's word. Let's demystify the tools! Why can't we teach Greek to our local elders? Why aren't we developing curriculums in the language of laymen that cover hermeneutics, archeology, and systematic theology? Why do we chain these tools to the walls of our educational institutions? Stripping away the mystery that surrounds the tools will encourage more believers to make use of these helpful instruments in their own Bible study.

Humanize the Teacher. The second way we can shatter the chains is by humanizing the teacher. We need to make sure that students don't deify us. It is easy for students to place us in a god-like position. We can become more than mere men to them. We are scholars, authorities, gods. Instead of mining the ore of truth for themselves, we allow our students watch us dig out precious jewels from the Scripture for them. I can tell you from experience how wonderful it feels when people come to me for answers about the deep issues of the Bible

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

and leave feeling they have heard the voice of God, even though I know it was simply my professional opinion. What an ego boost to have a class eating out of my hand as I dazzle them with my understanding of the Pauline epistles. I can tell you how it feels when I am admired for my scholarly explanation of the Word.

But if we are going to shatter the chains of affluence, academia, and apathy, if we are working to put the Bible back in the pew, we must constantly remind our students that we are mere men. We must say, like Paul and Barnabus, “Men, why are you doing these things? We are also men of the same nature as you” (Acts 14:15). We must be heard echoing the words of Paul, “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves” (I Corinthians 4:7). Students should leave our presence convinced that if God can reveal truth to the teacher, He can reveal truth to them.

Helping the student see us as human beings also means letting the student into our hearts—becoming transparent. It’s letting the student see our struggles and sometimes insecurity about the Word. But above all, we teachers must be a living testimony of the power of the Word. The Bible must first be real to us before we can make it real to our students. Have we been transformed by the Word? Is the Word of God a living force in our lives? As students observe how Bible study has impacted our lives, they are more likely to follow our example in personal Bible study. The student must see us as “living epistles.” Their excitement about Bible study will be in direct proportion to the effect of the Word on our lives.

Lift Up the True Interpreter. Finally, we can crush the chains and put the Bible back in the pew by uplifting the True Interpreter of Scripture. Before Jesus ascended to His Father, He left this promise, “But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth” (John 16:13). We pastors, teachers, and administrators must uphold the Holy Spirit as the True Interpreter of Scripture. We must be convinced, and convince our students, that only the Spirit of God knows the mind of God. Therefore, we must teach our students to lean on God’s Spirit for a true and complete understanding of the Word.

Our degrees and teaching experience are only parts of the interpretive equation. We must keep in mind that understanding the Bible is the work of God’s Spirit. Paraphrasing Zechariah 4:6, “not by Greek, nor by Hebrew, nor by scholarship, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of hosts.” The study of the Bible is unlike the study of any other subject. Mrs. White, explaining this point, wrote, “We should not engage in the study of the Bible with that self-reliance with which so many enter the domains of science, but with a prayerful dependence upon God and a sincere desire to learn His will. The Holy Spirit alone can cause us to feel the importance of those things easy to be understood, or prevent us

HILL: UNCHAINING THE BIBLE

from wresting truths difficult of comprehension.”³ If Bible study was simply about obtaining information, then there would be no need for spiritual insights. But searching the scripture is about receiving the breath of God. It’s about being resuscitated daily by Christ, the Living Word.

Scripture as God’s Breath. I discovered something a couple years ago while studying God’s Word that fastened in my mind the importance of daily Bible study. The Holy Spirit brought together for me three texts—Genesis 2:7, II Timothy 3:16, and Hebrews 4:12—which solidified for me the vivifying result of searching the Scriptures.

Genesis 2:7 explains how we received life: “Then the Lord God formed man of the dust from the ground, and breath into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.” Hebrews 4:12 explains that the word of God is not an inanimate object but a living entity: “For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” Paul then explains how the Word became a living entity: “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness” (II Timothy 3:16). The Greek word for inspired is *theopnuesto* which literally means “God-breathed.”

The Scripture became a living entity because God breathed into it life. Therefore all who read and study God’s word become recipients of the breath of God. I like to think of it this way: every time we study the Scriptures, God is breathing new life into us. What an exciting thought! As we apply ourselves to the word, God’s Spirit bends over us and breathes new life into us. That’s why we teachers must break the chains. We must help students to get under the oxygen mask of God’s Word so that they may be revived by the oxygen of the Spirit. We cannot resuscitate them. Only the Spirit of God can give life to the soul.

Conclusion

My wife and I do ministry every weekend across North America, and it is clear to us that the Bible is not in the pew and in many instances not even in the pulpit. We have witnessed, first hand, churches that have very little life. We have seen members who seem not to have the joy of the Lord nor the certain hope of salvation. But I believe the nebulous feeling about salvation can be remedied to a large degree by getting the church back into serious Bible study. I believe that two things will come about when the chains are broken and the Bible is put back in the pew.

First, many will discover a certain hope of salvation. The uncertainty of salvation is a menacing problem among many Adventists. We pastors, teachers, and administrators have done an excellent job of indoctrinating members, but we

³ *The Great Controversy*, 599.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

have not done as good a job leading people to Christ and helping them to become diligent students of His Word. As we loose the chains and lead them into personal Bible study, they will find the Christ of Scripture.

God speaks to us in His Word. Here we have in clearer lines the revelation of His character, of His dealings with men, and the great work of redemption. Here is open before us the history of patriarchs and prophets and other holy men of old. They were men 'subject to like passions as we are.' We see how they struggled through discouragements like our own, how they fell under temptations as we have done, and yet took heart again and conquered through the grace of God: and beholding, we are encouraged in striving after righteousness. As we read of the precious experiences granted them, of the light and love and blessing it was theirs to enjoy, and of the work they wrought through the grace given them, the spirit that inspired them kindles a flame of holy emulation in our hearts, and a desire to be like them in character—like them to walk with God.⁴

Believers will then be convinced that there is nothing we can do to save ourselves. They will understand that the Christ of Scripture saves us solely by His grace. They will see the fruitlessness of attempting to work their way to heaven and will then throw themselves in the arms of Christ, trusting Him for their complete salvation. Then joy will fill their lives. They will testify of the certainty of their salvation in their work and in their witness. We pastors, teachers, and administrators will not have to spoon feed them the Word, but they will eat goodly helpings daily because they will see Bible study as life.

And finally, as we put the Bible back in the pew, there will be revival and reformation. History testifies that once the chains of biblical illiteracy were broken during the Dark Ages and the people received the word, revival and reformation took place. I believe that this same divine phenomena will take place again as the Bible once again becomes meaningful to the rank and file of the church. Serious Bible study always revitalizes church members, and revitalization brings change. People who study the Word not only experience transformation in their life but start calling for change in the world around them—they want reformation. So we'd better get ready, because when we loose God's people in the Word, change will come. Freeing people in the Scriptures forces them to question the status quo. Breaking the chains is a call for reformation.

I want revival. I want reformation. What about you? Let's break the chains of affluence, academia, and apathy. Let's put the Bible back in the pew.

⁴ *Steps to Christ*, 87–88.

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The Lesser and the Greater Lights: A Re-examination of the Relationship of the Writings of Ellen White to the Bible

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In a recent editorial William Johnsson reminded us again that as Seventh-day Adventists we are the “Remnant” spoken of in Rev.12:17.¹ In harmony with the characteristics of that “Remnant,” we will have the “testimony of Jesus,” which the apostle John identifies as the “spirit of prophecy.”²

Not having been born into a Seventh-day Adventist home, it came to me as a shock when at age sixteen I first heard that Adventists believed Ellen G. White to be a genuine manifestation of that “spirit of prophecy.” And as I soon discovered, she was often quoted in Adventist pulpits. My father, a Baptist, attended a Seventh-day Adventist church only twice, and both times came away asking, “Who is this Ellen White? Why don’t they use the Bible?” He never became an Adventist. That was in the 1950s. Times have changed, and the locus of preaching has gravitated more solidly to the Bible, but we do well often to remind ourselves what relationship her writings should have to Scripture.

What was Ellen White’s view of Scripture? Did she believe her writings to be equal to or even superior to the Bible? Did she understand them to be an indispensable addition to the Bible?

To correctly understand the answers to those questions, it is imperative that we understand her view of revelation and inspiration.

¹ William Johnsson, *Adventist Review*, May 14, 1998, 5.

² Rev 19:10. While the phrase “spirit of prophecy” applies in the broadest sense to the Holy Spirit and His work through all prophets, canonical and non-canonical, in the eschatological context of Rev 12:17 it is a distinguishing characteristic and as such must apply to a modern manifestation of the gift.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Ellen White's Understanding of Revelation and Inspiration

The introduction to *The Great Controversy* and pages 15 to 23 of *Selected Messages*, vol.1, contain the clearest statements Ellen White wrote to aid our understanding of how God communicates divine truth. While she did not believe that God dictated His messages word for word to His specially chosen messengers (except on rare occasions), she would have firmly rejected the contemporary “encounter” view that holds that no divine messages were communicated to the prophets, and that the Bible therefore contains no absolute, normative truth.. While she did not believe that every individual word chosen was inspired (i.e. “God-breathed”), she did believe that the “men” were inspired. “Inspiration,” she wrote, “acts not on the man’s words or his expressions but on the man himself who, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, is imbued with thoughts.”³

She explained, “The writers of the Bible had to express their ideas in human language. It was written by human men.”⁴ Thus she believed that the “writers of the Bible were God’s penmen, not His pen.”⁵ And to clarify further she added, “the words receive the impress of the individual mind. The divine mind is diffused. The divine mind and will is combined with the human mind, thus the utterances of the man are the word of God.”⁶ The messages of the prophets, whether written or oral, were overshadowed and imbued, she believed, by the guiding ministry of the Holy Spirit. Thus she could declare, “I take the Bible just as it is, as the Inspired Word. I believe its utterances in an entire Bible.”⁷

Mrs. White acknowledged that there are mistakes in the Bible, but assured, “All the mistakes will not cause trouble to one soul, or cause any feet to stumble, that would not manufacture difficulties from the plainest revealed truth.”⁸ And she warned against “trying to find something to criticize in God’s Word.”⁹ It was her position that the essential truths of Scripture had been providentially preserved intact for all time. Thus, while acknowledging the presence of mistakes, she could declare, “In His Word, God has committed to men the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are to be accepted as an authoritative, infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the revealer of doctrines, and the test of experience.”¹⁰

The Continuation of the Prophetic Gift

While we believe that the Bible is an “infallible revelation of His will,” and is the “standard,” unlike most other denominations we do not believe that the

³ Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, vol. 1, 21.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁰ Ellen White, *The Faith I Live By*, 13.

ASHWORTH: THE LESSER AND THE GREATER LIGHTS

genuine gift of prophecy ceased with the death of John the Revelator. Since our inception as a denomination, we have believed that Ellen White was another in the long line of prophet-messengers who, though not canonical, and different in purpose and function, was as inspired as were her prophetic forebears. That does not mean however that her writings are on an equal footing with Scripture. Just as those prophetic writers who followed Moses were judged to be genuine only if they did not contradict formerly revealed truth (cf. Isa. 8:20), so the New Testament writers were judged by their faithfulness to the teachings of the Old Testament. In the same way all later prophets must be judged by their unswerving confirmation of the entire Bible.

Pioneer Views of the Lesser and Greater Lights

As early as 1847, James White, while holding to a *prima scriptura* view, confirmed that God would continue to utilize the gift of prophecy. He explained,

The Bible is a perfect, and complete revelation. It is our only rule of faith and practice. But this is no reason why God may not show the past, present, and future fulfillment of his word, in these last days, by dreams and visions: according to Peter's testimony. True visions are given to lead us to God, and his written word; but those that are given for a new rule of faith and practice, separate from the Bible, cannot be from God, and should be rejected.¹¹

The same year the church was organized, Uriah Smith took issue with the *Sola Scriptura* position that many were using to repudiate any post-biblical manifestation of the prophetic gift. He wrote,

The Protestant principle, of 'the Bible and the Bible alone,' is of itself good and true; and we stand upon it as firmly as anyone can; but when re-iterated in connection with outspoken denunciations of the visions, it has specious appearance for evil. . . . When we claim to stand on the Bible and Bible alone, we bind ourselves to receive, unequivocally and fully, all that the Bible teaches.¹²

Under the title "Our Use of the Visions of Sr. White," J. N. Andrews, as editor of *the Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, wrote in 1870,

"The work of the Holy Spirit may be divided into two parts: First, that which is designed simply to convert and to sanctify the persons affected by it. Second, that which is for the purpose of opening the truth of God, and of correcting error, and of reproving and rebuking secret sins. This part of the work is wrought by what the Scriptures term Spiritual Gifts. These exist, not for the especial good of the person to whose trust they are committed, but for the benefit of the whole body of the church."¹³

¹¹ *A Word to the Little Flock*, p. 13.

¹² Uriah Smith, *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, January 13, 1870. See Tim Crosby's article "Why I Don't Believe in *Sola Scriptura*," *Ministry*, October, 1987, 11-15.

¹³ J. N. Andrews, *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, February 15, 1870.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

The understanding of the early leaders of the church was paralleled by Ellen White in her statement at the close of her first book in 1851, “I recommend to you, dear reader, the Word of God as the rule of your faith and practice. By that Word we are to be judged. God has, in that Word, promised to give visions in the ‘last days’; not for a new rule of faith, but for the comfort of His people, and to correct those who err from Bible truth.”¹⁴

In those early views are enunciated several of the principal purposes for the writings of Ellen White. James White identified perhaps the two most important ones: first, to lead us to God, and second, to lead us to the Word. Uriah Smith identified three others—clarifying and explaining the Bible, correcting error, and reproving and rebuking secret sins. In that initial written description, Ellen White added two more—for the comforting and consoling of His people, and to bring those back who wander from Bible truth. Those seven purposes alone would justify the value of, and explain the enduring interest in the writings of Ellen White.

Metaphors for Understanding

Greater Light/Lesser Light. To aid our understanding of the purposes for which God has communicated through Ellen White to His people in this late hour of human history, and to more clearly perceive the relationship of her writings to the Bible, six different metaphors prove helpful. The first comes from Gen. 1:16 “God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night.” Ellen White used that passage to create one of the most apt metaphors for understanding the value and purpose of her works, that of the “Greater Light/Lesser Light.”

By 1902, the church’s educational institutions were deeply in debt, and Mrs. White had decided to dedicate the proceeds from the sale of *Christ’s Object Lessons* to the reduction of the debt. In a published letter she urged all of the church members to help in this missionary venture, assuring them that the book contained “precious, comforting light” and that from the book’s pages “this light is to shine into the hearts of men and women, leading them to the Saviour.”¹⁵

A little later in her letter, she explained, “The Lord has sent his people much instruction, line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, and there a little. Little heed is given to the Bible, and the Lord has given a lesser light to lead men and women to the greater light.”¹⁶

Thus she draws our attention to two important realities—the Word of God is sorely neglected, and her writings were given to draw all back to it.

In a statement the meaning of which cannot be misunderstood, she declared,

¹⁴ Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, 78.

¹⁵ Ellen G. White, “An Open Letter From Mrs. E. G. White to All Who Love the Blessed Hope,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, January 20, 1903, 15.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

ASHWORTH: THE LESSER AND THE GREATER LIGHTS

The Bible is the only rule of faith and doctrine. And there is nothing more calculated to energize the mind, and strengthen the intellect, than the study of the word of God. . . . If God's word were studied as it should be, men would have a breadth of mind, a nobility of character, and a stability of purpose, that is rarely seen in these times. Thousands of men who minister in the pulpit are lacking in essential qualities of mind and character, because they do not apply themselves to the study of the Scriptures. They are content with a superficial knowledge of the truths that are full of rich depths of meaning; and they prefer to go on, losing much in every way, rather than to search diligently for the hidden treasure.¹⁷

Earlier Light/Later Light. The second metaphor might be called "Earlier Light/Later Light." The Bible, written by some forty writers, the first of whom wrote over 3,000 years ago, has been God's universal revelation of His will and purpose universally and across time. In contrast, God called a modern prophet near the end of time to call people back to that earlier light. Thus she is that "later" light, reflecting and amplifying the "earlier" light..

Testor/Testee. The third metaphor is that of "Testor/Testee." Every nation of the world has national standards of measurement, establishing a recognized norm to which all other measurements are compared. While the working standards may be indistinguishable from the national standard, they are never used to test the national standard, but are always tested by it. In the same way, while the beauty, veracity, and relevance of the writings of Ellen White may be indistinguishable from the Bible, they are always and only the "working standard" to be tested by the Word.

National Map/State Map. Recognizing that Ellen White wrote far more than is found in the Bible,¹⁸ the metaphor of the "National Map/State Map" is particularly relevant. There are maps that cover everything, from the entire world, emphasizing the major characteristics of the planet, to local maps that cover a very small geographical area but do so in great detail. She was told, "Your testimony. . . . is to come down to the minutiae of life, keeping the feeble faith from dying, and pressing home upon believers the necessity of shining as lights in the world."¹⁹ The Bible portrays the great themes of God and His plan, and fundamental principles for Christian living, but in her writings God helps clarify for us the "minutiae."

Field/Lens. According to Denton Rebok, a well-known, North American Adventist minister, and life-long student of the Spirit of Prophecy,²⁰ Ellen White believed that Mrs. S. M. I. Henry had, in her metaphor of the "Field/Lens" cap-

¹⁷ Ellen White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, 126.

¹⁸ At 25 million words, she wrote approximately 100 times more than the New Testament contains.

¹⁹ Ellen White, *Life Sketches*, 202.

²⁰ Seventh-day Adventists often use the phrase "Spirit of Prophecy" to refer to the corpus of Ellen White's writings, recognizing nonetheless that her writings constitute only a modern-day continuation of the "spirit of prophecy" spoken of by the prophet John.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

tured “as clearly and as accurately as anyone could ever put into words,” the relationship of the Spirit of Prophecy to the Bible.²¹ Mrs. Henry said that the writings of Ellen White were like a lens and telescope through which we can look at the Bible, and are “subject to all telescopic conditions and limitations.” “Clouds” she explained,

may intervene between it and a heaven full of stars,—clouds of unbelief, of contention; Satan may blow tempests all about it; it may be blurred by the breath of our own selfishness; the dust of superstition may gather upon it. . . . If the lens is mistaken for the field we can receive but a very narrow conception of the most magnificent spectacle with which the heavens ever invited our gaze, but in its proper office as a medium of enlarged and clearer vision, as a telescope, the testimony has a wonderfully beautiful and holy office. . . . They are not the heavens, palpitating with countless orbs of truth, but they do lead the eye and give it power to penetrate into the glories of the mysterious living word of God.²²

In other words, a telescope doesn’t create more stars; it simply enables us to see more clearly the ones that are already there.²³ In support of that view, Ellen White wrote,

The written testimonies are *not to give new light*,²⁴ but to impress vividly upon the heart the truths of inspiration already revealed. Man’s duty to God and to his fellow man has been distinctly specified in God’s word; yet but few of you are obedient to the light given. Additional truth is not brought out; but God has through the Testimonies simplified the great truths already given and in His own chosen way brought them before the people to awaken and impress the mind with them, that all may be left without excuse.²⁵

Captain/Pilot. The final metaphor is one many find particularly useful. It is that of the “Captain/Pilot.” Uriah Smith, 32 at the time he wrote this in an editorial for the church paper, evidenced a clear understanding of the matter.

Suppose we are about to start upon a voyage. The owner of the vessel gives us a book of directions, telling us that it contains instructions sufficient for our whole journey. . . . but he also tells us that the latter part of our journey will be especially perilous. . . ‘but for this part of the journey,’ says he, ‘I have provided you a pilot, who will meet you, and give you such directions as the surrounding circumstances and dangers may require; and to him you must give

²¹ Denton Rebok, *Believe His Prophets* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1956), 181.

²² S. M. I. Henry, *The Gospel of Health*, January, 1898, 25-28.

²³ The material in Roger Coon’s third installment in a series of articles on revelation and inspiration in *The Journal of Adventist Education*, (Vol. 44, No. 3), February-March, 1982, 17-33, is especially helpful on the metaphors.

²⁴ Italics supplied.

²⁵ Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 605.

ASHWORTH: THE LESSER AND THE GREATER LIGHTS

heed.’ “With these directions we reach the perilous time specified, and the pilot, according to promise, appears. But some of the crew, as he offers his services, rise up against him. ‘We have the original book of directions,’ say they, ‘and that is enough for us. We stand upon that, and that alone; we want nothing of you.’ Who now heed that original book of directions? those who reject the pilot, or those who receive him, as that book instructs them? Judge ye.”²⁶

Ellen White as Interpreter of Scripture

In most areas of church and personal life we, as a church, have acknowledged and valued the presence of a God-given “harbor pilot” for these troubled and challenging times. Through her writings Ellen White continues to exalt the Word and call all back to the study of it.²⁷ The principles and truths of Scripture are clarified and simplified through her coming down to the “minutiae.”²⁸ A call to godly living and renouncing of sin is a note sounded faithfully throughout her writings.²⁹ In books like *Steps to Christ* and *The Desire of Ages* she provides hope, consolation, and heavenly solutions for the human dilemma. And she has much to teach regarding our understanding of final events, Christ’s second coming, and the preparation needed to meet them.³⁰ Though she died eighty-three years ago, she is still esteemed by most Seventh-day Adventists as a genuine prophet-messenger of God who has proven beyond doubt the “fruit” of her life and labor (Mt. 7:16, 20).

There is, however, an aspect of her ministry that merits especially careful investigation, and has been misunderstood—her role as interpreter of Scripture. Raoul Dederen notes three salient features of her in this role. First, “As interpreter of the Bible, Ellen White’s most characteristic role was that of an evangelist—not an exegete, nor a theologian, as such, but a preacher and an evangelist. . . . She was in the typical prophetic attitude, primarily desirous to press the text into service for the immediate objective, that of the spiritual quickening of her hearers or readers.” Second, “she never fails to emphasize the relevancy of the passage to her readers, and the importance of a proper response to the Word of God.” Third, he notes a “conspicuous feature. . .the amazing ease with which Biblical quotations and allusions come from her pen. . . . Her mind was thoroughly impregnated with the Scriptures.”³¹

²⁶ Uriah Smith, “Do We Discard the Bible by Endorsing the Visions?” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, January 13, 1863.

²⁷ *Testimonies*, vol. 2, 665; vol. 5, 665.

²⁸ *Testimonies*, vol. 2, 605.

²⁹ *Testimonies*, vol. 5, 667.

³⁰ *Great Controversy*, 593, 594. In his recent book *Reading Ellen White*, George Knight has identified not only the purposes of her writings, but the hermeneutical principles needed for correct interpretation of them.

³¹ “Ellen White’s Doctrine of Scripture,” in “Are There Prophets in the Modern Church?” Supplement to *Ministry*, July, 1977, 24H.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Since her writings were so immersed in the Word, it is not surprising that A. T. Jones, in 1894, should describe her as an “infallible” interpreter of the Bible, even going so far as to state that the best way to study the Bible was “through them.”³² Though other modern self-proclaimed prophets cast themselves as the necessary “looking glass” through which to rightly interpret Scripture, Ellen White categorically rejected such a role. She emphatically declared that her writings are never to be put ahead of the Bible.³³

However, she recalled how, in her early ministry, “the power of God would come” over her and she “was enabled clearly to define what is truth and what is error.”³⁴ On several other occasions she confirmed that what she wrote was accurate and correct. “There is one straight chain of truth, without one heretical sentence, in that which I have written.”³⁵ The testimonies she asserted “never contradict His Word.”³⁶ The conclusion is unavoidable—Ellen White must have believed that when she made statements regarding doctrine, as well as any other topic, her statements were biblically and doctrinally sound. If that is true, why then did she oppose the use of her writings to determine doctrinal correctness? In 1910, when the church leaders were divided over the meaning of the “daily” in Daniel 8, S. N. Haskell insisted that they should come to an understanding of the term “by the aid of the Spirit of Prophecy,”³⁷ because Ellen White had written regarding the “daily” in *Early Writings*, but she refused.³⁸ “I entreat of Elders H, I, J, and others of our leading brethren, that they make no reference to my writings to sustain their views of ‘the daily.’ . . . I cannot consent that any of my writings shall be taken as settling this matter. . . . I have had no instruction on the point under discussion.”³⁹

It is important to note that she did not want “any” of her writings to be used in “settling” this doctrinal controversy. While it is reasonable to assume that what she had written was correct, based on statements like “There is one straight chain of truth, without one heretical sentence, in that which I have written,”⁴⁰ she was, nevertheless, not presenting a theological or exegetical explanation (the possible import of her statement, “I have had no instruction on the point. . .”).

Reflecting on the controversy over the “daily,” W. C. White felt he understood the reason for Ellen White’s position. “Some of the brethren,” he wrote,

are much surprised and disappointed because Mother does not write something decisive that will settle the question as to what is the ‘daily’ and thus bring an end to the present disagreement. At times I

³² *HM Extra*, December, 1894.

³³ *Evangelism*, 256.

³⁴ *Gospel Workers*, 302.

³⁵ *Selected Messages*, vol. 3, 52.

³⁶ *Ibid.* 32.

³⁷ S. N. Haskell to W. W. Prescott, November 15, 1907.

³⁸ *Early Writings*, 74, 75.

³⁹ *Selected Messages*, vol. 1, 164.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* vol. 3, 52.

ASHWORTH: THE LESSER AND THE GREATER LIGHTS

have hoped for this, but as I have seen that God has not seen fit to settle the matter by a revelation thru [sic] His messenger, I have come more and more to believe that it was the will of God that a thorough study should be made of the Bible and history, till a clear understanding of the truth was gained.⁴¹

Conclusions

It is reasonable to draw a number of conclusions from the experience with the “daily.”

1. She consistently refused to be the arbiter of truth. No doctrinal position was to be determined and defended on the basis of “Ellen White says.”
2. She wanted all to “wrestle” with the Scripture.
3. Using her as final arbiter would inevitably lead to biblical illiteracy.
4. In order to have any lasting credibility with our own church members, let alone with Christians of other faiths, all of our doctrines must be based solely and completely on the Bible.

While it is true that Ellen White’s writings are primarily “formative,” not “normative,”⁴² because they speak in subservience to the authority of Scripture, that is not to stay that God did not, on occasion, use her to correct doctrinal errors. At critical junctures in our denomination’s history, she was used by God to significantly alter doctrinal views. Regarding the late 1840s, she writes: “At that time one error after another pressed in upon us; ministers and doctors brought in new doctrines. We would search the Scriptures with much prayer, and the Holy Spirit would bring the truth to our minds. . . . The power of God would come upon me, and I was enabled clearly to define what is truth and what is error.”⁴³

In 1898, to counteract the semi-arianism of Uriah Smith, she stated unequivocally, “In Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived. . . . The divinity of Christ is the believer’s assurance of eternal life.”⁴⁴ At the General Conference session of 1901, she publicly refuted the “Holy Flesh” fanaticism that had impacted the conference leadership and workers in Indiana in 1900. In response to their belief that each must acquire a state of physical sinlessness as an essential preparation for translation, she wrote, “The teaching given in regard to what is termed ‘holy flesh’ is an error. All may now obtain holy hearts, but it is not correct to claim in this life to have holy flesh. . . . No human being on the earth has holy flesh. It is an impossibility.”⁴⁵ And in 1903 when the leadership and the

⁴¹ W. C. White to P. T. Magan, July 31, 1910. Italics supplied.

⁴² For a provocative discussion of the issue, see Ron Graybill, “Ellen White’s Role in Doctrinal Formation,” *Ministry*, October, 1981, 7-11.

⁴³ *Gospel Workers*, 302.

⁴⁴ Cf. *The Desire of Ages*, 24, 25, and Smith’s editorial in the *Review*, March 16, 1897.

⁴⁵ *Selected Messages*, vol. 2, 32.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

church began to anguish over Dr. Kellogg's espousal of pantheism, she wrote, "In the book *Living Temple* there is the alpha of deadly heresies."⁴⁶

Again in 1905, in response to A. F. Ballenger's views on the sanctuary that denied the fulfillment of prophecy in 1844 and repudiated the heavenly ministry of Christ in the investigative judgment, she was categorical:

when the power of God testifies as to what is truth, that truth is to stand forever as the truth. No after suppositions contrary to the light God has given are to be entertained. Men will arise with interpretations of Scripture which are to them truth, but which are not truth. . . . We are not to receive the words of those who come with a message that contradicts the special points of our faith.⁴⁷

The conclusion is unavoidable. While God wants His people earnestly to "wrestle" with the Word in the continual quest for truth, when some arose who instead "wrested" the "Word, He acted through His prophet to distinguish for all the line between truth and error. Ellen White's broad role as God's "messenger" has been succinctly described thus:

The fact that Mrs. White's own particular calling and vocation was that of a prophet suggests that her role is not merely devotional or pastoral, nor yet exegetical or theological, but prophetic. Although her ministry exhibits elements of all these other roles, it is apart from them, distinct. Prophetic authority is authority to bring God's message to bear on the root problems of human existence, to search out human perversity, and highlight human potential in Christ. A prophet may argue theologically, may offer devotional reflection, and may minister pastorally to God's people, but his message is usually more disturbing than a pastor's, more challenging than a devotional writer's, more gripping than a theological formulation, and more relevant than an exegetical exposition.⁴⁸

Seventh-day Adventists continue to investigate, broaden, and deepen their understanding of the gift of prophecy and its multi-faceted treasure of heavenly guidance through the life, labors, and writings of Ellen White. But the study and use of her writings come with a call for discretion:

In public labor do not make prominent, and quote that which Sister White has written, as authority to sustain your positions. Bring your evidences, clear and plain, from the Word of God. 'Thus saith the Lord' is the strongest testimony you can possibly present to the people. Let none be educated to look to Sister White, but to the mighty God, who gives instruction to Sister White.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Ibid. vol. 1, p. 200. cf. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, 255-328. *The Living Temple* was a 568 page book published in 1903 in which he presented his pantheistic views.

⁴⁷ Ibid. vol. 1, 161. cf. Manuscript Release #760. For additional information and explanation see Robert W. Olson, *101 Questions on the Sanctuary and on Ellen White* (Washington, D.C.: Ellen G. White Estate, 1981), 38-45.

⁴⁸ Ron Graybill, "Ellen White's Role in Doctrine Formation," *Ministry*, October 1981, 8.

⁴⁹ *Selected Messages*, vol. 3, 29-30.

ASHWORTH: THE LESSER AND THE GREATER LIGHTS

The conclusion seems self-evident: If as Seventh-day Adventists we believe all that the Bible teaches, we will cherish the writings of Ellen White, and if we believe all that Ellen White teaches, we will cherish and exalt supremely the Word of God.

Biblical Narratives and Christian Decision

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“Man has always been his own most vexing problem.”¹ At the very core of our being we experience several uneasy tensions. One of the essential paradoxes is the tension between the physical and spiritual dimensions of our being. On the one hand, we share with animals total dependence on the physical world for food, water, air, and rest. This fact (together with the evolutionary theory of origin) has influenced scholars of many disciplines to conclude that human nature is a product of the environment. Humans belong inextricably to the physical world, to the animal kingdom, and like animals they are determined by and confined to their milieu (Marx, Darwin, Skinner).

On the other hand, unlike animals we are capable of transcending the limitations and vicissitudes of our world. We are endowed with a noetic soul (Aristotle). For that reason we constantly reach out for freedom, autonomy, and the transcendent world.² Based on this aspect of human nature, several schools of thought argue in favor of complete freedom and against any concept of a fixed nature. Humans are condemned to be free, argues Sartre. They are always in the process of making themselves. (Sartre, James, Pierce).

So how can humans belong to the physical world, subject to its laws and necessities, and yet possess a spiritual nature which belongs to the realm of freedom? Classical Greeks concluded that human nature is dualistic: the body is a prison, which keeps the soul captive to physical laws. Much of Christian theology today maintains some form of this dualistic view of human nature.

The biblical understanding of human life follows the narrow path between determinism and freedom. The doctrine of the creation of man in the image of God shields Seventh-day Adventist ethics from either extreme—and consequently from moral nihilism. If we consider humans as completely locked into

¹ Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man*. (New York: Charles Scribners, 1964), 1.

² *Ibid.*, 13, 14.

KIS: BIBLICAL NARRATIVES AND CHRISTIAN DECISION

the natural world, with no significant freedom to choose their destiny and their actions, we inevitably end up saying: “Genes made me do it”; “That’s the way I am”; “I cannot help it.”

Recently reported research into the origin of homosexuality assumes that an alleged genetic link would make alternative lifestyles normal because they would be imposed by nature.³ As a result, the sense of moral responsibility vanishes. If, on the contrary, we assume that our being is shapeless and in the process of being formed into whatever we want, there again we have no one to respond to, no preferences, no right or wrong alternatives. Each individual is a boat on the infinite sea of time with an engine and some fuel, but with no rudder.

According to Scripture, two fully developed, adult, mature human beings came forth out of the Creator’s hands. While Adam and Eve belonged to the natural world from their first breath onward, the environment contributed nothing in making them human. God alone determined what Adam and Eve would be like. He alone holds the patent to humanness. “It is he who made us, and not we ourselves” (Psalm 100:3).

But Scripture insists that the creation of man and woman in God’s image has serious moral implications. If we belong to this biosphere but are not its offspring, we must infer that human life and human behavior cannot be determined primarily by the environment. If the natural world or economic, social, and cultural conditions are not our essence, then they cannot dictate our lifestyle. If it is normal and healthy for a horse to act in harmony with its nature and endowments, then it is normal for humans to act in harmony with God’s definition of what is human. Godlikeness is man’s essential pedigree. God not only holds the patent, He is the pattern for humanness.

This is where Seventh-day Adventist ethics anchors its system of moral standards. Because we are neither totally locked into our physical dimension nor essentially an undefined mass of molecules in the process of self-realization, we have the unique privilege of joining our Creator in forming a pattern of conduct consonant with His ways. We are more authentically human the more we are like Christ. Christian behavior is not a life of limitation, but a life of imitation.

Without divine revelation in Scripture, we are indeed the most vexing problem to ourselves and the most dangerous menace to our environment. This is why the Bible teaches us “what sort of persons” we ought to be “in lives of holiness and godliness” (2 Peter 3:11). It teaches us both in precepts and examples, if only we knew how to grasp its lessons. The present essay attempts to suggest a way of learning moral lessons and moral ways of living from the Bible, the only reliable guide for sinful humanity.

³ W. A. Henry, “Born Gay?” *Time*, 26 July 1993, 36-41.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Three Levels of Moral Thinking

A careful study of God's Word will yield a wonderful discovery: human beings are not left alone on the ocean of time. God manifests His love to us by clearly indicating what are the standards of a good, just, merciful, and humble way of life in His presence (Micah 6:8). Scripture presents these standards on three levels of moral thinking (moral discourse).

1. Principles. At the deepest level of moral consciousness, where we know ourselves as moral beings, stand the fundamental notions of moral truth which we call principles. These notions remain obscured unless the light of the Word of God shines upon us and makes them evident. As we gain consciousness of these principles, our personal and interpersonal relations take form. Most Bible-believing Christians see in the Ten Commandments, the Psalms, Ecclesiastes, Proverbs, the Gospels (especially the Sermon on the Mount), and the Epistles a sufficient quantity of moral principles to cover life's situations.

Principles can be recognized because they are a) general (ML 74, 4T 562), b) immutable (4T 312, MYP 102, CS 25), c) eternal (7T 152), d) righteous (FE 512), and the only steadfast thing our world knows (ED 183, PK 548). In addition, ethical scholarship recognizes principles as grounds for the existence of moral rules and their justification.⁴

2. Rules of Action. That the Bible gives general guidelines indicating approximately the direction of God's will is an accepted idea among Christian scholars. When it comes to more concrete situations and specific rules of behavior which Scripture enjoins and which would be binding for us today, such a proposition does not enjoy the same support. To some this would indicate a legalistic attitude,⁵ to others a dangerous threat of causuistry.⁶

Nevertheless, biblical evidence supports the opposite view. As Walter Kaiser notes,

The Decalogue has the whole of Exodus as its setting and the covenant code and subsequent laws in the Pentateuch seem to embody concretely what had been set forth in the general principles of the Decalogue. Thus, Calvin's commentaries on these books proceeded in the manner of a harmony, as if the rest of the materials after the Decalogue in Exodus 20 were only illustrations of the abstract and universal moral laws.⁷

These precepts, unlike principles, are specific to a situation, enjoining an action or a prohibition. However, they are not free standing and independent. If they were, human moral conduct would have no structure or coherence. The rules of moral action belong to one or more moral principles from which they

⁴ M. G. Singer, "Moral Rules and Principles," in *Essays in Moral Philosophy*, ed. A. I. Melden (U. of Washington P, 1958), 160.

⁵ J. A. T. Robinson, *Honest to God*. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963), 116ff.

⁶ D. G. Bloesch, *Freedom for Obedience*. (New York: Harper and Row, 1987), 7.

⁷ W. C. Kaiser, *Towards Old Testament Ethics*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 43.

KIS: BIBLICAL NARRATIVES AND CHRISTIAN DECISION

are derived and to which they apply. Thus, it is conceivable that rules change under the influence of different principles involved in a given moral context.⁸

But the relevance and usefulness of Scripture as a moral guide is not exhausted with the revelation of moral principles and specific rules of behavior. These standards are given in a living context of people who entered into a covenant with God. These men and women bound themselves to Him and pledged their faithfulness and love to Him. He, Himself, promised His love and loyalty to them. Standards of moral behavior originate not from some legislative court which stands above, detached from ordinary people. They stem from a covenantal relationship. For that reason, the Word of God is much more than just some code of law prescribing and proscribing human conduct. It describes a journey of fallen humanity, a journey from Eden lost to Eden found. Standards of behavior are part of a dynamic narration of the walk of humans in company with and alongside God. They are part of divine/human common adventures, of human escapades, and of divine patience. Therefore, when we find that God uses commandments, that He gives orders, we do not see them as harsh and arbitrary. They are simply part of our bargain with Him. He fulfills His part of the promise, of the covenant.

3. Normative Models. “Now these things,” the adventures and even the escapades, “happened to them as a warning” says Paul (1 Corinthians 10:11). When His people rebelled against God and put Him to the test (v. 9), or when they engaged in sexual misbehavior (v. 8), these things did not occur as they did to those who were not under a covenant. Other people and other nations misbehaved and they reaped the consequences of their acts. But when God’s people acted foolishly, He, the covenant partner, became implicated in their action. He had to fulfill His promise and make His response evident. This way, looking from the standpoint of the Israelites or the members of the New Testament church, their experience was more than just an item of gossip. It became a warning. God’s dynamic presence reverberated throughout the events of the biblical biographies.

For this very reason, “these things” have a pregnant, moral import for ages to follow. This is why they were not reported in the way journalists report. They were not written down because they were newsworthy items. No, “they were written down *for our instruction*, upon whom the end of the ages has come.” The rest of the Bible (beyond principles and rules) plays a very crucial role in moral guidance for us who are not contemporaries of the sixteen centuries when the Bible was written. The events were recorded for our instruction. The reason is pedagogical. We read them as lessons. They claim importance for our life today. They are the secure nest in which, and because of which, God and I can trust each other. Because of who God proved Himself to be in “those things,” He

⁸ For some of E.G.White’s statements about specific rules of behavior see GC 65, 66; CH 294; EV 117, 118; MM 180; 5T 84, 85; 4T 335-337.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

can ask us to do or not to do what He dare not ask of others, those who are foreigners to the covenant.

We call “these things” *normative models*. We see them as normative because they are “a warning for us, not to desire evil as they did” (v. 6). They are also models, that is, they are intended for imitation. Webster defines a model as “a person or thing considered as a standard of excellence to be imitated.” Normative models are moral standards. If principles are the fundamental notions of moral truth, and if rules of action are concrete injunctions telling us what is a good, just, merciful, and humble way of being in a given situation, then normative models are the connecting links between principles and rules. They are the context in which God and I can interact.

Ethical theories of all kinds search for such a mediating element. For Aristotle it was the golden mean, for Aquinas the practical reason, for J. A. T. Robinson the situation, and for Paul Lehman the *koinonia*. However, biblical normative models provide a surprisingly coherent, catalytic function. In these narratives we find the multifaceted dimensions of love fully involved in healing the rebellious human soul. All other alternative middle axioms trust human beings (human reason, intuition, wisdom of a community) whose sinful hearts cannot be trusted. For this reason we opt for the reading of Scripture as a guide to God’s will as we move from principles to rules of action during the decision-making process. We also recommend the Bible and the narratives contained therein when we sense a need to justify or evaluate our choices.

The question which repeatedly emerges whenever someone claims that biblical narratives hold any normative value is: how do we know which event is normative and which is not? Should we choose King David’s example in his affair with Bathsheba or should we follow Joseph’s example with his slave owner’s wife? Both events are biblical. Should we imitate Rahab when we harbor refugees in order to save life and thus transgress a clear moral principle, or should we learn the lesson from Ananias and Sapphira, or Gehazi, the servant of Elisha? Are not the men and women in the Bible just as human, just as sinful and weak as you and I are, and therefore unfit to be models for us today? How can we learn from them?

The Relationship of Moral Standards

An illustration may be in order to clarify the relationship among biblical moral standards. The seventh commandment is a moral principle. It states “You shall not commit adultery” (Exodus 20:14). Extramarital sexual intimacy is prohibited for everyone, everywhere, and for all times. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus clarifies the spirit of this moral principle by saying that adultery is not limited to the physical act. In the human spirit, mind, and heart is where adultery occurs first (Matthew 5:28).

To help understand the application of this principle in daily life and relations among men and women, God gave Moses an impressive number of con-

KIS: BIBLICAL NARRATIVES AND CHRISTIAN DECISION

crete rules (Leviticus 20:10-21, Deuteronomy 22:22-30). To do things mentioned in these passages means transgression of the seventh commandment. But are there some exceptions to this rule? What about a slave who has no rights, no autonomy, no control over his/her life? What about adultery as a civil service for the good of a country? What about a king whose subjects belong to him?

Obviously, Joseph demonstrates how a slave under the most deprived conditions resisted his master's wife and remained faithful to moral principle. For centuries since, Joseph has served as a brilliant example, a model for young people in all times. King David's case stands as a most striking contrast to Joseph's. Joseph was young, David was not; Joseph was a slave, David a king; Joseph was harassed, David imposed himself; Joseph had the opportunity when no servants were in the house (Genesis 39:11), David crafted the conditions as only a king can do in order to have Bathsheba. How can David's sin become a normative model?

When scholars argue that biblical stories reflect the local culture and sinful practices of their time and for that reason these narratives cannot have a normative function, they are at least partially correct. The lies of Abraham, Rahab, and Ananias, the adulteries of David and Solomon, Cain's murder, Peter's two-facedness in Antioch and his denial of Jesus, or Judas' betrayal are not models to imitate. But these, too, are written for our instruction. So what can we learn from the positive as well as the negative stories?

Morals in Context. Biblical narratives stage a moral context, an ethos in which moral principles were upheld or denied by the actions of men and women in the Bible. To us they can serve as a laboratory experiment in which students learn by observing a chemical reaction. To see what actually happens when sulphuric acid and sugar mix is far more instructive than to hear about it in a lecture. As we read God's Word we can "see" Joseph, we can feel the internal unrest, the struggle between youthful urges and his commitment to God. We can identify with Joseph's experience far easier than with the moral principle of the seventh commandment or any of the rules of moral action.

Normative models contained in biblical narratives demonstrate the consequences of moral choices. There can be little confusion as to the rightness of a course of action when we compare the consequences of Joseph's decision with those of David's choice. We can learn lessons without actually experiencing sin for ourselves. Normative models help us learn by proxy.

At times we wonder whether God would really want us to suffer for His sake. Is God that kind of person? How far is far enough in our commitment and endurance? Normative models show us how far men and women, just like us, went in their faithfulness. They set a norm for obedience. After enumerating a gallery of normative models in Hebrews, chapter 11, Paul challenges us, his readers, to run the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the supreme normative model. Consider him, says Paul. Observe his behavior. "Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

grow weary” (Hebrew 12:3). Jesus could have cut short his suffering or tempered it by choosing a compromise. Paul then drives home the ultimate challenge: “In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood” (v. 4).

Whether a Christian faces daily decisions or extraordinary dilemmas, biblical principles should come to mind first. A child of God has a good sense of what would be the Father’s preference in a given situation. Even in the case where two principles conflict, a search for biblical examples (normative models) will often provide a solution to the conflict.

Once the principle of action becomes clear, the actual application of the principle demands a more concrete, focused rule of action. But which rule is the right one? On what basis do I choose one course of action rather than another? Normative models serve to tip the scale.

Rahab as Model? One more concern remains in answering the question about actions recorded in the Bible which go directly against a well-known principle. Do we imitate Rahab in our dilemmas of life? How can we reconcile her action with the statement that those who lie will not enter the kingdom of God (Revelation 21:8)? What can we say in her defense?

1. Normative models provide only a context, an ethos. They are events from which the observer can make a decision about which action is to be preferred. Rahab and Peter are not our models. It is not what David did that a good Christian should imitate. It is how God reacts in a given biblical event to a particular course of action. God’s response, not human frailty, is our safeguard in moral choices. Because we are involved in a journey together with Him, because He is omnipresent, no word or action can take place outside of His presence. Scripture often records God’s pleasure or displeasure with human activities and human choices, and this information is the most important source of moral guidance.

2. But what can we do when such divine assessment is not available? Rahab’s lie receives no apparent attention. In Hebrews 11:31 she is recognized not because of her duplicity but because she—the Gentile—took a risk of faith to hide the spies coming from an invading army. If a lie were to be commended, Paul would have known how to say so. The situation in which Rahab found herself does not necessarily mandate a lie. I know a good number of people who refused to lie in similar situations, and at the same time they refused to entrust information to those who were not worthy of it.

Additionally, to take Rahab as a model for lying when this is not what gave her recognition in the Bible begs the question. Why not legitimize prostitution as well? This courageous woman belonged to a nation where the knowledge of divine moral principles was absent. It is important that we choose carefully who and what serves as a model, even in the Bible. God’s judgment is normative, not the fact that a certain course of action is recorded in the Bible.

In cases like Rahab’s where no notice of her lie can be discerned, the better side of prudence would be to search for other models where God did intervene.

KIS: BIBLICAL NARRATIVES AND CHRISTIAN DECISION

If saving life is more important than lying, then Abraham, too, should be recommended for his lies (Genesis 12:10-13). However, here God did intervene (vs 17), just as He intervened in the case of Gehazi and Ananias and Sapphira.

The Conclusion of the Whole Matter

In my classes students often preface their question with: “What would you do if . . . ?” These are dangerous questions. While I want to be a good Christian, I cannot assume that my gut feeling should be normative. Intuition can be used in exceptional cases. Hypothetical as well as real situations should be prefaced with, “What would Christ do if . . . ?” My brief experience with extreme tests of faith has taught me that God gives His grace, exceptional grace for exceptional situations. I do not know what I would do if I do know that I do not want to transgress any of God’s moral principles. I want to remain committed to that. I also pray that in times of hard choices, God will manifest Himself in my weakness and in spite of my unworthiness. I also want to be faithful to Him until death (Revelation 2:10). That means that my loyalty to God should not be sacrificed to save life. Ponder these words of inspiration:

Even life itself should not be purchased with the price of falsehood. By a word or a nod the martyrs might have denied the truth and saved their lives. By consenting to cast a single grain of incense upon the idol altar they might have been saved from the rack, the scaffold, or the cross. But they refused to be false in word or deed, though life was the boon they would receive by so doing. Imprisonment, torture and death, with a clear conscience, were welcomed by them, rather than deliverance on condition of deception, falsehood, and apostasy. By fidelity and faith in Christ they earned spotless robes and jeweled crowns. Their lives were ennobled and elevated in the sight of God because they stood firmly for the truth under the most aggravated circumstances.⁹

Biblical narratives bring to us the stories of a cloud of witnesses, who met God at the end of their rope. This is the biblical norm, and this is the biblical model. This is the life of Jesus, our Master. “Consider Him” (Hebrews 12:3).

⁹ E. G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1948), 336.

The Good News About Last Day Events

Norman R. Gulley
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Years ago three men waited for a train. At the station they fell into deep discussion and became totally oblivious of the train's arrival. When the whistle sounded all three made a mad dash to the nearest door. Now in that part of the world, steps led up to a platform, from which the door could be opened. Two of them rushed fast enough to get onto the steps, but the last one couldn't quite make it, and the train left him behind.

In the deep shadows a man observed the whole proceedings. He noticed the three men deep in discussion until the whistle sounded, and then the mad dash. He noted that the one left behind suddenly burst out laughing, and had to find out why. So he came to him and said, "Sir, I know it's none of my business, but I saw all that happened. I saw your buddies make it, and you left behind. How come you are the one laughing?"

"I don't blame you for asking," the man chuckled. "If I had watched this happen, I would want to know, too. Those two men came down here to see me off."

Focus! How important it is! Some sincere Adventists are caught up in deep discussions about the times of trouble ahead while oblivious to Christ standing among them waiting to take them through last day events.¹

Recently I surveyed some students studying last day events at Southern Adventist University. This took place near the beginning of the semester. The results: 49% worry about the present pre-advent judgment; 56% are frightened of last day events; in fact, 41% would rather die than go through last day events; 37% believe they gain entrance to heaven through Christ's sacrifice plus their human works; 50% are not sure they would be saved if they died today; and yet

¹For those who would like to read about end-time movements, end-time doctrines, and end-time events from this perspective, see my recently released book *Christ is Coming!* (Review and Herald, 1998). It is a resource/textbook on last day events, to prepare end-time saints to face the future unafraid.

GULLEY: THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT LAST DAY EVENTS

88% claimed they know Christ as a personal friend. That's a stunning revelation, when you realize these represent a cross-section of Seventh-day Adventist youth, from all over the States and other countries, studying a variety of majors. They are among the final generation, yet many do not want to be! There's something radically wrong here. And who could say that the results would be any better if older people were canvassed? These students had received the message about trouble in Scripture, but they got it out of context, and it brought upon them unnecessary trouble.

One student blurted out, "I'd rather die and go to heaven via resurrection than live through last day events!" So many are afraid of Revelation 13. Yes, the chapter is bad news to many Seventh-day Adventists. They think of the Sea beast (or what Adventist historicists have interpreted, along with a number of early reformers, as the Papacy). The Greek for beast is *therion*, or wild beast, and it is blasphemous (v. 1), and wars against the saints (v. 7). Then the Earth beast (which we have seen as pointing to the U.S.A) is the same kind (*Gr.allos*) of beast, a wild one (*therion*), just like the Papacy. The United States forces the world to worship the Papacy (v. 12), deceives the world through miracles (vs. 13-14), passes a death decree against the saints (v. 15), and forces everyone to receive a mark (v. 16). Here's a global confederation led by the Papacy and enforced by America against the saints who are described as commandment keepers in Rev 12:17 and worshipers of the Creator in Rev 14:7, suggesting they are Sabbath keepers.² Seventh-day Adventists see the final battle over worship, and the Sunday/Sabbath issue as central.

The whole world follows the Papacy (Rev 13:3), and yet people from every nation, tribe, language and people join Sabbath keepers (cf. Rev 14:6). Here are two global churches. A church which, with the world that worships Satan and the Papacy (Rev 13:4); and Sabbath-keepers who worship Christ, who made the heavens and the earth (Rev 14:7) and gave mankind the Sabbath (Gen 2:2-3; Heb 1:1-2; Luke 6:5; Mark 2:27). There's no room here for congregationalism. God's end-time church is as global as the Papacy. Former Jesuit Malachi Martin didn't grasp this fact in his book, *The Keys of This Blood*, where he says Seventh-day Adventists need to collaborate "in the building of a geopolitical structure" or they will "diminish in numbers and influence, and finally lose their identity as operative parts in the new world order."³ We have news for him, don't we? And that has everything to do with the good news that is found in the biblical context of Revelation 13. The issue in Revelation 13 is worship—false worship is forced upon all mankind, but the saints will stand for the truth and worship Christ alone.

² The call to worship "him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water" (Rev 14:7) comes from the Sabbath commandment (Exod 20:11).

³ Malachi Martin, *The Keys of This Blood* (New York: Simon Schuster, 1990), 285- 292.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Three General Comments

Before coming to look at the context of Revelation 13, three general comments are in order:

Resting in Christ, King of Kings. Babylon (Rev 14:8; 17:1-6; 18:1-4) is an appropriate name for this anti-truth conglomerate. They are like those who built the tower of Babel to save themselves apart from Christ (Gen 11). By contrast, Sabbath-keepers worship the Lord of the Sabbath, and this means far more than mathematics—far more than keeping the seventh instead of the first day of the week. The Sabbath was given to mankind to show the distinction between the Creator and the creature,⁴ a fact that Satan refuses to admit, and which the end-time enemies of God refuse to admit. But end-time saints believe it and practice it. They have given up on their efforts to go through final events. They rest solely upon His work. This is the end-time Sabbath test—the world never gives up on its own works; the saints give up on theirs and rest in His work to get them through.

So the distinction between Christ and the saints is crucial to final events. His responsibility is to get us through final events. Our responsibility is to rest in Him in utter trust. That takes away the fear of final events. Anything less is only tower of Babel building—even if done by worried saints wanting to go through final events. Just as Christ brought us into this world as a gift, so He will get us into the next world as a gift. The only difference is we can turn Him down now, or accept Him. To trust Him and not ourselves— that’s the good news about last day events! Frightened saints are afraid because they take responsibility for getting through last day events—responsibility that belongs to Christ alone.

Depending on Human Kings. An overview of the end-time of Revelation 13 is given in Rev 17:12-14: “The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast. They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast. They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because He is the Lord of lords and King of kings—and with Him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers.”

The kings of the world will support the Papacy. They have one purpose: to war against the Lamb of God, Christ in His office as man’s only Savior. Here is an utter repudiation of Christ’s substitutionary sacrifice. Satan has caused his papal system to replace Calvary with the mass, and the church and human works to replace Christ as the means of salvation. You will find this rejection of Christ’s substitutionary atonement in spiritualistic and new age literature.⁵ The final battle is against the Lamb. Even in our church some have rejected the sub-

⁴Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, 347-348.

⁵See Norman R. Gulley, *Christ is Coming!* (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 1998), chapters 12-14.

GULLEY: THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT LAST DAY EVENTS

stitutionary sacrifice of Christ, and this should raise a warning flag.⁶ It is urgent that we grasp the truth that Christ is our Substitute at the cross, today and in last day events.

The coming crisis is Christ-centered. It's more important to focus on Christ than on the crisis, for *final events have far more to do with Who is coming than with what is coming*. The final confederate union is described as lasting only one hour—a small duration—for the King of Kings will defeat humans kings and the whole world that supports the Papacy. And note, those who follow the Lamb, who cling to His substitutionary sacrifice for them, will be saved. Final events are Christ-centered and not Christian-centered. As we approach them we cry out, "Nothing in my hand I bring; simply to Thy cross I cling." It is this picture of clinging to our substitute Savior that takes the saints through final events, just as Jacob clung to the pre-incarnate Christ during the typical time of Jacob's trouble (Gen 32). Yes, we will go through the antitypical time of Jacob's Trouble, but we will be in the arms of our Savior as Jacob was. That's the good news about last day events!

The Place of the Lamb in Final Events. The place of the Lamb in final events is the crucial difference between the two sides. As Revelation 17:3-5 indicates, the Papacy leans on the kings of the world. But end-time saints cling to Calvary and the King of Kings. This is the way they face final events. The Papacy will use human kings, rulers, the uniting of church and state in its attempt to attempt to destroy the saints. By contrast, the saints depend solely upon Calvary for their salvation and Christ for their deliverance. This radically affects the way they look at last day events. They see the coming crisis in the context of the crucified and conquering Christ, and are saved from all fear of the future. For "perfect love drives out fear" (1 John 4:18). It's the wicked who depend on human power; the saints depend upon divine power. That's the difference between the two sides. We have Christ; they don't. That's the good news of last day events.

Context of Revelation 13

Revelation 13 must be studied within the following three contexts. Its Old Testament source chapter is Daniel 7, its general context is the Book of Revelation, and its immediate context is chapters 12-15.

Daniel 7 Source Chapter. Non-SDA scholars recognize the connection between Daniel 7 and Revelation 13, as seen, for example, in the work of Greg K. Beale of Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary⁷ and Alan F. Johnson of *The*

⁶See my article, "A Look at the Larger View of Calvary," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 3/1 (Spring 1992): 66-96. Compare "Toward Understanding the Atonement," *JATS*, 1/1 (Spring 1990):57-89. Seventh-day Adventists believe in salvation through Christ's substitutionary atonement (Fundamental Belief #9).

⁷Gregory K. Beale, *The Use of Daniel in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature and in the Revelation of St. John*, (New York: University Press of America, 1984), 247.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Expositor's Bible Commentary.⁸ Although they arrive at different interpretations from Adventists, it is important that other scholars are connecting the two chapters. So should all SDAs, for this is one way to take the terror out of last day events. Daniel 7 clearly calls in question the dominance of the global Papacy in Revelation 13.⁹ Daniel 7 is the first mention of the Papacy in Scripture. Three times it is introduced, and immediately the results of the pre-advent judgment are given—the Papacy will be destroyed and God's saints will be delivered (vs 1-10; 18-22; 24-27). It is urgent that we realize why Satan has attacked our doctrine of the pre-advent judgment, for it is precisely in this judgment that his global system is condemned. It must be grasped by Adventists that the death decree verdict of Revelation 13:15 comes after the destruction-deliverance verdict of the pre-advent judgment (Dan 7:13-14).

Adventists need to look beyond the death decree verdict on earth to the prior pre-advent verdict in heaven, for the heavenly verdict nullifies the verdict on earth. The heavenly court overrules the courts of the earth, which are bent on causing the whole world to conform to the Papacy and its day of worship. Compare verses from both chapters. Revelation 13:2-4 states, "The dragon [Satan] gave the beast [Papacy] his power and his throne and great authority . . . The whole world was astonished and followed the beast [Papacy]. Men worshiped the dragon [Satan] because he had given authority to the beast [Papacy], and they also worshiped the beast [Papacy] and asked, 'Who can make war against him?'" The rest of the book of Revelation answers that question, showing that Christ Himself will make war against the beast. Daniel 7:13-14 shows why, "I looked and there before me was one like a Son of man coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He [Christ] was given authority, glory and sovereign power: all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed." So the true Christ will overcome the false Christ and his system.

General Context in Revelation. Now to the general context of the book of Revelation. A throne room scene precedes each of the seven divisions of the book that reveal troubles to take place on earth (Rev 4:1-5:14; 8:2-6; 11:19; 15:1-8; 16:18-17:3; 19:1-10; 21:1-5). They shout out, "Look up here, and see the Crucified Christ on the throne. He is in charge. He is here as the Son of Man. He understands. He went through the great time of trouble for you. He has not forgotten you. He will be with you." And sometimes the end-time saints are already pictured as being in heaven, so sure is their victory through the coming crisis (Rev 7:1-17; 14:1-5; 15:1-4).

⁸ Alan F. Johnson, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, *Revelation*, vol 12, p. 525.

⁹ The sea beast of Rev 13 is described as a conglomerate of leopard/bear/lion (v. 2), the beasts mentioned in Dan 7:1-6.

GULLEY: THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT LAST DAY EVENTS

Revelation 16-19 reveals the pre-advent, end-time destruction of the world's powers and peoples which have combined in war against God's saints. Plagues and Armageddon will decimate those warring against the saints. These judgments come to implement the pre-advent judgment verdict. Great will be the destruction of the powers of Revelation 13, and glorious will be the deliverance of the saints against whom they battle. Christ will stand up, and great will be the deliverance of His saints (Dan 12:1).

Revelation 17:12-17 shows that the ten kings will turn on Babylon and on the false churches which are her daughters and bring them to ruin. This seems to agree with Daniel 7:11-12, which says the little horn is slain and the other beasts, stripped of their authority, live on for a period of time.

Immediate Context of Revelation 13. Now to the immediate context of Revelation, that is chapters 12 to 15. It must be remembered that troubles for the remnant in Revelation 13 come after the church is first introduced in Revelation 12:1 as wearing a *stephanos* crown, or a laurel wreath of victory given to an Olympic winner. The saints are introduced as victors.

Revelation 12. Revelation 12 gives an overview of the cosmic controversy and reminds us of two falls of Satan. He was thrown out of heaven (v. 7-8), then he was hurled down once more at Calvary (vs. 9-11)—"The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil or Satan, *who leads the whole world astray*, He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him. Then I heard a voice in heaven say, 'Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of His Christ. *For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before God day and night, has been hurled down.* They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb." These are approximately the central verses of Revelation. It is *that final event* which determines all other end-time events. Satan was defeated at Calvary (John 16:1). When Christ cried out "It is Finished" (John 19:30), Satan was doomed. The decisive battle of the great controversy was over. But Satan is like a man who loses a boxing match, but still flings his fists after the final bell. This causes pain but doesn't alter his defeat. The final bell rang at Calvary. Satan flings his fists all he wants in Revelation 13—but Revelation 12 says the church has the crown because the church has the victorious Savior. That's the good news about last day events!

John twice describes this relationship of saints with their Savior, saying, "The woman was given the two wings of a great eagle so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the desert, where she would be taken care of" (v. 14, cf. V. 6). Christ put His strong arms of love around His persecuted saints and loved them to the end. Some will die before the close of probation (Rev 20:4), but nothing can separate them from the love of Christ (Rom 8:38-39).

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Revelation 14. The 144,000, or the translated saints, are pictured with the Lamb on Mt. Zion. Zion¹⁰ in Hebrew (tsiyown) means “fortress.” Obadiah says of Mt. Zion, in the Old Testament, “on Mount Zion will be deliverance” (v. 17). In the New Testament Mt. Zion is Heaven (Heb 12:22-23), the place of deliverance to which saints go immediately after the second advent (John 14:1-3). Yet the saints in Revelation 14 are presented as already there. If chapter twelve portrays the translated saints as wearing the victor’s crown, then chapter 14 portrays them as already in heaven as victors. That’s the assurance that surrounds both sides of Revelation 13 with all its trouble!

The 144,000 are innumerable according to Rev 7:9. “Then one of the elders asked me, ‘These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?’ I answered, ‘Sir, you know.’ And he said, ‘These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore, they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them. Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes.’”¹¹

The translated saints, called the 144,000, are only twice mentioned by that name in Revelation, and both times the vision of them is in heaven with the Lamb. Revelation 14:4 says, “they follow the Lamb wherever he goes.” This is throughout eternity, for they are the only ones to live after the close of probation (just as Christ did all His life), and they have a story to tell unfallen worlds that vindicates the cause of God in the Great Controversy.¹² They are Christ’s

¹⁰ The word “Zion” is used in different ways in the OT. David conquered the Jebusite fortress located on a hill southeast of the later city Jerusalem, and this fortress city became known as David’s city (2 Samuel 5:7, 1 Kings 8:1) and became the dwelling place of God. When Solomon built the temple on the hill north of David’s city, Zion came to include the expanded area. Sometimes the word Zion applies to the whole city of Jerusalem (Isa 33:20; 60:14) and sometimes to the whole nation (Isa 40:9; Zech 9:13). See *SDA Bible Dictionary*, ed. Siegfried H. Horn, (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1960), p. 1182. Zion, the dwelling place of Christ, can include His end-time remnant with whom He dwells as their fortress (Psa 91:1-16; Matt 28:20, Heb 13:5).

¹¹ See Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, 649, where she identifies the 144,000 with the great multitude.

¹² Translated saints are saved like the rest of the redeemed—through accepting the saving work of Christ for them. There is no different plan of salvation in the end-time, no special kind of perfection. But they live during the greatest time of trouble ever, and show that even under such circumstances they can remain loyal to Christ, because they allow Him to keep them from falling. None of their end-time contemporaries can argue against this demonstration at the end of the millennium. They cannot even say that Christ kept the law because divine, for here the weakest of the weak under the worst time of trouble ever, will demonstrate that total dependence upon Christ—in a Sabbath-like rest in Him—enables Christ to keep them true to Him. In an infinitely greater way, Christ lived His whole life after the close of probation (He had no intercessor) and showed that Satan’s charge that created beings cannot keep God’s law, and hence that God is unjust, was itself unfounded.

GULLEY: THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT LAST DAY EVENTS

senators and have an eternal mission with Him. What an awesome privilege to be in this group who will be translated—the modern Elijah people (cf. Mal 4:5-6).

They sing a new song before the throne which no one else can learn, for they alone have lived during the great time of trouble. (Rev 14:3). *The Great Controversy* says its a song of their experience.¹³ They will sing of the great time of trouble during the millennium in heaven and beyond, wherever Christ and they journey to tell their story throughout the inhabited worlds.

Do you like singing about your troubles? “Oh what a rotten day I had yesterday”? No! So what are they singing about? The answer is in Revelation 15.

Revelation 15. The context of Revelation 15 is in heaven just before the seven last plagues come upon the wicked. Again God’s end-time saints are pictured as in heaven before the great time of trouble, so sure is their victory. Verse 2 says they “had been victorious over the beast and his image.”

Look at the focus of the song in Rev 15:2-4. “Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the ages. Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you [This looks beyond the false global worship of Revelation 13 to the post-millennial time when every knee will bow; Isa 45:23-24; Rom 14:11; Phil 2:10-11]. For your righteous acts have been revealed.” The mighty acts of God in the great time of trouble that fill the song! How awesome His destruction of the wicked! How wondrous His deliverance of the saints (Dan 12:1)! Not one word about trouble gets into the song. And this they sing during the millennium and forever as they follow Christ in eternity (Rev 14:1-4)! My friends, *if it’s worth singing about so long after it happened, it must be worth going through!* Right? That’s the good news about last day events!

What do you suppose the three Hebrews in the fiery furnace would have told their grandchildren? Was it about the flames heated seven times hotter or about the presence of the pre-incarnate Christ in there with them (Dan 3:8-25)? We must see beyond the coming crisis to Christ. What’s the song of the 144,000 called? “The song of Moses and the Lamb” (Rev 15:3). The passage through last day events is typified by the passage through the Red Sea. Isaiah said, “The Shepherd of His flock brought them through the Red Sea” (Isa 63:11). Moses called Him the “angel of God” (Exod 14:19). Luke said, “an angel appeared to Moses in the burning bush . . . I am the God of your father . . .” (Acts 7:30, 32). Daniel said when Michael the archangel stands up, there will be the worst time of trouble ever, but at that time the saints will be delivered (Dan 12:1). Clearly the Christ who led His people through the Red Sea will lead His people through final events. In both, Christ’s part is to get them safely through. Their part is to trust Him completely.

¹³ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, 649.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

No wonder Moses said, “Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The Lord will fight for you; you need only be still” (Exod 14:13-14). That’s the deeper meaning of the Sabbath in final events. It’s resting in Christ and not being afraid of the whole world against us. There is rest in true worship. Like Jehoshaphat, surrounded by enemy nations, end-time saints will feel helpless. In 2 Chronicles 20:12 the king cried out, “O our God, will you not judge them? For we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon you.” That’s the focus—on Christ and not on the crisis. There is no more need of a Mediator in heaven. The saints are sealed (Rev 7:1-3). But they need a Mediator with them on earth. Christ will cross the Red Sea of final events with us even as He did with ancient Israel. That’s the good news about final events!

In utter contrast, the third angels’ message says the wicked have no rest, for they worship the beast and His image (Rev 14:9-11: the two powers of Rev 13). They have no rest because the Spirit is withdrawn from the world (not from God’s people).¹⁴ Satan has full control of them. So in the great time of trouble it’s the world against us that has no rest—not the saints! What’s the use of controlling the world when they have no rest? They do not have Christ with them, but the saints do. That’s the decisive difference in the end-time. The Lamb makes all the difference! The wicked and not the saints have the greatest time of trouble. I wouldn’t want to be on their side, would you?

How to Be Among the 144,000

Have you ever wondered why the vision of the victorious 144,000 comes before the three angels’ messages? The messages come to tell us how to be in the group. They say much more, but I want to focus on the experience they speak about—an experience that will lead to the experience that the 144,000 will have in the great time of trouble. The first angel’s message says, Look to Christ. Reverence the One who is the Creator of heaven and earth—especially in the judgment time. Do not look to yourself and be afraid of your name coming up in judgment, but look to Him, and by beholding Him become ever more like Him (2 Cor 3:18). By beholding become like Jesus. Enter the second message. Babylon is fallen. Babylon means self-dependence. Remember the tower of Babel (Gen 11). We’ll build it 15 feet beyond the water line and save ourselves in the next flood. This kind of self-dependence crumbles as we gaze on Jesus. Enter the third message about the image to the beast, the union of church and state. What is this experientially? It means to no longer try to be religious (church) through our own secular (state) power. Put the three together. As an experience they say, Behold Jesus and become like Him, so that you no longer depend upon self; even to the extent that you no longer try to be religious through your own

¹⁴ Ibid., 615.

GULLEY: THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT LAST DAY EVENTS

secular power. That's righteousness by faith, isn't it? That's the total dependence upon Christ necessary to get us through final events. That's the essence of the end-time Sabbath test—resting in Him alone! As Luke 15:6 says, the Shepherd puts the sheep on His shoulders and carries it all the way home. That's the only way to go through final events.

Armageddon

Armageddon is written large over Revelation 14-19. It clearly demonstrates that the greatest time of trouble is for the wicked and not for the saints. Consider two examples. Both are second advent scenes. In Revelation 14:14-20 we read, "I looked, and there before me was a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was one 'like a son of man' with a crown of gold on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand." The crown is a *stephanos* crown, a laurel wreath of victory worn by an Olympic victor—the same crown worn by God's saints in Revelation 12. The crown signifies Christ's victory over Satan in His life and death. The One who defeated Satan and His followers already at Calvary comes vaulting through the heavens just as the Papacy and its fiends move to implement the death decree.¹⁵ In Revelation 14:6-13 we have the message of the three angels. In verses 14-20 we have the mission of three more angels. The destruction of the wicked is effected by destroying angels, as in the Passover night of Israel's exodus. Jesus comes for the saints. He comes as one who has been through end-time troubles for us.

Revelation 19:14-21 is the other scene of Christ's second advent. Now Christ comes on a white horse, "with justice he judges and makes war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns" (Rev 14:11-12). He comes as "King of kings and Lord of lords" (Rev 19:16). These crowns are diadems—worn only by royalty, worn because of inherent power and authority, not through winning a race as a human, but worn because Christ is God. Whereas He comes as Son of man to deliver the saints in Revelation 14, He comes as Son of God to destroy their enemies in Revelation 19. Note how the two beasts of Revelation 13—the Papacy and the USA as Apostate Protestantism—who confederate to destroy the saints—are singled out. Revelation 19:19-21 says, "Then I saw the beast [Papacy] and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse and his army. But the beast [Papacy] was captured and with him the false prophet [Apostate Protestantism] who had performed the miraculous signs on his behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped his image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. The rest of them were killed with the sword that came out of the mouth of the rider on the horse" (Rev 19:19-21).

¹⁵ Ibid., 635-636.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Here is the outcome of the persecution of Revelation 13. The two beasts, the Papacy and Apostate Protestantism in the USA, are overcome by Christ. *Armageddon needs to be understood in its context. It issues out of Calvary with its double verdict—deliverance to the saints and destruction to their enemies. That's precisely what is looked at during the pre-advent judgment.* The saints are those who have accepted what Christ did for them in their place when He was judged at Calvary for them, when He who knew no sin became sin for them (2 Cor 5:21). Those who accept His work for them will be delivered. Those who have not accepted His work for them will be destroyed. The pre-advent judgment is not so much looking at what works we have done as it is looking at our acceptance or non-acceptance of His work when He was judged in our place at Calvary. It's the acceptance of Calvary that saves the saints and takes them through final events. The enemy and the world have not accepted Calvary and will not make it through the end-time, even if they seem for a while to triumph. Armageddon issues out of two verdicts, the verdict of Calvary which is worked out in the verdict of the pre-advent judgment. So Armageddon has Calvary and the pre-advent judgment as well as Christ's intercession before it. The implementation of the pre-advent judgment verdict is the final implementation of Calvary during the pre-advent time.

The rejection of the Lamb is global in the end-time. Only a remnant accept Him. Christ came in the first advent to a rebel world. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering (Isa 53). Just before His final events He looked at a clinging vine and said "That's how I feel"—"I am the vine" (John 15:1). That's the only way to go through final events—clinging to Christ. Jesus went through the greatest time of trouble that any human being will ever endure. His last day events were infinitely worse than ours will ever be!

In Gethsemane, "The sins of men weighed heavily upon Christ, and the sense of God's wrath against sin was crushing out His life."¹⁶ "Terrible was the temptation to let the human race bear the consequences of its own guilt."¹⁷ Jesus "fell prostrate, overcome by the horror of a great darkness. The humanity of the Son of God trembled in that trying hour."¹⁸ "Three times has humanity shrunk from the last, crowning sacrifice. But now the history of the human race comes up before the world's Redeemer. He sees that the transgressors of the law, if left to themselves, must perish. He sees the helplessness of man. He sees the power of sin. The woes and lamentations of a doomed world rise before Him. He beholds its impending fate, and His decision is made. He will save man at any cost to Himself."¹⁹

¹⁶ Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 687.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 68.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 690.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 690-693.

GULLEY: THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT LAST DAY EVENTS

Calvary

The scene is changed to Calvary. “The guilt of every descendant of Adam was pressing upon His heart. The wrath of God against sin, the terrible manifestation of His displeasure because of iniquity, filled the soul of His Son with consternation . . . Satan with his fierce temptations wrung the heart of Jesus. The Savior could not see through the portals of the tomb. Hope did not present to Him His coming forth from the grave a conqueror . . . He feared that sin was so offensive to God that their separation was to be eternal.”²⁰

He cried out, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matt 27:46). One thing is for sure. Jesus did not forsake us on Calvary, nor will He in the end-time. He promises, “Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you” (Heb 13:5). But as our sin-bearer He felt God-forsaken in His great time of trouble. Though Christ had promised to rise from the dead (Luke 18:33), build homes for the saints in heaven (John 14:1-2), and return in the second advent (John 14:3), now He couldn’t see through the portals of the tomb. Hope did not present to Him a safe passage through death. “Father, If my death will mean eternal separation from you so that my people can live with you in my place—so let it be”—and He plunged into the abyss and perished. That’s the ultimate meaning of Christ’s substitutionary sacrifice for us! That’s the ultimate of what it means to be the Lamb! And if He went that far for us, and we cling to Him, He will never let us slip out of His hands in final events. He says to us today: “Do not be afraid little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32). That’s the good news about last day events.

In the great time of trouble Christ’s voice is heard saying to the saints, “Lo, I am with you. Be not afraid. I am acquainted with all your sorrows; I have borne your griefs. You are not warring against untried enemies. I have fought the battle in your behalf, and in My name you are more than conquerors.” “The precious Saviour will send help just when we need it. The way to heaven is consecrated by His footprints.”²¹ That’s the good news about last day events.

²⁰ Ibid., 753.

²¹ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, 633.

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The Song of Moses and the Song of the Lamb

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One of the noticeable features of the Book of Revelation is the singing of the heavenly family. We find in this book theology put to music. All the songs of this book would make a small songbook. Unfortunately, we do not have the melodies to go with the words, but perhaps once we have the words, we could come up with our own melody. Revelation features a widening circle of praise, from the four living creatures to the whole redeemed family

The Setting of the Song

The Song of Moses and the Song of the Lamb comes at the opening of the eschatological section of the book. It follows the three central chapters of the book (12-14) in which the great controversy theme has been played out. These three chapters show the origins of the great controversy (war in heaven, 12:7), its spread to earth (the Devil cast down to earth, 12:9-13), the key players in the drama (Christ and Satan, 12:7), the key issues of the controversy (worship 13:12 and 14:7), and the final results (14:1-3, 12). These chapters form the thematic center for the whole book and are crucial in opening our understanding to the whole book. It is in this setting that the song is introduced.

Identifying the Song

Students of Revelation have debated the number of songs involved here. At first it appears as if the writer is referring to two songs. But it appears that the victors really have one song to sing. The song of the Lamb is cast in the setting of the song of Moses. Revelation is rich in Old Testament allusions, and is best interpreted in the setting of the Old Testament. Our first task is to identify the song of Moses. Two songs are attributed to Moses in the Old Testament. Exodus 15:2-19 is a song that deals with the Red Sea deliverance. Deuteronomy 32 is a song sung at the end of Moses' life and recounts God's mercies in the wilder-

MUSVOSVI: THE SONG OF MOSES AND THE SONG OF THE LAMB

ness wanderings of His people. There is a possible third song, if we go by the superscription of Psalm 90. Psalm 90 is not seriously considered a possibility since it does not have any thematic or verbal parallels with Revelation 15. Deuteronomy 32 has been given some consideration by some, but the allusions to it are weak. Exodus 15 seems to have the strongest links with Revelation 15. Moreover, the general theme of both songs is similar, and the skeletal structure is similar.

Exodus 15	Revelation 15
1. Plagues of Judgment	1. Plagues of Judgment
2. The Red Sea	2. The Sea of Glass
3. Theme of Divine Deliverance	3. Theme of Divine Deliverance
4. Song of Deliverance	4. Song of Deliverance
5. Song by the Sea	5. Song by the Sea
6. Pillar of Fire through the Sea	6. Fire in the Sea

John seems to intend that we view the song of the Lamb in its Old Testament thematic background, Exodus 15. This may be the reason why he uses the double title. The first part of the title is the Old Testament contextual key to the New Testament passage. The duality of the title preserves a distinction between the two events while linking them in a typological relationship.

The Two Exoduses

The allusions and parallels found in these two chapters introduce the exodus motif. One feature of Revelation is the taking local of Old Testament events and replaying them on a cosmic scale. In this instance the local exodus movement of two million people becomes the cosmic exodus of all of God’s children in the final days. All the linkages we outlined above are exodus-related. In both exoduses God leads His people out triumphantly. In the first exodus Moses is the visible leader who leads Israel through crisis to victory. In the second exodus the Lamb is the cosmic leader who leads the saints to victory. In both the crisis was of such proportions that destruction seemed imminent. The enemy seemed to have God’s people under him. But God acted decisively on behalf of His people.

In the two exoduses there is no antithesis between Moses and the Lamb, between Law and Grace. There is a beautiful harmonious complementarity. The great deliverance under Moses forms the pattern, the type, of the greater deliverance by the Lamb. While in the first the controversy was with Pharaoh, the second exodus occurs in the setting of the Great Controversy.

The Song of Moses

This song of Moses had been incorporated into the Temple services. Ederheim points out that this song was sung at the evening sacrifice on the Sabbath. Philo mentions that this song was sung by an antiphonal group, with men sing-

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

ing some lead stanzas, while the women sang the responses. The words were repeated often in song and in sermon. Children were taught the meaning of this song in their history, and made to feel a part of the history of their ancestors. In this way the people passed on to the next generation the essence of their faith.

In its historical setting the song of Moses was sung by the shores of the Red Sea as a spontaneous response to miraculous deliverance. Israel had almost perished at the hands of Pharaoh and his mighty, angry army. And their deliverance was a deliverance from above. This a song of Moses, even though it was sung by everybody, for it was Moses who led them to victory. It was Moses who led them through their Red Sea crisis. Moses was the leader. This is a song of redeemed people. It is a song of experience. Every stanza flows out of a grateful heart. The words and the music flow together, composed in the moment of deliverance. No stanza could be omitted in the singing of this song.

The Dimensions of the Song

The Song of Moses is three-dimensional:

1. It recalls the past, celebrating God's mighty deeds. It refers to God's triumph over the enemy. Pharaoh's army had been cast like a stone into the sea. It describes how the waters which parted for the deliverance of His people became the very means by which the enemy was destroyed. Mercy and judgment harmonize in this song (vs. 1, 4-10, 12).

2. The song deals with the present, affirming faith in God. First person pronouns are used to describe the relationship with God—"He is my God . . ."—and first person pronouns are used in utterances of praise: "I will praise Him . . ." (vs. 2-3, 11).

3. In the last section the song looks to the future, anticipating future divine guidance of God's people. It anticipates the movement into Canaan, the victory over their future enemies, and the settlement there (vs. 13-19).

The Song of the Lamb

John has just portrayed the Lamb leading the victorious saints on Mount Zion (14:1-3). As He has led them in triumph they have sung a song which no one else could sing. Have remained faithful in the face of the persecuting powers of the leopard-like beast, the lamb-like beast, and the image to the beast. There has been a death decree against them, but they have chosen to worship God, rather than the beast. Now here in Revelation 15:1-4 they are portrayed as standing by the Sea of Glass, reminiscent of the Red Sea in the old exodus. The Great Controversy theme is very evident, for it forms the backdrop of this scene. The conflict with the beast powers must be kept fresh in mind. The singers are portrayed as having been victorious over the beast, his image, and the number of his name (15:2). Victory is a major theme in Revelation. The picture is that of fighters fresh from the battlefield standing in celebration. The song they sing is a song of victory—god's victory for His people.

MUSVOSVI: THE SONG OF MOSES AND THE SONG OF THE LAMB

The words of the song are fragmentary phrases and clauses drawn from the Old Testament. The works of God are described as “great and marvelous,” (words which describe this vision at the beginning of the chapter). These words may be drawn from Psalms 92:5 and 139:14. Other allusions in the song may be from Isaiah 66:23; Jeremiah 10:7; Amos 4:13, and others. There are no direct quotations, just words and concepts that are the same. John does not intend for us to go fishing for these different verses. His mind is filled with the language and thought patterns of the Old Testament, so his vocabulary is drawn from this rich heritage.

This Song Is Also Three-Dimensional

1. The song recalls God’s past mighty deeds on behalf of His people (“Great and marvelous are your works”; “Your judgments have been revealed”). These mighty works and judgments are the great acts of God in delivering the saints from the beast and his image. The focus is on God as the One who has accomplished our salvation.

2. The song describes the saints’ present relationship with God. (“Just and true are your ways”; “For you alone are holy”). In this part of the song the victorious saints acknowledge their indebtedness to God. The divine vindication of His people is alluded to, as is the judgment on their enemies.

3. The song focuses on the future and celebrates God’s final victory. (“For all nations shall come and worship before You”). This part of the song anticipates the ending of the Great Controversy and the establishment of God’s eternal kingdom, wherein righteousness dwells. It views that future time when all nations, kindred, tongues, and people will be under God’s righteous rule, and there will be no alien powers. It foresees the time when the controversy will be ended and sin and strife shall be no more.

The song of the Lamb reminds us that the final stages of the Great Controversy are near, and the people of God are to prepare by being anchored in the truth. It is a song reserved for those who overcome in Christ.

Tall al-ʿUmayri and the Bible

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For six seasons the Madaba Plains Project¹ has been uncovering significant remains at Tall al-ʿUmayri,² located about 10 km south of Amman, Jordan, on the airport highway. In antiquity it most likely lay on one of the most important parts of the ancient King’s Highway and was a strategic site in the control of trade routes traversing the high plateau of Transjordan between the Red Sea and Damascus.

We have found remains from the Early Bronze Age (ca. 3000–2000 BC), the end of the Middle Bronze Age (ca. 1700–1550 BC), the end of the Late Bronze Age (13th century BC), the Iron I period (ca. 1200–1000 BC), the early stages of Iron II (ca. 900–800 BC), and the end of Iron Age II and the Persian period (ca. 570–400 BC). Minor occupation existed in later periods (Roman, Byzantine, Early Islamic), but never were there more than solitary buildings or agricultural installations. For our purposes, the early Iron I site is the most interesting from a Biblical and archaeological point of view. We will therefore focus on that period.

¹ The Madaba Plains Project is sponsored by Andrews University in consortium with Canadian University College, LaSierra University, East Africa University, and Walla Walla College. I wish to thank my Co-Directors for their support and encouragement: Larry Geraty (Senior Project Director); Douglas Clark (Consortium Director); Øystein LaBianca (Hinterlands); and Randall Younker (Tall Jalul); I am responsible for the excavations at Tall al-ʿUmayri. Much of the work on the Iron I comparative material was done at the Albright Institute in Jerusalem. I wish to thank the trustees of the Albright for my appointment as Annual Professor during the 1993/94 academic year and the Dorot Foundation for an additional award.

² Note on Place Names: The Royal Geographic Center of Jordan has recently standardized the spellings of place names, following a consistent linguistic pattern. Where possible, this paper follows those spellings. The spelling “Tell el-ʿUmeiri” has been frequently used in the past.

HERR: TALL AL-'UMAYRI AND THE BIBLE

The Town from the Time of the Judges

The inhabitants of this town constructed an impressive fortification system. Indeed, it is the most extensive and best preserved system from this time anywhere in the southern Levant. A Middle Bronze Age moat at the bottom of the slope was re-excavated, leaving about one meter of debris in the bottom. A retaining wall was built on top of that debris; it supported the new rampart which was built on top of the remains of the Middle Bronze Age rampart. The new rampart filled in a crack in the bedrock caused by an earthquake and raised the top of the rampart by about 1.5-2.0 meters. At the top, the new rampart was built together with what seems to have been an outer casemate wall.

This probable casemate wall, one of the earliest such systems known to date from this part of the world, has been traced over a length of about 30 meters and so far comprises two casemate rooms and three (possibly four) crosswalls. Near the southern extent of our excavation the wall curves into the settlement, perhaps forming a gateway, but we have not yet reached this phase inside the wall to know for certain. The inner wall is broken into segments, but so far they are perfectly aligned like a normal inner casemate wall. In the last season, the inner wall may not have been found north of House B, but floor levels have not yet been reached. Parts of the crosswalls and inner wall segments are preserved over 2 m high, making this the best preserved domestic architecture from this period. If our remains represent an early casemate wall, the present construction may illustrate the origin of this type of wall system in carefully planned houses with back rooms adjoining a more-or-less continuous city wall. More of the wall will be excavated to the north and south in future seasons. Whether or not the casemate construction was limited to the western edge of the site is not known for certain, but Ground Penetrating Radar studies of the southern lip of the site show distinct anomalies of two parallel lines with cross lines having roughly the same dimensions as those we have uncovered. Excavation commenced in this location in 1998.

Portions of two houses have been excavated. Building A contained a cultic corner with a standing stone and a small altar separated from domestic finds in a nearby courtyard by a line of stone pillar bases. In the back was a storeroom which contained about eight large store jars of a type called "collared pithoi" and piles of barley that fell from the roof. There was also a stepped platform that may have supported a ladder reaching to the second story. The huge volume of mudbrick destruction filling the room indicates there was a second story.

Another house, typical of houses from this period, is made up of four rooms, three of which are long rooms and are aligned next to each other. The fourth room crosses the western edge of the three rooms. This house plan is extremely frequent in the southern Levant at this time. Making this house slightly different from most houses of the four-room plan is an attached animal pen in a courtyard in front of the house. The casemate room was extremely rich in finds,

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

with almost 40 collared pithoi lining the walls and fallen from the second story. A portion of an alabaster vessel suggests trade with Egypt. Five bronze weapons and a few stone ballistic missiles (slingstones) indicate that the destruction of the site was caused by military attack. The burned bones of at least two individuals, most likely defenders, were found scattered around the room. Probably they fell from the second story during the burning. A well constructed door near the northeastern corner of Building B egressed into an entryway or alley.

The destruction of this small city (ca. 1.5 hectares) was swift and violent. The violence is suggested by the 1.5-2.5 m of destruction debris in the rooms; the ubiquitous signs of burning including burned beams, bricks, and stones (some turned to lime); and the weapons in Room B3. That the destruction was swift is clear from the masses of food (mounds of barley and two shanks of butchered large mammals) still apparently uneaten, and the burned remains of the two individuals caught in the conflagration, an extremely rare find.

The results from Tall al-ʿUmayri provide a focus for looking at the Madaba Plains region during the late 13th and 12th centuries. The finds are the first extensively excavated remains from this period on the central plateau of Transjordan. Very little settlement occurred in the region during the Late Bronze Age, the period immediately preceding our town. ʿUmayri thus represents the beginning stages of highland settlement in Transjordan. This process of sedentarization is reflected in a quantitative study of the pottery forms. The high percentages of utilitarian types, such as collared pithoi, jugs, cooking pots, and bowls, make up approximately 75% of the corpus, connecting the assemblage with simple highland sites rather than the more complex coastal and valley sites.³ Moreover, ʿUmayri's location in the hilly terrain south of Amman and its small size make it hard to connect it with coastal and valley sites (Finkelstein 1994).⁴

When compared with other highland sites in the southern Levant, however, ʿUmayri is somewhat unique. Early Iron I highland sites in Cisjordan are primarily small, unfortified agricultural villages with a social structure limited perhaps to a single extended family or clan, whereas ʿUmayri was strongly fortified, larger than most of the highland villages, and perhaps made up of compounds of several extended families. In terms of the sedentarization process of sites in highland areas, the settlement at ʿUmayri must be seen as richer and

³ A. Mazar, "Giloh: An Early Israelite Settlement Site near Jerusalem," *Israel Exploration Journal* 31 (1981): 1-36, see 31; A. Zertal, "An Early Iron Age Cultic Site on Mount Ebal: Excavation Seasons 1982-1987," *Tel Aviv* 13-14 (1987): 105-65, see 138; I. Finkelstein, *The Archaeology of the Israelite Settlement* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society: 1988), 177-204; L. G. Herr, "Tell el-ʿUmayri and the Madaba Plains Region during the Late Bronze—Iron Age I Transition," *Mediterranean Peoples in Transition: Thirteenth to Early Tenth Centuries BCE*, eds. S. Gitin; A. Mazar; and E. Stern (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1998).

⁴ I. Finkelstein, "The Great Transformation: The 'Conquest' of the Highlands Frontiers and the Rise of the Territorial States," *The Archaeology of Society in the Holy Land*, ed. T. E. Levy (London: Leicester University, 1994), 350-365.

HERR: TALL AL-'UMAYRI AND THE BIBLE

more advanced (the pottery seems to be slightly earlier) than the other highland settlement sites in the hills of Cisjordan.

The closest parallels to the material culture (pottery and objects) of 'Umayri come from the highlands north of Jerusalem, especially in the region of Shechem (Mount Ebal). Zertal's "Manasseh bowl"⁵ is very frequent at 'Umayri, as well,⁶ followed closely by typical Iron I carinated types.⁷ On a jar rim from Mount Ebal is a potter's mark in the shape of an upside-down "V,"⁸ identical to the marks on two collared pithos handles at 'Umayri. A trapezoidal seal from Mount Ebal⁹ is similar to seals from 'Umayri.

Relation to the Bible

How should we relate this site to the Bible? It probably was not specifically mentioned by name; very few sites east of the Jordan were listed specifically. We can tie no specific Biblical event to the site. But we definitely can relate its settlement processes and lifestyles to those recorded in the Bible, especially the Book of Judges. We will first examine the lifestyle exhibited by the finds and then explore the implications of the settlement process by looking at other finds in the region of 'Umayri.

For Biblical connections, the cultic corner in Building A is the most striking feature because of its religious significance. In many Israelite sites, primarily dating later in the Iron Age, standing stones were frequent symbols of the deity. They were often located near city gates (Tell el-Far'ah and Dan, for instance) and were also in the central rooms of shrines and temples, such as the one at Arad. Because all of these sites seem to have been Israelite (Arad and Dan both have inscriptions clearly indicating this), the standing stones may have symbolized Yahweh. Indeed, Jacob set up a stone for God at Bethel (Gen. 28). Although Micah of Judges 17 set up an actual image of Yahweh in a warped sense of piety ("There was no king in the land; everyone did what was right in his own eyes;" Judges 18:1), the idea of a private household shrine implied by the story resonates with the presence of our domestic cultic corner. The resonance heightens when we remember that both the story and our archaeological find come from pre-monarchic times.

⁵ 139, Figs. 11:1, 3, 5, 7; 14:5.

⁶ D. R. Clark, "Field B: The Western Defense System," *Madaba Plains Project 2: The 1987 Season at Tell el-'Umeiri and Vicinity and Subsequent Studies*, eds. L. G. Herr, et al. (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University/Institute of Archaeology, 1991), 53-73, see Fig. 4.7:24, 17; D. R. Clark, "Field B: The Western Defense System," *Madaba Plains Project 3: The 1989 Season at Tell el-'Umeiri and Vicinity and Subsequent Studies*, eds. L. G. Herr, et al. (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University/Institute of Archaeology, 1997), 53-98, see Fig. 4.25:17-19; many more unpublished.

⁷ Clark, 1997, Fig. 4.25:17-19.

⁸ Zertal, 147.

⁹ B. Brandl, "Two Scarabs and a Trapezoidal Seal from Mount Ebal," *Tel Aviv* 13-14 (1987): 166-172, see 167).

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

The four-room house plan is well known from Iron Age sites, mostly in Israelite territory, but may also be found among other national groups in lesser frequencies. The relatively simple finds from our house illustrate very well the types of finds made in other early Israelite villages and towns. It reflects a people who are subsisting on a combination of small-scale farming and pastoralism, as well as a small amount of trade. This is precisely the type of lifestyle which lies behind many of the stories in the Book of Judges. Even at the end of the period, for instance, only King Saul and Jonathan could afford weapons (1 Sam. 13:22). Because 'Umayri was apparently on the King's Highway, where trade and communication were more prominent in the economy than elsewhere in the hinterland of the Canaanite culture, which still existed, the site was somewhat more prosperous and larger than most other highland sites.

Indeed it is these highland sites in Cisjordan (discussed briefly above) which are usually identified with Israel during the time of the settlement. The significant relationship between the finds from 'Umayri and the highlands north of Jerusalem, especially in the Shechem area, indicates at least a mild form of economic and social interaction. Certainly the people living at 'Umayri did so in a lifestyle similar to that of the Israelite tribes settling down in Cisjordan. But were they Israelites? To answer that question we must first examine some of the finds from other sites close to 'Umayri.

Who destroyed 'Umayri so definitively? Can we make a Biblical connection for it? The site was not immediately resettled after the destruction. So far, only a small storeroom has been found built on top of the destruction debris. It dates to the end of the twelfth or early eleventh centuries BC and so existed about 75 to 100 years after the destruction. Were all the inhabitants put to the sword, as seems to have been often the case in the Biblical record? Or was the destruction so violent and the threat to resettlement so strong that any survivors simply moved, perhaps west of the Jordan, rather than rebuild so cursed a site? It is possible to nominate several groups as the destroyers, but there is no clear sign for any of them. I prefer to connect the destruction with 'Umayri's location on the King's Highway, but it is simply a preference. Could 'Umayri have become too prosperous? That is, could they have taxed goods being transported through their land so heavily that the caravaneers and/or consumers banded together to destroy the extortioners and allow free trade, or at least trade which they controlled? In the Bible the caravaneers in this region are sometimes identified as Midianites, descendants of Ishmael, who lived in a group of oases in northwestern Arabia, a region known as the Hijaz. Their pottery has been found in the very south of Jordan and the Araba Valley near the Gulf of Aqaba. They also appear in the Book of Judges, apparently trying to open and control a trade route through the Esdraelon Valley to the Mediterranean. If they could control

HERR: TALL AL-`UMAYRI AND THE BIBLE

the complete trade route their caravans needed to take, they would profit much more.¹⁰

A Cluster of Similar Sites

So far, we have very few excavation results of early Iron I remains from the central plateau of Transjordan (extending from the east-west section of the Wadi Zarqa [Biblical Jabbok River] in the north to the Wadi Mujib [Biblical Arnon] in the south), except for the MPP region. Van der Steen's list includes some sites that are earlier in LB and somewhat later in Iron I.¹¹ The horizontal exposure of Ibrahim's work at Sahab was hampered by its modern urban setting, but the Iron I pottery from there seems more advanced (typologically later) than ours.¹² Dornemann's Iron I pottery from Amman is difficult to sort out, but there are very few similarities to ours.¹³ The corpus of pottery from the Baq'ah Valley¹⁴ seems to be roughly contemporary to ours (jugs and lamps), but frequent forms at `Umayri, such as cooking pots and collared pithoi, are not published from there and apparently were not found. The pottery in the early Iron I tomb from Madaba¹⁵ also seems to be contemporary with `Umayri, especially the bowls, lamps, and flasks. But standard domestic forms like cooking pots and collared pithoi are again lacking. Of these sites only the tomb at Madaba and the Baq'ah Valley site may be considered contemporary with `Umayri, but the pottery assemblage at both sites is so different, due to the specific functions of the sites, that a serious social connection cannot be strongly suggested at present (nor can it be excluded).

More positively, unpublished, fragmentary, or partial evidence from sites in the `Umayri region is beginning to surface, which may suggest a coherent series of contemporary settlements. The early Iron I pottery from Tall Hisban (biblical Heshbon), especially the collared pithoi and cooking pots, is similar to that from `Umayri (I am in the process of preparing this assemblage for publication with Jim Sauer). Similar collared pithoi have been found in secondary deposits at Tall Jawa, about 4 km east of `Umayri,¹⁶ and Tall Jalul east of Madaba.¹⁷ A bedrock trench at Hisban may have been a moat protecting the site, although it must be

¹⁰ J. D. Schloen, "Caravans, Kenites, and *Casus Belli*: Enmity and Alliance in the Song of Deborah," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 55 (1993): 18-38.

¹¹ E. Van Der Steen, "The Central East Jordan Valley in the Late Bronze and Early Iron Age," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 302 (1996): 51-74, see 52.

¹² Personal observation confirmed by Ibrahim, personal communication, July, 1994.

¹³ R. H. Dornemann, *The Archaeology of the Transjordan*. (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Public Museum, 1983), Figs. 53-60; virtually all of the illustrated sherds are Iron II.

¹⁴ P. E. McGovern, *The Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages of Central Transjordan: The Baq'ah Valley Project, 1977-1981* (Philadelphia: University Museum, 1986), 151-163.

¹⁵ Harding, G. L. and B. S. J. Isserlin, "An Early Iron Age Tomb at Madaba," *Palestine Exploration Fund Annual* 6 (1953):27-41.

¹⁶ Daviau, personal communication, November, 1994.

¹⁷ R. W. Younker, personal communication, November, 1994.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

stressed that the conditions there were not at all similar to that in which the moat at 'Umayri was found. I am therefore still hesitant to draw this conclusion for Hisban (suggested to me by William Shea in the late 1970s and again by Paul Ray and Øystein LaBianca in the summer of 1996), because the trench is too narrow (ca. 3-4 m wide at the top) and is located near the top of the hill. Unlike the moat at 'Umayri, it did not cut off a connecting ridge; indeed, the location of the trench is near the lip of the original hill, whereas the moat at 'Umayri is at the bottom of the hill, where moats usually are located. If it was a moat, it probably encircled only a small site at the very top of the hill. Hisban also contained a nicely plastered cistern. Not enough is known of these sites, however, to suggest size, fortifications, or economic status.

Although I must stress that these very preliminary observations warrant no firm conclusion, one may entertain the possibility that the finds from 'Umayri, Jawa, Jalul, Hisban, and Madaba (if we may use the early Iron I tomb there to suggest a corresponding domestic settlement) represent a contemporaneous regional cultural entity. The material culture seems to be very similar at all sites, and they are within about 18 km of each other (Madaba to Jawa). Each site is within visual contact with at least one other (from Jalul one can see Madaba, Jawa, and Hisban, as well as the hill immediately to the south of 'Umayri).

A Biblical Tribal Organization?

I prefer to explain our archaeological finds using a model based on tribal lifestyles, economics and social systems.¹⁸ This is the model already recorded by the Bible, which allocates the land to various tribal groups. The settlement processes by which these groups converted from nomadism to a sedentarized, agricultural way of life saw a very complex series of events that included populations on the move, such as the tribe of Dan, dissatisfied peasants such as the Gibeonites, settling nomads, and undoubtedly other scenarios, as well. The model we use should not be limited to just one of these processes, but should be inclusive of various social processes rather than exclusive.¹⁹ Tribal relationships consist of fluid coalitions that rise, fall, swap loyalties, and come and go; these same processes should be acknowledged as playing a part throughout LB II and Iron I while Israel and its tribally related and very similar neighbors (Ammonites, Moabites, Edomites) were settling the area. At the risk of making an extremely complex picture overly simple, I can try to summarize the process: As tribal relationships and loyalties became more consistent and less fluid through time, groups of allied tribes developed supra-tribal structures which slowly grew

¹⁸ Ø. S. LaBianca and R. W. Younker, "The Kingdoms of Ammon, Moab and Edom: The Archaeology of Society in Late Bronze/Iron Age Transjordan (Ca. 1400-500 BCE)," *The Archaeology of Society in the Holy Land*, ed. T. E. Levy. (London: Leicester University, 1994), 399-415.

¹⁹ Also stated by L. E. Stager, untitled response, *Biblical Archaeology Today*, (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1985), 83-87.

HERR: TALL AL-ʿUMAYRI AND THE BIBLE

into nations or territorial states during Iron II, the time of the monarchy.²⁰ Thus, the settlement process was made up of tribes and tribal alliances (which could be called “Sons of Israel” or “Sons of Ammon”) like that reflected in the Biblical literature, such as the Song of Deborah (Judges 5), where ten tribes are listed in the coalition known as Israel.

Elsewhere I have suggested that the tribal group with whom the inhabitants of ʿUmayri and the other sites in the region may be most easily identified was Reuben.²¹ The argument was based in part on an article by Frank Cross²² and on the similarity of the finds from ʿUmayri with those in the Shechem area (above). There are certainly other tribal groups with whom it is possible to identify our inhabitants, such as Ammonites, Moabites, Gadites, and Amorites, but, because of Cross’s paper and the relative lack of finds from this period in the central Ammonite territory,²³ and the complete lack of relationships with the other groups mentioned, the identification that is most likely and most interesting heuristically remains Reuben. This is the region the Bible assigns to Reuben, as well.

If we identify ʿUmayri and related sites in the region as Reubenite, the settlement process of that tribe probably began as early as the 13th century. When exactly they arrived cannot be seen from the archaeological record, because their nomadic existence would not have left remains for us to find. After beginning to settle they grew into a prosperous series of towns, some, like ʿUmayri, with an impressive system of fortifications. They also developed a complex, prosperous culture, more ambitious than their relatives west of the Jordan who were beginning to settle in smaller, less developed villages in Cisjordan. It also makes stronger the argument that at least part of the “Israel” of the Merneptah Stele (late thirteenth century BC) was in Transjordan, as Naʿaman suggests,²⁴ because it follows Yenoʿam, a possible Transjordanian city. The much discussed determinative before “Israel” indicating a “people” rather than a “city” could apply to a group of settlements the Egyptians knew primarily as a tribal entity or alliance rather than a city state in the “Canaanite” fashion. Most scholars identify Israel on the Merneptah Stele with the region of Shechem, because the biblical Shechem stories seem to reflect very early times. However, the archaeological finds from ʿUmayri and region may suggest we should look to the east rather than the west. The close association of the material culture of ʿUmayri with the Shechem

²⁰ LaBianca and Younker, 403.

²¹ Herr 1998.

²² F. M. Cross, “Reuben, First-Born of Jacob,” *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 100 (1988 Supplement): 46-65.

²³ C.-H. C. Ji, “Iron Age I in Central and Northern Transjordan: An Interim Summary of Archaeological Data,” *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 127 (1995): 122-140.

²⁴ N. Naʿaman, “The ‘Conquest of Canaan’ in the Book of Joshua and in History,” *From Nomadism to Monarchy*, eds. I. Finkelstein and N. Naʿaman. (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1994), 218–281.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

region, and the greater prosperity of 'Umayri and possibly its region suggest Reubenite priority.

Conclusion

There are several ways to interpret our archaeological evidence historically and demographically. 'Umayri could have been populated by an early Ammonite group, but there is very little archaeological or textual evidence to suggest it. The finds from 'Umayri are significantly different from those nearer 'Amman ('Amman Airport, Baq'ah Valley, Sahab); but it should be noted that these differences may relate more to functional differences of the sites. They could also have been early Moabites, but there is even less evidence for that than for Ammonites. The Bible speaks of Amorites in this area; especially famous is Sihon the king of Heshbon in Num 21. But who were the Amorites? If they may be identified with Canaanites (those occupying cities and towns in the valleys and plains as opposed to highland sites) the material culture of 'Umayri cannot be paralleled significantly by any valley/plain site, even those few nearby in the Jordan Valley. This is a highland site and a highland culture that is best connected with tribal entities that are in the process of settling down. The best identification continues to be Reubenite, because there is textual evidence for it.

If we are correct in suggesting that the remains from Tall al-'Umayri and the other contemporary sites in the region confirm the Biblical indication that we should look for Reuben in our area, Dever's assertion that there is no archaeological evidence for highland settlements in central Transjordan from which "Israel" could have come²⁵ is no longer correct.²⁶ Tall al-'Umayri's strong connections with the northern highlands around Shechem tie the hill countries of Cisjordan and Transjordan together, suggesting that both groups were related economically and socially. It is a simple next step to suggest that they belonged to two tribes which were part of the same tribal confederacy. That confederacy was known as Israel.

²⁵ W. G. Dever, "Archaeology and the Israelite 'Conquest,'" *Anchor Bible Dictionary* 3 (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 545–58.

²⁶ B. Halpern, "Settlement of Canaan," *Anchor Bible Dictionary* 5 (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1120–43.

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New Discoveries Among the Philistines: Archaeological and Textual Considerations

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Perhaps no other culture of the Bible is more notorious than the Philistines. As the ever present foes of Israel, they are the people who brought about the downfall of Samson (Jdg 16). The Philistines are the only people who ever captured the ark of God (1 Sam 4-6). The Bible records the story of the Philistine giant Goliath, who challenged the armies of Saul and was then defeated by a boy named David whose practiced aim was blessed by the Lord (1 Sam 17). Later David avenged the deaths of Saul and Jonathan at the hands of the Philistines (2 Sam 5:17-25). So the Philistines have become part of the childhood imagination wherever Bible stories are told, epitomizing evil and rebelliousness before the God of heaven. Mention of them brings to mind images of a barbaric, uncivilized, and uncouth people. While the first association is biblical, the second is a sociocultural assumption that requires further investigation.

Before the dawn of archaeology as a systematic discipline in the Middle East during the last century, these recorded events, renowned as they were through the Judaeo-Christian world, lacked any specific historical context. Today, that picture has changed. We know a great deal more about the everyday life of this ancient people, for the Philistines, more perhaps than any other no ancient culture of the Bible, have been vividly illuminated through archaeological excavations during the past two decades.¹ I have been personally involved in excavating several Philistine and "Sea People" sites in Israel, so this topic is of particular interest

¹ Trude Dothan, *The Philistines and Their Material Culture* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1982); Trude Dothan and Moshe Dothan, *People of the Sea: The Search for the Philistines* (New York: Macmillan, 1992); Amihai Mazar, "The Emergence of the Philistine Material Culture," *Israel Exploration Journal* 35 (1985):95-107. For the most comprehensive discussions, see *The Mediterranean Peoples in Transition: Thirteenth to Early Tenth Centuries B.C.E.*, ed. Seymour Gitin, Amihai Mazar, and Ephraim Stern (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1998), reviewed by Michael G. Hasel, *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, in press.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

to me.² This paper will consider the textual, iconographic, and archaeological evidence that has recently new life to this people.

Origins: Textual Considerations

Biblical Accounts. According to the Bible, the Philistines originated from the islands and coast lands of the Aegean sea. In the table of nations of Gen. 10:14 the Philistines are mentioned as originating from Caphtor.³ Jeremiah 47:4 and Amos 9:7 also specifically associate them with Caphtor, which can be identified with the area of Crete.⁴ Ezekiel 25:15-16 and Zephaniah 2:5 portray the Philistines in poetic parallel with the Cherethites (also from Crete).⁵ The Biblical record regarding their origin is rather clear, but are there other historical indications?

Egyptians and the “Sea Peoples.” In 1798 Napoleon Bonaparte landed on the beaches of Alexandria with a massive French force. Napoleon’s main goal was of course to secure a valuable colony for the young French Republic, but he also had hopes of scientific conquest as well. He brought along with him a “Scientific and Artistic Commission” composed of 167 distinguished scholars and scientists who were to record and study the things found there.⁶ One of the most impressive sites discovered in Thebes in southern Egypt was the enormous temple of Ramses III at Medinet Habu.⁷ On the walls of this temple,

² These sites include Ashkelon, Dor, and Tel Miqne-Ekron. For a recent discussion, see Michael G. Hasel, “Excavations at Tel Miqne-Ekron, 1994,” *Horn Archaeological Museum Newsletter* 15/4 (1994): 5; idem, “New Discoveries Among the Philistines,” *Ministry* (March, 1998):21-23; idem, “A Silent Mound Reveals Its Secrets,” *Perspective Digest* 3/1 (1998):30-33.

³ Gary A. Rendsburg, “Gen 10:13-14: An Authentic Hebrew Tradition Concerning the Origin of the Philistines,” *Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages* 13 (1987): 90 n. 3.

⁴ F. R. Bush, “Caphtor,” *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 610-611; Richard S. Hess, “Caphtor,” *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 1 (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 869-870; cf. D. M. Howard, Jr., “Philistines,” *Peoples of the Old Testament World*, ed. Alfred J. Hoerth, Gerald L. Mattingly, and Edwin M. Yamauchi (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1994), 232.

⁵ Although it is generally assumed that this group also originated in Crete, the identity of the Cherethites is not certain. Indeed, some passages in the OT juxtapose the Cherethites and the Philistines (Ezek 25:16; Zeph 2:5), yet there remains some ambiguity whether the “Cherethites were identical with the Philistines, a subgroup of the Philistines, or a separate ethnic entity,” Carl S. Ehrlich, “Cherethites,” *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 1 (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 898-899. William F. Albright (“A Colony of Cretan Mercenaries on the Coast of the Negev,” *Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society* 1 [1920-21]: 187-194) believed that they were a mercenary group employed by the Egyptians long before the incursion of the “Sea Peoples” at the time of Ramses III, while M. Delcor believes that they did not arrive from Crete until the time of David (“Les Kéréthim et les Crétois,” *Vetus Testamentum* 28 [1978]: 409-422) during whose reign they were used as guards (2 Sam 8:18; 15:18; 20:7; 20:23; 1 Kgs 1:38-44; 1 Chr 18:17).

⁶ Dothan and Dothan, *People of the Sea*, 13.

⁷ On the Medinet Habu reliefs, see The Epigraphic Survey, *Medinet Habu II: The Later Historical Records of Ramses III*, Oriental Institute Publications 9 (Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago); For translations of the text see W. F. Edgerton and John A. Wilson,

HASEL: NEW DISCOVERIES AMONG THE PHILISTINES

as on many funerary temples in Egypt, military campaign records were written in Egyptian and accompanied with reliefs that illustrated these actions vividly.⁸ Often in these military scenes the king is shown smiting the captives he has brought back to Egypt.⁹

In one of these scenes at Medinet Habu an account is given of the arrival of the “Sea Peoples,” warriors who met the forces of Ramses III in boats,¹⁰ presumably somewhere in the mouth of the Nile Delta.¹¹ Several of these “Sea Peoples” already appeared in earlier records of Ramses II¹² and Merenptah.¹³ Among those mentioned on the Medinet Habu reliefs, including the Tjeker, Denyen, Sharduna, and Weshesh, the *prst* (Peleset) or Philistines are mentioned

Historical Records of Ramses III: The Texts in Medinet Habu Volumes I and II. Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization 12 (Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago).

⁸ For a complete analysis of the use of military terminology in the texts of the entire period, see Michael G. Hasel, *Domination and Resistance: Egyptian Military Activity in the Southern Levant, ca. 1300-1185 BC*, *Probleme der Ägyptologie* 11 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1998); more specifically cf. Barbara Cifola, “Ramses III and the Sea Peoples: A Structural Analysis of the Medinet Habu Inscriptions,” *Orientalia*, n.s. 57 (1988):275-306. On the reliefs, idem, “The Terminology of Ramses III’s Historical Records with a Formal Analysis of the War Scenes,” *Orientalia*, n.s. 60 (1991):9-57; E. van Essche-Merchez, “La syntaxe formelle des reliefs et de la grande inscription de l’an 8 de Ramsès III à Médinet Habu,” *Chronique d’Égypte* 134 (1992):211-239.

⁹ Michael G. Hasel, *Domination and Resistance*, 36-38; Emma S. Hall, *The Pharaoh Smites His Enemies: A Comparative Study*, *Münchener Ägyptologischer Studien* 44 (Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1986).

¹⁰ On the boats of these invading groups, see Shelley Wachsmann, “The Ships of the Sea Peoples,” *International Journal of Nautical Archaeology and Underwater Exploration* 10/3 (1981):187-220; idem, “The Ships of the Sea People: Additional Notes,” *International Journal of Nautical Archaeology and Underwater Exploration* 11/4 (1982):297-304; Avner Raban and Robert R. Stieglitz, “The Sea Peoples and Their Contribution to Civilization,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 17/6 (1991):34-42, 92-93.

¹¹ Trude Dothan, “What We Know About the Philistines,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 8/4 (1982):30-35; N. K. Sanders, *The Sea Peoples: Warriors of the Ancient Mediterranean 1250-1150 B.C.*, rev. ed. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1985).

¹² In the reign of Ramses II, the Lukka and Sherden, two Sea People groups, are mentioned (Alan H. Gardiner, *The Kadesh Inscriptions of Ramesses II* [Oxford: Griffith Institute, 1960]). The Lukka are mentioned as allies of the Hittites (KRI II:17), while the Sherden are listed as mercenaries fighting for Egypt (KRI II:6-10). The Tanis Stela describes a group of Sherden who overpowered in raids and assaults from the sea vessels (translation in J. Yoyotte, “Les stèles de Ramsès II à Tanis,” *Kemi* 10 (1949):60-74, lines 13-16; KRI II:345,3); and the Assuan Stela of Ramses’ Year 2 refers to the king who “destroys the warriors of the sea” (James H. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt: Historical Documents, vol. 3* [Chicago: University of Chicago, 1906] 779; KRI II:345,3). The Sherden are also listed among Egypt’s military in Papyrus Anastasi I (Alan H. Gardiner, *Egyptian Hieratic Texts* [Leipzig, 1911] 58).

¹³ Several groups of Sea Peoples are mentioned in Merenptah’s campaign against the Libyans in the Great Karnak Inscription (KRI IV:2-12) and the Athribis Stela (KRI IV:19-22). These include the Eqwesh, Teresh, Lukka, Sherden, and Shekelesh as “northerners coming from all lands.” Only the Eqwesh in this list are eventually said to be “coming from the sea” (KRI IV:8,9; IV:22,13). These groups are not mentioned in the Merenptah (Israel) Stela (KRI IV:12-19; on the military campaign of Merenptah to Canaan, see Michael G. Hasel, “Israel in the Merneptah Stela,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 296 [1994] 45-61).

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

for the first time during the eighth year of Ramses III (1185 B.C.).¹⁴ Taking a closer look at these warriors, we notice distinctive features. We certainly can be thankful for the careful and meticulous scribes and artisans who preserved such a detailed record of what peoples of the ancient world looked like. Asiatics and Egyptians are clearly distinguished from these groups of newcomers. Other reliefs show whole families of these groups traveling in ox-drawn carts and warriors riding on horse-drawn chariots as they engage the Egyptians in land battle.¹⁵

According to the reliefs, the Philistines wore a plain shirt jerkin under some armor. All wore elaborate feather headdresses similar to a mohawk haircut. They are clearly fighting against the Egyptians, and by the look of it they are not winning. The same hairstyle or feathered headdress appears as a coffin lid from Beth Shan, an Egyptian stronghold in Palestine during the Late Bronze Age.¹⁶ Other ceramic coffins of this type occur at coastal sites like Tell Far'ah (S) and Lachish.¹⁷

Some scholars have made a connection between these coffin lids and various early "Sea Peoples"¹⁸ or Philistines.¹⁹ However, Larry Stager, of Harvard University, has pointed out that the dating of coffins found at the Egyptian garrison site of Deir el-Balah²⁰ may preclude an association with the Philistines since they appear a century or two before the "Sea People" invasion described in the records of Ramses III.²¹ Stager, with others, assumes that the first arrival of the Philistines did not occur until shortly before the campaign described by Ramses

¹⁴ The ethnic name *prst* was first noticed by Jean François Champollion, see Dothan and Dothan, *People of the Sea*, 22.

¹⁵ Dothan and Dothan, *People from the Sea*, 21.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, Pl. 4.

¹⁷ Dothan, *The Philistines*, 260-279.

¹⁸ Some scholars believed that these coffins contained the Denyen, see E. Oren, *The Northern Cemetery at Beth Shan* (Leiden: Brill, 1973).

¹⁹ So G. Ernest Wright, "Philistine Coffins and Mercenaries," *Biblical Archaeologist* 22 (1959):54-66. Sir Flinders Petrie, when excavating Cemetery 500 at Tell el-Far'ah (S), first associated these coffins with "five lords [seranim] of the Philistines," see Jane Waldbaum, "Philistine Tombs at Tell Fara and Their Aegean Prototypes," *American Journal of Archaeology* 70 (1966):331-340. Waldbaum and others have associated the appearance of this form of burial with the Aegean world (cf. William H. Stiebing, Jr., "Another Look at the Origins of the Philistine Tombs of Tell el-Far'ah [S]," *American Journal of Archaeology* 74 [1970] 139-143. Trude Dothan associated the first of these tombs at Deir el-Balah with the Egyptians and suggests that this burial practice was later adopted by the Philistines (Dothan, *The Philistines*, 288).

²⁰ On excavations at Deir el-Balah, see Trude Dothan, *Excavations at the Cemetery of Deir el-Balah. Qedem 10* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1979); idem, "Deir el-Balah," *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, ed. Ephraim Stern (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993), 343-347.

²¹ Lawrence E. Stager, "The Impact of the Sea Peoples in Canaan (1185-1050 BCE)," *The Archaeology of Society in the Holy Land*, ed. T. E. Levy (Leicester: Leicester University, 1995), 341; see already on this point, James D. Muhly, "The Role of the Sea Peoples in Cyprus during the LCIII Period," *Cyprus at the Close of the Late Bronze Age*, ed. Vassos Karageorghis and James D. Muhly (Nicosia: Zavallis, 1984), 46.

HASEL: NEW DISCOVERIES AMONG THE PHILISTINES

III in 1185 B.C. While the evidence from the coffins alone make such a connection difficult, it might also be possible to conclude that they represent an earlier Philistine presence, as described in earlier biblical accounts. While later coffins could also have served the Philistines,²² they may also have been used by the Egyptians who dominated Palestine during the Late Bronze Age.²³

Most scholars have concluded from the Egyptian evidence that the Philistines at this stage were part of a massive invasion from the Greek islands across the Mediterranean both by land and by sea. What caused this massive migration? Various theories abound: 1) a volcanic eruption;²⁴ 2) massive earthquakes;²⁵ 3) famine or drought;²⁶ 4) overpopulation; 5) or a systemic theory of collapse that may include several of these factors. There is no certain explanation. What does become clearer from the textual, iconographic and archaeological record is where they came from and the method of their settlement along the coastal plain of Israel.²⁷

²² So Dothan, *The Philistines*, 288.

²³ So Stager, "Impact of the Sea Peoples," 341.

²⁴ On the eruption of Thera and its influence on migrations around the Late Bronze/Early Iron Age transition, see Spyridon Marinatos, "The Volcanic Destruction of Minoan Crete," *Antiquity* 13 (1939):425-439; L. Pomerance, *The Final Collapse of Santorini (Thera) 1400 or 1200?* SMA 26 (Göteborg: Aströms, 1970); but see P. Kuniholm, "Overview and Assessment of the Evidence for the Date of the Eruption of Thera," *Thera and the Aegean World. Proceedings of the Third International Congress, vol. 3: Chronology*, ed. D. A. Hardy and A. Colin Renfrew (London: Thera Foundation, 1990), 13-18.

²⁵ On the hypothesis that earthquakes caused many of the destruction of Late Bronze Age cities, see C.F.A. Schaeffer, "Commentaires sur les lettres et documents trouvés dans les bibliothèques privées d'Ugarit," *Ugaritica*, vol. 5 (Paris, 1968), 753-768; but see Robert Drews, *The End of the Bronze Age: Changes in Warfare and the Catastrophe ca. 1200 B.C.* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1993), 33-47.

²⁶ On drought or famine as the causative factor for the migration of "Sea Peoples," see Rhys Carpenter, *Discontinuity in Greek Civilization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1966); August Stobel, *Die spätbronzezeitliche Seevölkersturm* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1976), 173-174; William H. Stiebing, Jr. *Out of the Desert? Archaeology and the Exodus/Conquest Narratives* (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1989), 182-187; but see Drews, *The End of the Bronze Age*, 77-84.

²⁷ There has been a question whether they were settled into Egyptian garrisons after their alleged defeat under Ramses III (William F. Albright, "The Excavation of Tell Beit Mirsim, I: Pottery of the First Three Campaigns," *Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 12. [New Haven, CT: ASOR, 1932]; Albrecht Alt, "Ägyptische Tempel in Palästina und die Landnahme der Philister," *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins* 67 [1944] 1-20; Dothan, *The Philistines*, 288; I. Singer, "The Beginning of Philistine Settlement in Canaan and the Northern Boundary of Philistia," *Tel Aviv* 12 [1985] 109-122; idem, "Egyptians, Canaanites, and Philistines in the Period of the Emergence of Israel," *From Nomadism to Monarchy*, ed. Israel Finkelstein and Nadav Na'aman [Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1994]: 232-238) or whether they were invading conquerors that settled in the southern coastal plain of Palestine despite the efforts of the Egyptians to quell their advance (on this view see, Bryant G. Wood, "The Philistines Enter Canaan: Were They Egyptian Lackeys or Invading Conquerors?" *Biblical Archaeology Review* 17 [1991] 44-90; Manfred Bietak, "The Sea Peoples and the End of Egyptian Administration in Canaan," *Biblical Archaeology Today: 1990: Proceedings of the Second International Congress on Biblical Archaeology, Jerusalem, June-July, 1990*, ed. A. Biran and J. Aviram [Jerusalem: Israel Explora-

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

From Biblical records we know that there were at least five Philistine cities along the southern coastal plain in Israel. They were called Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron, Gaza (Jer 25:20; Amos 1:8; Zeph 2:4), and Gath (Josh 11:22; 1 Sam 5:8; Amos 6:2). Three of these sites have been excavated extensively, and at two sites, Gaza²⁸ and Gath (Tell es-Safi),²⁹ excavations were initiated last year. We turn now specifically to the recent excavations at Tell Miqne-Ekron.

Origins: Recent Discoveries at Ekron

Architectural Affinities. The eighty-five acre site is located southeast of modern Tel Aviv on the southern coastal plain. The first stages of Philistine occupation followed the massive destruction of a Canaanite city.³⁰ This same pattern of destruction is found at sites throughout Philistia, including Ashdod³¹ and Ashkelon.³² At Tel Miqne-Ekron over a meter and a half of debris included charred roof beams and a beautiful bowl, intact, with dried figs that were made into charcoal as a result of the intensive heat and thereby preserved. The first stage of settlement was marked by numerous pits and storage areas. The Philistines probably camped for awhile before building more monumental structures.

Later this first phase was followed what became known as the “hearth” room excavated in Field IV Lower. The hearth functioned as a large fireplace in a room with mudbrick walls that were covered with fine plaster. The hearth was found and cleared in 1990, but was saved for thorough excavation in 1995, when I was made responsible for carefully sectioning it and analyzing its contents. The hearth was surrounded by standing mudbricks that formed the perimeter and several sunken storage jars. We found considerable remains of charcoal in the upper levels but it later dissipated as we excavated further. It turned out, in fact, that the so-called hearth served initially as a storage silo that was nearly two meters deep and lined with mudbrick at the bottom. The conclusion was reached, on the basis of the architecture surrounding this unique feature, that the building built

tion Society, 1993] 292-306; Rainer Stadelmann, “Die Abwehr der Seevölker unter Ramses III.,” *Saeculum* 19 [1968] 156-171; Stager, “Impact of the Sea Peoples,” 340-341).

²⁸ Hershel Shanks, “Gaza: Nascent Palestinian Authority Tackles a New Dig,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 23/2 (1997):52-53.

²⁹ Tammi J. Schneider, “New Project: Tel Safi, Israel,” *Biblical Archaeologist* 60/4 (1997):250.

³⁰ Trude Dothan, “The Arrival of the Sea Peoples: Cultural Diversity in Early Iron Age Canaan,” *Recent Excavations in Israel: Studies in Iron Age Archaeology*, AASOR 49, ed. Seymour Gitin and William G. Dever (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1989), 6.

³¹ Dothan and Dothan, *People of the Sea*, 127-188; M. Dothan, *Ashdod I*, Atiqot 7 (Jerusalem: Israel Department of Antiquities and Museums, 1967); M. Dothan and Y. Porath, *Ashdod IV*, Atiqot 15 (Jerusalem: Israel Department of Antiquities and Museums, 1982); idem., *Ashdod V*, Atiqot 23 (Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, 1993).

³² Lawrence E. Stager, *Ashkelon Discovered: From Canaanites and Philistines to Romans and Moslems* (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Archaeology Society, 1991), 13; cf. idem., “Merneptah and the Sea Peoples: New Light on an Old Relief,” *Eretz-Israel* 18 (1985):64* n. 37.

HASEL: NEW DISCOVERIES AMONG THE PHILISTINES

around it belonged to a later phase, when the storage silo was converted to a hearth for ritual purposes. The hearth room at Tell Miqne-Ekron has striking affinities to similar hearth temples in the Aegean.³³ At Pylos in Greece a similar hearth room sanctuary was excavated.³⁴ It also had plastered walls, in this case beautifully and ornately painted. These types of sanctuaries are altogether unknown in Palestine, and only one other sanctuary of this type has been found, at another Philistine site called Tell Qasile.³⁵ In summary, both sanctuaries were surrounded by plastered walls, and the hearth was the center object in the sanctuary, leading us to conclude that the sanctuaries at Tell Miqne-Ekron and Tell Qasile were diminished versions of similar sanctuaries at Pylos, Mycenae, and Tiryns.

Cultic Figurines. In addition to architecture features, such as the hearth sanctuaries at Miqne and Qasile, we also have a number of figurines that indicate cultic affinities with the Aegean world. At the Philistine site of Ashdod a very interesting figure was found shaped like a chair, but with some prominent female characteristics.³⁶ This chair/woman wore a small necklace in the shape of a lotus. The prominent breasts and other designs immediately pointed to some type of female fertility deity. Called "Ashdoda" after the place it was found, this figurine resembled very closely the figurines found in Mycenae, Greece, and other locations. A similar figurine depicts a figure seated in a chair with the same prominent features, but holding a small child.³⁷ Another example from Greece shows a similar design and painting.³⁸ Not only does this indicate another connection between the Philistines and the Mycenaean world of Greece, but it also reveals that they transported their own religious and ideological practices with them.

Other cultic artifacts include a stand used for burning incense that was found at Ashdod, the design of which emphasizes close association of music with religion.³⁹ Music evidently held a very prominent role in worship practices of the Philistines, as can be seen from another figurine of a lyre player.⁴⁰ These cultic figurines and other elements seem to signify that the early settlers brought with

³³ Such temples existed at Pylos, Mycenae, and Tiryns, where they are as much as four m in diameter, see Stager, "The Impact of the Sea Peoples," 347.

³⁴ Dothan and Dothan, *People of the Sea*, 242-245.

³⁵ Amihai Mazar, *Excavations at Tell Qasile*, Qedem 12 (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1980); idem, "Some Aspects of the Sea Peoples Settlements," *Society and Economy in the Eastern Mediterranean*, *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* 23, ed. M. Heltzer and E. Lipinski (Leuven, Peeters, 1988), 251-260.

³⁶ On the significance of the "Ashdoda" figurine, see M. Dothan, *Ashdod II-III: The Second and Third Seasons of Excavations, 1963, 1965, Soundings in 1967*, *'Atiqot* 9-10 (1971):20-21.

³⁷ G. E. Mylonas, "Seated and Multiple Mycenaean Figurines in the National Museum of Athens, Greece," *Aegean and the Near East: Studies Presented to Hetty Goldman*, ed. S. Weinberg (New York, 1956), pl. XV:7.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pl. XIII.

³⁹ M. Dothan, "The Musicians of Ashdod," *Archaeology* 23 (1970): 310.

⁴⁰ M. Dothan, *Ashdod II-III*, pl. LV:1.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

them the religious practices of their homeland, but as we will see, soon thereafter they began to adapt to the local religious practices.

Ceramic Affinities. Perhaps the most important of cultural affinities with the Aegean comes from the ceramic forms excavated at sites along the southern coastal plain of Israel. In 1994, just north of the hearth sanctuary, and at a level below its foundation, a heavy concentration of a specific type of pottery called Mycenaean IIIC:1b was found in the initial level of occupation. This pottery is painted in typical Mycenaean style in either black or, less frequently, red. There are several different motifs, including birds, concentric shapes, and other styles.⁴¹ Painted pottery is quite rare in this region, usually found only on imported wares or some typical Late Bronze forms,⁴² so connections to this type of painting and motifs were sought in other areas. It was found that much of the pottery was related to forms and styles found throughout mainland Greece, Crete, Cyprus, Syria, and Turkey.⁴³ This confirmed the documentary and textual evidence of an incursion of Philistines over land (from the north) and over sea (from the west). What was even more striking was that the motifs and traditions found in this ceramic type did not continue in the Aegean world after about the twelfth century B.C. “The Philistines appear to have been cut off from the rest of the Aegean world for some still unexplainable reason.”⁴⁴

Trude and Moshe Dothan have suggested that the Mycenaean IIIC:1b pottery was the precursor that influenced and led to Philistine bichrome pottery of subsequent occupation levels.⁴⁵ Their theory is that there were two waves of settlement, one prior to the campaign by Ramses III, characterized in the material culture by Mycenaean IIIC:1b pottery found above the destruction of sites like Ashdod and Tell Miqne-Ekron. The second wave of settlement came “in the aftermath of their defeat by Ramesses III” in 1185 BC.⁴⁶ Another view, argued by

⁴¹ For an analysis of these motifs, see T. Dothan, *The Philistines*, 94-217.

⁴² See Ruth Amiran, *Ancient Pottery of the Holy Land* (Jerusalem: Masada, 1969). for local Late Bronze wares that include “chocolate-on-white” (pp. 158-159, pl. 49); the “palm and ibex” motif (pp. 161-163, pl. 50) and certain pilgrim flasks with concentric patterns (166-170, pl. 51).

⁴³ One of the first individuals who recognized this similarity was Walter Abel Heurtley, “The Relations Between ‘Philistine’ and Mycenaean Pottery,” *Quarterly of the Department of Antiquity in Palestine* 5 (1936):90-110.

⁴⁴ Dothan and Dothan, *People of the Sea*, 51-52.

⁴⁵ On Mycenaean IIIC:1b pottery and the question of Philistine origins, see Heurtley, “The Relations Between ‘Philistine’ and Mycenaean Pottery,” 90-110; A. Furumark, *The Mycenaean Pottery: Analysis and Classification* (Stockholm: K. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien, 1941); P. Mountjoy, *Mycenaean Decorated Pottery—A Guide to Identification* (Gothenburg: Paul Aströms, 1986); Trude Dothan, “Mycenaean IIIC:1b Pottery and the Arrival of the Sea Peoples at Tel Miqne-Ekron,” *Sixth International Colloquium on Aegean Prehistory* (Athens: The Ministry of Culture, 1987); B. Kling, *Mycenaean IIC:1b and Related Pottery in Cyprus* (Gothenburg: Paul Aströms, 1989).

⁴⁶ T. Dothan, *The Philistines*, 295-296; idem, “Arrival of the Sea Peoples,” 6-9; idem, “Tel Miqne-Ekron: The Aegean Affinities of the ‘Sea Peoples’ [Philistines] Settlement in Canaan in Iron I,” *Recent Excavations in Israel: A View to the West*, *Archaeological Institute of America*

HASEL: NEW DISCOVERIES AMONG THE PHILISTINES

Larry Stager, also sees two stages of settlement and expansion, the first occurring during the initial settlement of Philistia before the, but unlike earlier treatments, Stager does not accept that the first stage of settlement occurred with the settlement of the Philistines in Egyptian garrison cities. Instead, he sees them as conquerors who the Egyptians could barely contain.⁴⁷ Regardless of the two possible interpretations, the consensus remains that the Mycenaean IIC:1b pottery precedes and influences the Philistine bichrome which later replaces it.

Having established that the style and painting designs were very similar to Aegean forms, another question arose. Were these pottery forms imported or were they locally made? Neutron Activation Analysis⁴⁸ confirmed that the pottery was of local origin.⁴⁹ The large number of pottery manufacturing kilns that were found confirmed the results of neutron activation analysis.⁵⁰ Together with the architectural elements like the hearth, the cultic elements such as the seated figurine found at Ashdod, and the painted themes on the pottery, these aspects provide crucial connections between Philistine culture and the Aegean world.⁵¹

We thus have several lines of evidence pointing to an Aegean origin for the settlers of these cities. 1) Egyptian military records not only mention several groups originating from across the Mediterranean Sea, but also depict what the Philistines looked like. 2) Local Canaanite cities were destroyed and new settlements were established. 3) Architectural designs of buildings and other features, such as the hearth at Tel Miqne-Ekron and Tel Qasile, indicate a strong Aegean connection. 4) The pottery designs and forms, as exemplified first by Mycenaean

Colloquia and Conference Papers 1, ed. Seymour Gitin (Dubuque, IA: Archaeological Institute of America, 1995), 41-59; idem, "Initial Philistine Settlement: From Migration to Coexistence," *Mediterranean Peoples in Transition*, 148-61.

⁴⁷In this he follows such leading Egyptologists as Manfred Bietak, "The Sea Peoples," 292-306; Rainer Stadelmann, "Die Abwehr der Seevölker," 156-171; and archaeologist Wood, "The Philistines Enter Canaan," 44-52, 89-93.

⁴⁸NAA is a test performed on pottery to detect some of the rarest elements present. The pottery is bombarded with neutrons. The unstable radioactive isotopes then release gamma rays as they decay into stable isotopes. Measuring the gamma ray energy emitted allows one to determine what elements the pot is composed of and in what quantities, thus providing a chemical fingerprint. When these elements are known they are compared with various clay sources to determine the provenance of pottery, see Maureen F. Kaplan, "Using Neutron Activation Analysis to Establish the Provenance of Pottery," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 2/1 (1976); Colin Renfrew and Paul Bahn, *Archaeology: Theory, Methods, and Practice* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991), 317.

⁴⁹F. Asaro, Isadore Perlman, and Moshe Dothan, "An Introductory Study of Mycenaean IIC:1 Ware from Tel Ashdod," *Archaeometry* 13 (1971):169-175; F. Asaro and Isadore Perlman, "Provenience Studies of Mycenaean Pottery Employing Neutron Activation Analysis," *The Mycenaeans in the Eastern Mediterranean: Acts of the International Archaeological Symposium* (Nicosia, Cyprus: Department of Antiquities, 1973), 213-224; Jan Gunneweg, Trude Dothan, Isadore Perlman and Seymour Gitin, "On the Origin of Pottery from Tel Miqne-Ekron," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 264 (1986):3-16

⁵⁰Dothan, "The Arrival of the Sea Peoples," 4.

⁵¹Trude Dothan, "Tel Miqne-Ekron: The Aegean Affinities of the Sea Peoples' (Philistines') Settlement," 41-59.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

IIIc:1b, a monochrome type, and later the bichrome wares of the 12th-10th centuries indicate the pattern of settlement and diffusion throughout the Southern Levant. 5) The Ashdoda figurine and the musician stands indicate Aegean affinities.

A sixth connection between the ancient Philistines and the Aegean world was discovered during the final season at Tel Miqne-Ekron in 1996. But before we turn to this point let us look how the Philistine occupation of the site continued.

Philistia in Transition

Philistine culture flourished at Ekron throughout the next two centuries. In the early tenth century B.C. Ekron was completely destroyed and abandoned “in the wave of destruction that swept over Philistia.”⁵² Although excavators remain uncertain whether the destruction was caused by the Israelites under David or the Egyptians under Siamun, David could in fact have been responsible. Following this destruction, a small settlement was reestablished on the site, but it was a mere reflection of the great fortified city that had preceded it. The ten-acre occupation was restricted to the northern acropolis and was constructed on a series of monumental stone platforms. The occupation of this smaller, fortified site extended, according to the ceramic sequence, to the eighth century B.C.⁵³

Assyrian Domination

Beginning already in the ninth century, the Assyrians in the east became a much more powerful force and began to extend their empire.⁵⁴ As Isaiah writes in the eighth century: “I will give them charge to seize the spoil, to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. . . . For I have removed the boundaries of the nations, and I have plundered their treasures. Like a bull I have pushed down those who sat on thrones” (Isa 10:13). The prophet’s description of the Lord’s action aptly predicts and describes the activities of the Assyrians as they swept through Syria-Palestine. One of the most vivid Assyrian pictorials is Sennacherib’s attack on the ancient city of Lachish in 701 B.C.⁵⁵ These reliefs, found in the Southwest Palace at Nineveh, the same city from which Jonah fled and which he finally led to repentance, show the grue-

⁵² Dothan and Dothan, *Peoples of the Sea*, 252.

⁵³ Seymour Gitin, “Ekron of the Philistines, Part II: Olive-Oil Suppliers to the World,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 16/2 (1990):34.

⁵⁴ On Assyrian military expansion, see Walter Mayer, *Politik und Kriegskunst der Assyrer, Abhandlungen zur Literatur Alt-Syrien-Palästinas und Mesopotamiens* 9 (Münster: Uagrit-Verlag, 1995).

⁵⁵ On the comparison of the archaeological evidence at Lachish with Sennacherib’s reliefs, see David Ussishkin, “The ‘Lachish Reliefs’ and the City of Lachish,” *Israel Exploration Journal* 30 (1980):174-175; idem, *The Conquest of Lachish by Sennacherib* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 1982); idem, “Defensive Judean Counter-Ramp Found at Lachish in 1983 Season,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 10/2 (1984):66-73.

HASEL: NEW DISCOVERIES AMONG THE PHILISTINES

some war tactics of the Assyrians. It can be fairly assumed that these tactics were also applied against the Philistines.⁵⁶ In the same chapter of Isaiah, however, a promise is given to Israel, “The remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob to the Mighty God” (Isa 10:21 NKJV). God would be with His remnant.

It was not until the seventh century that Ekron became a vassal city-state of the Assyrian empire.⁵⁷ At that time it expanded extensively to encompass more than eighty-five acres. The Neo-Assyrian kings Sargon II and Sennacherib captured and held it under their imperial jurisdiction in the same campaign that took place against Lachish in 701 B.C. During the time of their successors, Esarhad-don and Ashurbanipal, the city became a highly developed and centralized olive oil production site boasting the largest capacities for olive oil production in the Near East.⁵⁸ To date 105 olive oil installations at Ekron are estimated, producing 1,000 tons of oil annually, requiring over 48,000 storejars.⁵⁹

During the 1994-1996 seasons, a Neo-Assyrian type temple of monumental proportions was uncovered, including frontal and side entrances with four meter long, single stone thresholds, thus far unique in Palestine. Thousands of whole vessels were found in the building, as well as a stele-like stone with incised lines and a rosette—an Assyrian royal/cultic symbol. The building also contained a number of Assyrian-type cultic vessels and a unique carved elephant tusk with the figure of a queen and the name of the Egyptian king Merenptah. In 1995 a 23-cm long, coiled, gold Egyptian cobra, or uraeus, was found, and other Egyptian objects were discovered in other areas.⁶⁰ These objects indicate strong Egyptian influence during the final stage of occupation. The warnings of the Hebrew prophets against an alliance with Egypt, predicting their destruction and captivity, were based on the realities that were soon to take place (Jer 42:14-19; Ezek 17:11-24). The influence and domination of Egypt over the Philistine cities in the final years of the seventh century would not save them from the onslaught of Nebuchadnezzar.

Nebuchadnezzar

⁵⁶ On the tactics of the Assyrian military, see Erika Bleibtreu, “Grisly Assyrian Record of Torture and Death,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 17/1 (1991):52-61, 75.

⁵⁷ Seymour Gitin, “Tel Mique-Ekron in the 7th Century B.C.E.: The Impact of Economic Innovation and Foreign Cultural Influences on a Neo-Assyrian Vassal City-State,” *Recent Excavations in Israel: A View to the West, Archaeological Institute of America Colloquia and Conference Papers 1*, ed. Seymour Gitin (Dubuque, IA: Archaeological Institute of America, 1995), 61-79.

⁵⁸ Seymour Gitin, “Ekron of the Philistines: The Rise and Fall of a 7th Century BCE Neo-Assyrian Vassal City-State” *Orient-Express* (1994): 20-22.

⁵⁹ D. Eitam, “Tel Mique-Ekron—Survey of Oil Presses: 1985-1986,” *Excavations and Surveys in Israel* 1986, 72-74. See also, Gitin, “Ekron of the Philistines, Part II” 32-42, 59.

⁶⁰ Samuel R. Wolff, “Archaeology in Israel,” *American Journal of Archaeology* 100 (1996):745-747, fig. 21; Seymour Gitin, “Philistia in Transition: The Tenth Century BCE and Beyond,” *Mediterranean Peoples in Transition*, 178-79.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

The Dedicatory Inscription. It was in Ekron that perhaps the most impressive discovery was made. In the 1996 season an inscription was found in the destruction debris of the sanctuary of the temple complex.⁶¹ Found upside-down, the rectangular limestone block is similar to those used for building purposes at Ekron. Its find spot suggests that it was originally part of the western wall of the sanctuary—perhaps its focal point as a royal dedicatory inscription.⁶² The inscription is complete, containing five lines that are translated by renowned epigrapher Professor Joseph Naveh of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem:

1. The temple (which) he built 'kys son of Padi, son of
2. Ysd, son of Ada, son of Ya'ir, ruler of Ekron,
3. for Ptgyh his lady. May she bless him, and
4. prote[ct] him, and prolong his days, and bless
5. his []and.⁶³

The most important factor is that it identifies the ancient site of Tel Miqne as Ekron. It is the only confirmation of the name of the site since it was first identified by J. Naveh in 1957.⁶⁴

The ruler of that city is identified as *Ikausu*, also mentioned as the king of Ekron in the Assyrian records of Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal.⁶⁵ Its consonantal spelling is the same as *Achish*, the name of the well-known king(s) of Gath identified in the Bible during the time of David and Solomon (1 Sam 21; 27; 28; 29; 1 Kings 2: 39-40)⁶⁶ three and half centuries earlier. Padi, the father of *Ikausu*, is identified as the king of Ekron in the annals of Sennacherib in the context of his third campaign in 701 B.C.⁶⁷ The additional forefathers identified in the dedicatory inscription at Ekron appear here for the first time, yet their significance cannot be overestimated. They indicate a dynastic period of succession that lasted at least from the eighth through most of the seventh century. Moreo-

⁶¹ Seymour Gitin, Trude Dothan, and Joseph Naveh, "A Royal Dedicatory Inscription from Ekron," *Israel Exploration Journal* 47/1-2 (1997):1-16; Joseph Naveh, "Achish-Ikausu in the Light of the Ekron Inscription," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 310 (1998):35-37.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 7.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁶⁴ Joseph Naveh, "Khirbet al-Muqanna'—Ekron," *Israel Exploration Journal* 8 (1958): 87-100, 165-170.

⁶⁵ A. Leo Oppenheim, "Babylonian and Assyrian Historical Texts," *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 3rd edition, ed. J. B. Pritchard (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 291, 294.

⁶⁶ The name in the dedicatory inscription has the identical spelling of the Old Testament Achish. This puts to rest some earlier theories that found a Trojan origin of this name as Anchises. The translators suggest that the name derived from Akhayus or Achaeon, meaning 'Greek.' This has important implications for the origin of the Philistines. Gitin, Dothan, and Naveh, "Royal Dedicatory Inscription," 11. Cf. D. L. Christensen, "Achish," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 1, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 55-56.

⁶⁷ Oppenheim, "Babylonian and Assyrian," 287.

HASEL: NEW DISCOVERIES AMONG THE PHILISTINES

ver, they help to secure a founding date for the temple complex around 650 B.C.⁶⁸

Finally, the mention of Ptgyh, the goddess to whom this temple is dedicated, provides an important insight into Philistine cultic and religious practices. The name is of non-Semitic origin, perhaps a Philistine or Indo-European name, and even though unknown to us she “must have been a deity of considerable power to safeguard the well-being of the dynasty and the city.”⁶⁹

Her power proved inadequate, however, for the commercial activities of this Neo-Assyrian vassal city-state, now under the influence of Egypt, were abruptly cut short with the invasion of Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar in 603/4 B.C.⁷⁰ A massive destruction level evidenced by tumbled columns, thousands of smashed storage vessels, and collapsed upper floors of the monumental temple and throughout the site attest to the destructive force of the invading Babylonians. Other Philistine cities, such as Ashkelon, Ashdod, and Timnah, suffered similar destructions at the hand of the Babylonians. Unable to regain momentum, and with its cultural core lost, Philistine culture, too, collapsed. Its people, either dispersed or deported, were quickly assimilated into the surrounding cultures.⁷¹

Today only their remains are left to speak. Traces of what was once a flourishing culture continue to provide clues to the now distant past. The words of the prophet Zephaniah continue to echo over the silent mounds of ruins:

For Gaza shall be deserted,
and Ashkelon shall become a desolation;
Ashdod's people shall be driven out at noon,
and Ekron shall be uprooted.
Ah, inhabitants of the seacoast,
you nation of the Cherethites!
The word of the Lord is against you,
O Canaan, land of the Philistines;
and I will destroy you until no inhabitant is left (Zeph 2:4-5).

The eschatological words of Zephaniah are couched in another message. The message of warning to the nations is couched in a call to repentance for Israel (Zeph 2:1-3) and a promise for the remnant.⁷² Zephaniah 3:9 says “I will restore

⁶⁸ Gitin, Dothan, and Naveh, “Royal Dedicatory Inscription,” 16.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁷⁰ Gitin, “Philistia in Transition,” 179-80; for this activity against Ashkelon, see Lawrence E. Stager, “Ashkelon and the Archaeology of Destruction: Kislev 604 BCE,” *Eretz-Israel*, 25 (1996):61-64; *idem.*, “The Fury of Babylon: Ashkelon and the Archaeology of Destruction,” *Biblical Archaeology Review*, 22/1 (1996):56-69, 76-77.

⁷¹ Gitin, “Ekron of the Philistines,” 22; Gitin, Dothan, and Naveh, “Royal Dedicatory Inscription,” 3; For another view on the process of acculturation, see B. Stone, “The Philistines and Acculturation: Culture, Change, and Ethnic Continuity in the Iron Age,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 298 (1995):7-32.

⁷² On the concept of the remnant in Zephaniah, see Greg A. King, “The Remnant in Zephaniah,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 151 (1994):414-427; on the concept of remnant in general, see Gerhard

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

to the peoples a pure language, that they may call on the name of the Lord, to serve Him with one accord.”

Today we too are faced with cultural influences of the world around us. Little has changed over the millennia. Like the Philistines’ relationship to Israel, the technologies, cultural advancement, intellectual, and religious achievements of the world may seem to dwarf at times the simple yet profound truths of Scripture. Like the Israelites, Seventh-day Adventists have been called to give a message, a message to be proclaimed to all nations, kindred, tongues and people. How will this remnant respond to the call of God? May we be faithful to Him who has foretold that all this too will come to an end and who promises that He will be faithful to establish a new heaven and a new earth for the remnant that persevere to the end.

F. Hasel, *The History and Theology of the Remnant Idea from Genesis to Isaiah*, 3rd ed. (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, 1980); idem, “Remnant,” *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 130-131.

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Two Hundred Years from Lacunza: The Impact of His Eschatological Thought on Prophetic Studies and Modern Futurism

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The Jesuit priest Manuel de Lacunza y Díaz (1731-1801), was born in Santiago de Chile and died in Imola, Italy. He wrote a book under the pseudonym Juan Josafat Ben-Ezra, posthumously published: *La venida del Mesías en gloria y magestad. Observaciones de Juan Josafat Ben-Ezra, hebreo-cristiano: dirigidas al sacerdote cristófilo*.¹ In 1791 he completed this famous work, which he began around 1775. Lacunza's work had a great impact on the ferment of prophetic studies at the beginning of the nineteenth century, since his work spoke about the premillennial advent of Christ, and was studied by the British millenarians. His work was key to the introduction of futurism in the field of prophetic apocalypticism in the early nineteenth century.²

¹ The first Spanish edition was printed in Cádiz, Spain, around 1812. In 1816, a complete edition in Spanish of 1500 copies of Lacunza's work in four volumes was published in London by the Diplomatic Agent of the Argentinian Republic, Manuel Belgrano, without the author's name, as *La venida del Mesías en gloria y magestad. Observaciones de Juan Josaphat Ben-Ezra, hebreo-cristiano: dirigidas al sacerdote cristófilo*, 4 vols. (Londres: Carlos Wood, 1816). There is another Spanish edition in three volumes (London: Ackermann, Strand, 1826). The work was translated into Italian, English and French. The English version was translated by Edward Irving: *The Coming of Messiah in Glory and Majesty. By Juan Josaphat Ben-Ezra, a Converted Jew*, 2 vols. (London: L. B. Seeley and Son, 1827). Irving's translation was published from the 1812 Cádiz printing, but checked with the 1826 Ackermann edition. See LeRoy Edwin Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*. 4 vols. (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald, 1946-1954), 3:313, 314. For versions in other languages, see Daniel Hammerly Dupuy, *Defensores latinoamericanos de una gran esperanza* (Florida, Buenos Aires: Casa Editora Sudamericana, 1954), 85-95.

² In this paper, all the quotations of *La venida del Mesías* are taken from the 1816 edition and the 1826 edition, both printed in Spanish in London. First, we will give the page numbering from the 1816 edition, and between brackets the page number from the 1826 edition. See also n. 48.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Throughout his work, Lacunza called attention to the prophetic predictions of the Old Testament, Paul, and John, and sounded out once again “the prophetic warning and appeal that had too long been silenced by force . . . and the light of the premillennial second advent broke upon him in all its impelling grandeur and simplicity.”³

In the realm of studies about the second coming and the millennium, we can no more ignore Lacunza, than we can ignore Kant’s impact on modern philosophy. His voluminous treatise was investigated at the Albury Park Conferences and at Powerscourt house, and it deserves to be remembered.

It may be interesting to know that the pen-name he choose, Juan Josaphat Ben Ezra, was not *per se* a fictitious name chosen to conceal his true identity as a Jesuit and thus make his writings more palatable to Protestant readers.⁴ I presume it alludes to the great medieval rabbi Abraham ben Meier ben Ezra, a biblical scholar whose rabbinic exegesis was not allegorical or spiritual.

It is also an enigma why he doesn’t say anything at all about the Protestants when he mentions the false religions, including Mohammedanism.⁵

Historical Background to the Inroads of Futurism

Since futurism took root in the Protestant church nearly two centuries ago, we first need to have an overview of its development before the nineteenth cen-

³ Froom, 3:303.

⁴ This is what Kimball says, but I can’t agree with Kimball on this. Lacunza never speaks about Protestants in all his work, in spite of the fact that he was a Jesuit. He chose this pen-name for other reasons, as we can see when we read his work. See William R. Kimball, *The Rapture: A Question of Time* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985), 32.

⁵ Abrahám ben Meir ben Ezra, or Ezra Ben Abraham Ben Mazhir, was a rabbi and Jewish exegete born in Toledo, Spain, around 1092, whom the Jews called the Wise, the Great, the Admirable. They consider him to be the true founder of rationalist exegesis. He was contemporary with Maimónides, and exegesis was one of his specialties. He was a Bible interpreter and wrote a commentary on the Old Testament in 24 books. He opened the way to grammatical exegesis. He assumed the title of *gaon*, a formal title of the heads of Sura and Pumbedita in Babylonia. The *geonim* were recognized by the Jews as the highest authority of instruction from the end of the sixth century to the middle of the 11th. In the 12th and 13th centuries the title of *gaon* was also used by the heads of academies in Bagdad, Damascus, and Egypt. See *Enciclopedia universal ilustrada Europeo-Americana* (Barcelona: Hijos de J. Espasa) 1:309; *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 14 vols. (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1972), 7:314-324.

According to M. Góngora, Lacunza acknowledges that he has borrowed the name of Ben Ezra as a pseudonym of his book because he was “one of the more learned and judicious rabbis” and also because “he was Spanish and he wrote when he was in the exile”. See, “Memorial del 12 de noviembre de 1788 al ministro español Antonio Porlier,” published by M. Góngora, *La revista chilena de historia y geografía* 123 (1954-55): 247-251. See Fredy Omar Parra Carrasco, *Pensamiento teológico en Chile: contribución a su estudio. V. El reino que ha de venir: historia y esperanza en la obra de Manuel Lacunza* (Santiago de Chile: Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, 1993), 47.

GULLON: TWO HUNDRED YEARS FROM LACUNZA

tury, when Lacunza's work became widely known in Latin America and Europe.⁶

We are living at the end of the twentieth century and on the threshold of the third millennium, when futurism, the prevailing school of interpretation of the apocalyptic prophecies of Daniel and Revelation, plays a significant role in today's eschatological views.⁷ Two centuries ago, however, the historicist school of interpretation was common to both amillennialism and premillennialism, since Roman Catholic futurism concerning the appearance of a future antichrist had not yet made an impact upon the Protestant prophetic interpretation, and almost all Protestant expositors of the prophecies of the books of Daniel and Revelation in the Reformation and post-Reformation era belonged to the historical school of interpretation, known as the Protestant school of interpretation.⁸

Furthermore, it has been found that futurism was not the original approach held by the early church, nor by the church of the Middle Ages and the Reformation. Research shows that the early Fathers were not futurists in the modern meaning of the word. In a certain sense, the early church Fathers had futurist views because for them everything was future.⁹ The early Christians were convinced that the final age of history had arrived; the new age had already dawned, and the end was imminent.¹⁰ To quote one example, Hippolytus (160-233), who produced the most extensive treatise of biblical eschatology found among the Fathers, argued that the end of the world would come about A.D. 500. He dated

⁶ For a study of Lacunza and his work, see Daniel Hammerly Dupuy *Defensores latinoamericanos de una gran esperanza* (Florida, Buenos Aires: Casa Editora Sudamericana, 1954), 85-95; 108-114. For a detailed investigation of the editions of Lacunza's work, see the studies of the French scholar Alfred Vaucher, *Une célébrité oubliée. Le P. Manuel de Lacunza y Díaz (1731-1801) de la Société de Jésus auteur de "La Venue du Messie en gloire et majesté."* New rev. ed. (Collonges-sous-Salève: Imprimerie Fides, 1968); *Lacunza, un heraldo de la segunda venida de Cristo* (Mexico DF: Publicaciones Interamericanas, 1970); George E. Ladd, *The Blessed Hope* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1956), 38-39.

⁷ Dispensationalism, a view that has become deeply rooted in many American Evangelical churches, follows the extreme futuristic interpretation of Daniel and Revelation. See, for instance, George E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1974), 622-624; Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, seventh printing, 1990), 1154, 1162-1165; Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism 1800-1930* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), 36-39, 66-68, 81-83.

⁸ See Robert H. Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 184-185; H. Grattan Guinness, *History Unveiling Prophecy of Time as an Interpreter* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1905), 132-136; 169-196; Kimball, 30-32.

⁹ See David P. Gullón, "An Investigation of Dispensational Premillennialism: An Analysis and Evaluation of the Eschatology of John F. Walvoord" (Ph.D. dissertation, Andrews University, 1992), 76-79; Kimball, 20-29.

¹⁰ See, for instance, Thomas N. Finger, *Christian Theology: An Eschatological Approach*, 2 vols. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985-89), 1:101-102.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Christ's birth in the year 5503 after creation, thus making a period of about 500 years between His first and second comings.¹¹

In their writings, the early Fathers followed the historicist approach as the correct method to interpret the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation.¹² Irenaeus and Hippolytus both used the historicist approach in their interpretation of the coming antichrist.¹³ For them everything was future, and, consequently, they cannot with fairness be cited for the modern futurist system that holds that most of the prophecies still are in the future, at the end of the Christian era.¹⁴

This rival eschatology, futurism, founded by Francisco de Ribera, whose posture constitutes the groundwork for the whole structure of Roman Catholic futurism concerning the Antichrist, had a tremendous impact on prophetic studies and gradually became more prominent in the nineteenth century. It is crystal-clear that the cradle for contemporary futurism was actually constructed by Catholic theologians to counteract the Reformers' historicist method of interpretation.¹⁵

Futurism and the Early Nineteenth Century

The spiritual tone of the eighteenth and the early nineteenth century was dominated by Whitby's postmillennialism, which contributed to lessening the

¹¹ See David G. Dumbar, "Hippolytus of Rome and the Eschatological Exegesis of the Early Church," *Westminster Theological Journal* 45 (1983): 322-339; Roger T. Beckwith, "Daniel and the Date of the Messiah's Coming in Essene, Hellenistic, Pharisaic, Zealot and Early Christian Computation," *Revue of Qumran* 110 (1979-81): 539-541.

¹² If they expected the Second Coming of Christ in a brief period of time, it was only natural that the reign of the antichrist was restricted to just a few years. See, for instance, Hippolytus's Treatise (ANF, 5:204-219); Irenaeus, *Haer.* 5.25-35 (ANF, 1:553-567).

¹³ See J. Barton Payne, *The Imminent Appearing of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1962), 30. The futurist perspective of the early church cannot be equated with modern futurism.

¹⁴ While the early church "was generally futurist in their eschatological beliefs, present day futurism is not synonymous with the earlier forms of futurism" (Kimball, 29).

¹⁵ See Kimball, 30; Ladd, *The Blessed Hope*, 37-39. Ribera's posture constitutes the groundwork for the whole structure of Roman Catholic futurism, which was followed by Lacunza despite Lacunza never mentioning Ribera. Lacunza alludes to Alcázar, the founder of preterism.

Francisco de Ribera (1537-1591), a Spanish Jesuit and theologian, was, from 1576 until his death, professor of Sacred Scripture at Salamanca. His commentary *In Sacram Beati Johannis Apostoli et Evangelistae Apocalypsim Commentarii. Cum quinque indicibus* (Salamanca, 1590), was published as a rebuttal to the Reformers. See Joseph Tanner, *Daniel and Revelation: The Chart of Prophecy and Our Place in It. A study of the Historical and Futurist Interpretation* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1898), 1-17; Gullón, 80-82.

Ribera refuted the protestant identification of the papacy with the antichrist, projecting the antichrist to the future as a persecutor of the church whose reign would last for three and a half years. We find the seeds of futurism already in Augustine (354-430), who wrote about the future antichrist perhaps more than any previous interpreter. No less than seven times Augustine speaks about the last persecution at the hands of the antichrist, and three times he says that it will last for three and a half years. See for instance, *De Civ. Dei* 16.24 (*Fathers of the Church: A New Translation*, edited by Thomas P. Halton, 84 vols. 1947-1991) 14:532; *ibid.*, 18:52, 53 (*FC* 24:174-177); *ibid.*, 20:13, 19, 23, 30 (*FC* 24:284, 298, 313, 338).

GULLON: TWO HUNDRED YEARS FROM LACUNZA

sense of expectancy of the coming of the Lord.¹⁶ But in the early nineteenth century, the French Revolution stirred up a renewed interest in prophecy.

Since Lacunza's work was finished about 1791 and printed for the first time in Spanish around 1812, and in English in 1827,¹⁷ it is meaningful to know what was happening in Europe at that time. For our purposes, perhaps the most significant event was the French Revolution, which began in 1789 and influenced the revival of prophetic concern. Lacunza, of course, does not refer in his work to the French Revolution or to the dethronement and banishment to France of Pope Pious VI in 1798 and his death while in exile during the French Revolution, as he was not writing prophecy but expositing it (recall that while he died in 1801, he completed his manuscript in 1791).¹⁸

The prophetic expectations of the early nineteenth century in Europe reached a point of great agitation in the years following the French Revolution, an event that had a special influence for the student of prophecy.¹⁹ It was possibly the greatest blossoming of premillennialism since the beginning of the Christian era and led to the Second Advent Awakening. Many Bible scholars concluded that the end of all things and the commencement of the millennial kingdom were near.²⁰ Certainly the English translation of Lacunza gave a marked impetus "to the study of the second advent in Britain among those Protestants already awakened to the study of the prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation."²¹

In England, many renowned premillennialists took part in the Albury Park prophetic conferences held at the estate of Henry Drummond (1786-1860), from 1826-1830, that molded the British millenarian revival.²² Premillennialism be-

¹⁶ Postmillennialism was a common view in eighteenth-century England. Daniel Whitby (1638-1726), Salisbury rector, highlighted the eventual culmination of Christian history in the coming of a literal millennium before the second coming, and postmillennialism prevailed. See Daniel Whitby, *A Treatise on the True Millennium*, in, *Paraphrase and Commentary on the New Testament*. 2 vols. (Edinburgh: Lackington, Allen and Co., 1807), 2:679-705; Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism*, 5.

¹⁷ Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism*, 17.

¹⁸ Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism*, 5. He also states that "to live through the decade of the 1790s in itself constituted an experience in apocalypticism for many of the British" (*ibid.*). See also *ibid.*, 6-8. Lacunza never alludes to the dethronement and captivity of Pope Pious VI as the fulfillment of any time period of Daniel or the Revelation.

¹⁹ Froom, 3:9-12; Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism*, 5-8.

²⁰ See, Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism*, 5, 1-41 R. G. Clouse, "The New Christian Right, America and the Kingdom of God," *Christian Scholar Review* 12 (1983): 8.

²¹ Froom, 3:305. See also, Gullón, 84-86; Kimball, 32, 33.

²² See, Henry Drummond, *Dialogues on Prophecy*, 3 vols, (London: Nisbet, 1828-1829); Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism*, 18-19; Ladd, *The Blessed Hope*, 36. For the British and American millenarian revival, see Sandeen, *ibid.*, 1-102. Harold H. Rowdon, *The Origins of the Brethren, 1825-1850* (London: Pickering and Inglis, 1967), 16. He says that these conferences "provided a forum for the discussion of prophetic interpretation, but failed to secure unanimity" (*ibid.*, 16).

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

gan to emerge,²³ and the British millenarian revival that was the forerunner of the prophetic conferences was characterized by three main aspects: (1) a new zeal for the interpretation of prophetic studies at the beginning of the century;²⁴ (2) a renewal of interest in the Jewish people and the restoration and return of the chosen people to Palestine; and (3) the doctrine of the premillennial advent, in contrast with the standard postmillennial eschatology.²⁵ These, among others, were also the preoccupation of Lacunza in the last decades of the eighteenth century, and in his book he dwells upon these concerns.

Three factors gave grounds for prophetic speculation: the political chaos of the period, the instability of the years following Napoleon's defeat in 1815, and the political tensions of the period around 1830.²⁶

In the nineteenth century, futurism entered premillennialism through the writings of the Protestant scholars Samuel Roffey Maitland, William Burgh, and James H. Todd, among others.²⁷ Maitland, who had read the work of Lacunza,²⁸ and whose futuristic approach to Revelation had a great impact on premillennialism, introduced futurism into Protestantism²⁹

²³ Ernest Sandeen holds that the millennial expectations "are woven into the fabric of the early nineteenth century life in both Europe and America" ("Toward a Historical Interpretation of the Origins of Fundamentalism" in *Church History* 36 [1967]: 69.

²⁴ . As an example I mention the following works on prophecy: William Cuninghame, *A Dissertation on the Seals and Trumpets*, 2nd ed. rev. and enlarged. (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, Strand, 1817); George Stanley Faber, *A Dissertation on the Prophecies That Had Been Fulfilled or Are Now Fulfilling, or Will Hereafter Be Fulfilled Relative to the Great Period of 1260 Years*, 2 vols. 4th ed. rev. and corrected (London: F. C. and J. Rivington, 1810) idem, *The Sacred Calendar of Prophecy: or a Dissertation on the Prophecies which Treat the Grand Period of Seven Times, and Especially of Its Second Moiety or the Latter Three Times and a Half*, 3 vols. (London: C. and J. Rivington, 1828).

²⁵ See Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism*, 8-14.

²⁶ See Harold H. Rowdon, *The Origins of the Brethren, 1825-1850*, (London: Pickering and English, 1967), 12-14; Deryck W. Lovegrove, *Established Church, Sectarian People: Itinerancy and the Transformation of English Dissent 1780-1830*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 121-123.

²⁷ See, for instance, Charles H. H. Wright, *Daniel and His Prophecies* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1906), xiv, xv. Wright names S. R. Maitland, J. H. Todd, W. Burgh, Dr. Pusey of Oxford, and many others. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism*, 38; Gullón, 81-91. Sandeen remarks that "graduates of Trinity College, Dublin, for reasons that are not clear, were among the earliest and most able defenders of futurism."

²⁸ Samuel Roffey Maitland, *An Attempt to Elucidate the Prophecies Concerning Antichrist: With Remarks on Some Works of J. H. Frere, Esq.* 2d ed. (London: Francis and John Rivington, 1853), 4-8. Maitland knew the work of Lacunza and agreed with Lacunza that the fourth empire of Dan 2 and 7 is not the Roman Empire. The fourth empire, said Maitland, is the kingdom of antichrist (*ibid.*, 9). Maitland was perhaps the first Protestant to make use of Lacunza, and his example was followed by Burgh and Todd.

²⁹ Scholarly opinion points particularly to Maitland as the one responsible for the introduction of futurism into Protestantism. See, for instance, Payne, 30, 153; Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism*, 37.

GULLON: TWO HUNDRED YEARS FROM LACUNZA

The work of this Chilean theologian and biblical scholar, the Jesuit Lacunza y Díaz, translated into English, had a great influence upon the incipient futurism of early nineteenth-century Protestantism.³⁰ Lacunza's prophetic interpretation was a mingling of futurism and historicism. In his analysis of the prophecies concerning the coming of the Messiah, Lacunza avoided the method of allegorism and reached conclusions that in some aspects coincided with the exegesis of the historicist school.

He took a futuristic view and argued that the book of the Revelation is a consecutive prophecy yet to be fulfilled and stated that the antichrist is a moral body composed of innumerable individuals and not a single man.

On the other hand, Lacunza maintained that the appearance of the antichrist and the two witnesses are still in the future, just before the coming of Christ,³¹ and that all the prophecies concerning the antichrist will be fulfilled just prior to the coming of Christ. The great tribulation during which the church will be persecuted by the antichrist will last 1260 literal days.³² He did make, however, a strong case for the premillennial advent of Christ. In this way, Lacunza contributed to the revival of British millenarianism³³ and to the development of futurism in Protestantism, a view, as we have seen, first suggested by the Spanish Jesuit Francisco de Ribera.³⁴ Lacunza's work was studied at the Albury Park prophetic conferences.³⁵

Lacunza rejected the allegorization of the Millennium made by Tyconius, Augustine, and Catholic exegesis.³⁶ His work was considered by Edward Irving

³⁰ See Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism*, 37-38, 106; Zens, 3; Duncan McDougall, *The Rapture of the Saints*, 1st rev. and annotated ed. (Blackwood, NJ: O.F.P.M. Publishers, 1970), 19-20; Wilmot, 251-252. John H. Newman and Henry E. Manning accepted the futuristic interpretation of the antichrist. Both entered the ranks of the Roman Catholic Church, and became cardinals. Oliver, *Prophets and Millennialists*, 144-149.

The influence of Roman Catholic futurism has been decisive on Protestant thought and was assimilated by the Fundamentalists. Lacunza "restricted the prophetic fulfillments of the Revelation to the very end of the age" (Kimball, 32). This new view among Protestants discarded the idea of a historical antichrist who operates during the whole Christian era until the second coming of Christ (Tanner, 17).

³¹ "El anticristo está todavía por venir" (*La venida del Mesías*, 1:128 [1:89]). See also Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism*, 37.

³² The 1260 days, 42 months, and three years and a half are "the exact time during which the great tribulation of Antichrist among the Gentiles is to last" (*ibid.*), 3:152 [2:343].

³³ *Ibid.*, 1:152-178 [1:105-124]. See Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism*, 17-22.

³⁴ See Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism*, 37-38. Irving, who did not agree with the futurism of Lacunza, unintentionally, perhaps, helped to lay the foundation of the Protestant futurism by means of his translation.

³⁵ See Jon Zens, *Dispensationalism: A Reformed Inquiry into Its Leading Figures and Features* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1978), 3.

³⁶ This is acknowledged by most scholars. See, Ray C. Petry, *Christian Eschatology and Social Thought* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1966), 316. Pelikan affirms that Augustine "set the standard for most Catholic exegesis in the West when he surrendered the millenarian interpretation of Rev 20." See Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of the Doctrine*,

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

as the master work of one of God's most gifted servants.³⁷ It was important for the development of futurism in Protestantism, and we may say that nineteenth-century futurism was fueled by Lacunza's premillennial work.

Although the general approach to the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation at the Albury Park prophetic conferences which sparked the British millenarian revival, was historicist,³⁸ those attending took account of Lacunza's and Maitland's futurism. Drummond argued that the opinions of Ben-Ezra, Samuel Maitland, and others who considered that the greater part of Revelation is yet to be fulfilled in a literal period of 1260 days at the end of the world, were not to be overlooked. He stated that these opinions were not opposed to the day-year principle, as may at first sight appear to be the case.³⁹

Thus, Drummond thought he had reconciled the two approaches by a sort of double historicist fulfillment of the prophetic time periods. The 1260 days of persecution by the antichrist are given a dual fulfillment: a prophetic application during the time of the Christian dispensation⁴⁰ and a fuller literal fulfillment in the days before the coming of the Lord.⁴¹ Actually, it seems to be a threefold antichrist: the papacy;⁴² Protestantism which renounced the truth of God;⁴³ and the future antichrist as proposed by Ribera, Lacunza, and Maitland.⁴⁴

Vol. 1, The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600) (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971), 129.

³⁷ *The Coming of Messiah*, 1:xx.

³⁸ H. Drummond, 1:177; 3:ii-iii, 421. These meetings from 1826 to 1830 were attended by a wide section of Evangelicals. See Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism*, 18-20. Edward Irving, Lacunza's translator, attended these meetings. See *The Coming of Messiah*, 1:clxxxvi-ccxii.

³⁹ Ladd affirms that in 1827, the book of Lacunza "and the millennial question became the main objects of study at the Albury Park conference" (*The Blessed Hope*, 36).

"For as all the prophecies of the Old Testament had an inchoate accomplishment first, and a more perfect fulfillment afterwards, so it is not impossible that this great prophecy of the New Testament may have had a partial application during the whole time of the Gentile dispensation, and will have a more full and literal completion in the days which accompany the coming of our Lord" (Drummond, *Dialogues.*, 377).

⁴⁰ Drummond, 1:177, 322, 324, 336; 2:17; 3:iii.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 1:376-377.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 1:266, 322-325; 3:421; "The false prophet is the little horn of Daniel, that Papal iniquity."

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 2:359-360. "And as Popery as a system buried the truth of God under ceremonies and traditions, so Protestantism as a system renounced the truth of God, in neglecting the ordinances by which that truth was to be preserved."

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 1:377. This opinion, says the *Dialogues*, is not to be overlooked (*ibid.*). See also 2:42. It is interesting to note the almost allegorical reason for this dual fulfillment of the 1260 days. As Christ's personal ministry at His first coming was 1260 days in which he fulfilled in His own person all the things which the church had performed personally, "it seems fair to conclude, that he will likewise fulfil [sic] in his own person, at the time of his second advent, all the things which the church shall have performed from the time of her first calling" (*ibid.*, 377).

GULLON: TWO HUNDRED YEARS FROM LACUNZA

Synopsis of Lacunza's Treatise

Even though Ribera, as well as others Catholic theologians, had fostered the fruitful ground from which futurism would eventually burst into full bloom at the beginning of the nineteenth century,⁴⁵ the work of Lacunza had a more immediate impact upon the unfolding events of the prophetic awakening [of the nineteenth century] than either Ribera or Bellarmine. The historicist approach to apocalyptic prophecy espoused until the nineteenth century was challenged and gradually rejected in favor of the futurist interpretation of Revelation.⁴⁶

Lacunza had rediscovered the truth of the second coming of Christ to establish his millennial kingdom which had been lost in Catholicism, therefore he revived premillennialism.⁴⁷

Lacunza's treatise begins with a long preface in which he dialogues with the Bible and affirms that his ideas regarding the second coming came from the Scriptures,⁴⁸ recovering the almost forgotten truth of the premillennial second advent. He divides his voluminous work into three sections. In the first, he expounds his hermeneutical rules in contrast with the hermeneutics of those who follow the allegorical interpretation.⁴⁹

In the second part, the most extensive and substantial of his work, he makes wide use of the Scripture and discusses ten phenomena related to Christ's second coming and the concomitant events. In the third, he reveals the conclusions of his investigations, "the fruits of the foregoing observations,"⁵⁰ and describes the principal events related to the second coming, the millennium, and the new

⁴⁵ Ribera's futurist method was advocated in different countries by some prominent Roman Catholic theologians, such as Cardinal Robert Bellarmine (1542-1621), Cornelius A. Lapide (1537-1637), Thomas Malvenda (1566-1628), and Blasius Viegas (1544-1599). See Gullón, 82.

⁴⁶ Kimball, 32. See also, Froom, 2:489-493; 3:319, 323; Ladd, *The Blessed Hope*, 36; Sandeen, 37, 38; Gullón, 84. It is difficult to say just why the historicist school of interpretation faded in popularity. It may be that the excessive date-settings by historic premillennialism of contemporary events and the diversity in its interpretations of prophetic Scripture were the cause that the historicist approach discredited itself. See Dennis L. Reiter, "Historicism and Futurism in Historic Premillennialism, 1878-1975" (M.A. thesis, Trinity Divinity School, 1975), 30.

⁴⁷ As we will see, he adapted premillennialism to his own style, since his theory of the two resurrections is particular. See also, Froom, 3:303, 304; Ladd, *The Blessed Hope*, 36; Sandeen, 18, 37; Kimball, 32.

⁴⁸ *La venida del Mesías*, lviii [xl]. For the quotations of Lacunza's work, we will use the 1816 Spanish edition with 4 volumes and almost 1900 pages, *La venida del Mesías en gloria y magestad: observaciones de Juan Josaphat Ben-Ezra, hebreo-cristiano: dirigidas al sacerdote cristófilo*. 4 tomos (Londres: Carlos Wood, 1816), where the author makes use of the Latin text of the *Vulgata*. Also, we give the pages of Ackerman's edition, 3 volumes (London, 1826) in which the biblical quotations are in Spanish. We will quote in this form: *La venida del Mesías*, 1:57 [39]; the first number corresponds to Wood's edition and the second, between brackets, to Ackerman's.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, lxiii [lxiv]. Lacunza mentions the spiritual, tropological, mystical, and accommodating meanings to interpret the Scriptures. He follows the literal method of interpretation.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, lxxv [lxxii].

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

earth. We may say that his book is a lengthy conversation with the Scriptures, as he himself states at the end of his work.⁵¹

Lacunza shows a wide knowledge of the Scriptures, as well as of the principal commentators and expositors from patristic times until his own days, but his main source was the Scriptures, particularly the prophetic and apocalyptic traditions related to the promised kingdom of Israel.⁵² This kingdom at the second coming is the essence of his thesis.⁵³ It is revealing that Lacunza argues that the change in belief about the second coming of the Lord in glory and majesty was made in the times of Dionysius of Alexandria (d. 264) and Epiphanius (315-403).⁵⁴

Undoubtedly, Lacunza supports the literal interpretation and fights against the allegorical method, because it obscures the true meaning of the Word of God,⁵⁵ and affirms that the errors of the heretics and Catholics in history came because they deviated from the literal sense of Scriptures. He also speaks against the patristic allegorism of Origen, a mixture of the typological and allegorical.⁵⁶

Lacunza disagrees with the Catholic view about the second coming and proposes a new system or explanation. Jesus Christ will come at the end of time with his angels and thousands of saints resurrected in the first resurrection, “those who are considered worthy of taking part in that age and in the resurrection from the dead” (Luke 20:35), to judge the dead and the living in two different judgments, both in substance and in time. The saints who are not among the martyrs and other renowned saints specified in Revelation 20:4 or in Daniel 12:2, 3 don’t come to life to reign with Christ during the millennium, and therefore they have not part in the first resurrection. They will come to life in the second resurrection or universal resurrection at the end of the 1,000 years. Lacunza also states that besides the martyrs and other famous saints, some of the wicked will be resurrected in the first resurrection.⁵⁷ From this fact, he concludes that

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 4:433 [3:314] “Y veis aquí, Cristófilo carísimo, que hemos llegado con el favor de Dios al fin, y término de nuestra larga conversación.”

⁵² In his own words: “Empecé desde luego a estudiar este punto particular [the millennium] registrando para esto con toda la atención y reflexión de que soy capaz, cuantos autores antiguos y modernos me han sido accesibles, y en que he empezado a hallar alguna luz, más confrontándolo siempre con la Escritura misma” (*Ibid.*, 1:59 [1:40]).

⁵³ Lacunza makes clear that his whole work consist of 3 things: (1) to discover if the Catholic church has decided something on the millennial kingdom; (2) to know the different kinds of chiliasts and what the doctors say about them; and (3) to know what the same doctors say and what is their explanation of Revelation 20 and what was the error of the chiliasts (*Ibid.*, 1:60, 61 [1:41, 42]).

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 1:99 [1:68, 69]. Says Lacunza “...parece que forman la época precisa de la mudanza entera y total de ideas sobre la venida del Señor en gloria y majestad. Hasta entonces se había entendido la Escritura Divina como suena según su sentido propio, obvio y literal.”

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 1:10 [1:7].

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 1:10-24 [1:7-16].

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 1:52-56 [1:36-38]. He appeals to Luke 20:35 and Jude 14. See also *ibid.*, 4:136-151 [3:99-109]. Lacunza denies that all the saints will be resurrected in the first resurrection. The living

GULLON: TWO HUNDRED YEARS FROM LACUNZA

there will be a great amount of time between the second coming and what he calls the judgment of the dead or universal resurrection at the end of the millennium.⁵⁸

He posits two literal resurrections, one before the second coming, the saints' resurrection, and the second for the remainder of men, much later, one thousand years, whether definite or indefinite,⁵⁹ until the universal judgment—which, instead of a thousand years, could be one million years or 200,000 generations!⁶⁰ His premillennialism contradicts the amillennial position of the Roman Catholic church. Moreover, he refutes the claim that the church is the kingdom of God represented by the stone of Daniel 2.⁶¹

Here we have the crucial key to his system: he contends that according to the Scriptures, the stone that struck the statue and became a huge mountain represents not the first but the second coming of Christ in glory and majesty. This difference is vital for Lacunza, and he discusses at length the meaning of the stone and the mountain. “Is it the present church?” he asks himself. The answer is a categorical no.⁶² For Lacunza, the two advents of Christ are like the foci of the ellipse of all prophecy and the goal of all history.⁶³

Lacunza proposes another interpretation of the prophecies of Daniel 2 and 7. He includes Babylon and Persia under the head of gold, ruled by Nebuchadnezzar, Darius, Cyrus and his successors; the second was the kingdom of the Greeks, the third, the Roman Empire, and the fourth the barbarian or Roman-Gothic Christian kingdoms of divided Western Europe since the fifth century.⁶⁴

Lacunza claims that the four beasts in the vision of Daniel 7 represent the religious history of mankind, and he names four religions: idolatry, the oldest of all false religions; Mohammedanism; false Christianity with its four heads: her-

saints will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air (see *ibid.*, 4:12-20 [3:7-15]).

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 1:55 [1:38].

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 1:103 [1:71]. In several places, Lacunza maintains that the one thousand years of Rev. 20 could be 10,000, 20,000, 100,000 or more. See, *Ibid.*, 1:133 [1:92]; 1:175 [1:122]; 1:230 [1:162]; 4:332, 337, 338, 342 [3:242, 243, 246, 249]. Lacunza discusses the resurrection in 1:150-213 [1:104-149].

⁶⁰ Almost at the end of his treatise, he goes on to say that “después de mil años, o sean cien mil, o un millón de años de justicia, e inocencia, se vuelva a pervertir otra vez el orbe de la tierra” (*Ibid.*, 4:337 [3:249]). He speaks of “one hundred or two hundred thousand years, or one hundred or two hundred thousand generations” (4:332 [3:246]). If we calculate 50 years to each generation, that means ten million years!

⁶¹ See *ibid.*, 1:272, 273, 290, 291 [1:189, 190, 202, 203].

⁶² Lacunza devotes to this issue 23 out of 56 pages he uses to explain the statue of Daniel 2. See *ibid.*, 1:276-299 [1:192-209].

⁶³ See *ibid.*, 1:280-283 [1:195-197]. See also Froom, 3:304.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 1:243-275 [1:169-192].

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

esy, schism, hypocrisy, and the lust of the flesh or licentiousness; and deism, which he calls natural religion and also anti-Christianity.⁶⁵

After his detailed analysis of the current views about the Antichrist, all of which he reduces to nothingness with an overwhelming critique,⁶⁶ he concludes that the Antichrist will appear in the last times before the second coming.⁶⁷ The Antichrist, argues Lacunza, is not an individual but a moral body⁶⁸ that began to develop in the time of the apostles and which, together with the mystical body of Christ, has been in existence continually and exists at the present time.⁶⁹ This is the true and only Antichrist,⁷⁰ which the book of Revelation presents as the beast of seven heads and ten horns.⁷¹ He argues that the persecution by the Antichrist, the great tribulation, will last three and a half years—or 42 months or 1260 days—and will be the greatest event immediately before the second coming of Jesus Christ.⁷² Lacunza contends that the eleventh horn of the beast of Daniel 7 is not the Antichrist because the book of Revelation keeps silent about such a horn.⁷³

Lacunza has an important point when he reasons that the true rationale for the tribulation of the Antichrist, the mystery of lawlessness, according to the book of Revelation, will be the wrath of the dragon against those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus,⁷⁴ the remnant of true Christianity among the peoples.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 1:315-346 [1:221-242]. Lacunza also calls the fourth beast of Daniel 7 and the eleventh horn the Antichrist. See *ibid.*, 1:348, 351 [1:244, 246]. However, some pages later he seems to contradict himself when states that the eleventh horn is not the Antichrist. See 1:431 [1:301].

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 1:356-396 [1:250-277]. Lacunza uses more than 290 pages to discuss the issue of the Antichrist (1:356-467 and 2:1-180 [1:250-452]).

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 1:128, 412, 430 [1:89, 288, 301]; 3:84 [2:294, 295].

⁶⁸ The Antichrist “no es otra cosa que un cuerpo moral compuesto de innumerables individuos diversos, y distantes entre sí, y animados de un mismo espíritu” (*Ibid.*, 1:399, 400 [1:279, 280]). “Que el Antecristo de quien hemos oído que ha de venir, no puede ser un hombre, o persona individual y singular, sino un cuerpo moral que empezó a formarse en tiempo de los apóstoles” (*Ibid.*, 405-406 [1:284]). Lacunza claims that the Antichrist is a moral body also in 1:399, 400, 401, 405, 450, 451, 463 [1:279, 280, 281, 283, 314, 315, 324]; 2:12, 13, 74, 75, 76, 90, 101, 241 [1:334, 335, 377-379, 389, 397, 2:44, 45]. But he never says that the Pope is or will be the Antichrist.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 1:405, 406 [1:283, 284].

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 1:400 [1:280].

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 1:431 [1:301].

⁷² *Ibid.*, 1:400 [1:280]. See also 1:431 [1:302] where Lacunza says: “El Antecristo, perfecto, y completo, como lo esperamos para los últimos tiempos, y como lo considera San Juan es la bestia misma del Apocalipsis con sus siete cabezas y diez cuernos.” For the three and a half years, see, *ibid.*, 1:43, 412, 450, 451, 463 [1:29, 288, 314, 324]; 2:2, 179 [1:327, 451]; 3:84, 90, 136, 152, 217, 225 [2:295, 298, 332, 343, 391, 398].

⁷³ “Este mismo silencio del Apocalipsis respecto del undécimo cuerno es una prueba clara y sensible de que este cuerno no es el Antecristo” (*Ibid.*, 1:430, 431 [1:301]).

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 3:225 [2:398]. Says Lacunza, “Convierte el dragón todas sus iras, con aquellos que observan los mandamientos de Dios, y tienen el testimonio de Jesucristo . . . Veis aquí el verdadero principio de la tribulación Antecristiana, de que estamos amenazados en todas las Escrituras... Veis

GULLON: TWO HUNDRED YEARS FROM LACUNZA

In regard to the book of Revelation, Lacunza contends that the sentence “the Revelation of Jesus Christ” (Rev. 1:1) means the same as the appearing of Jesus Christ in the great day of his coming. He asserts, therefore, that the whole book of Revelation, or at least from the fourth chapter,⁷⁵ is directed towards the second coming of the Lord. Consequently its prophecies are all in the future, awaiting their fulfillment,⁷⁶ inasmuch as this last book “is the true and unique key of all the prophets; explains, illuminates, summarizes, enlarges, and frequently fills up many empty places that the prophets have left to us.”⁷⁷ Lacunza was a thorough futurist and literalist.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, he recognizes that in order to understand the Apocalypse we must study its many allusions in the light of the Old Testament.⁷⁹

Regarding the beast coming out of the earth with two horns like a lamb, Lacunza declares that it is a symbol or metaphor of the Christian priesthood of the time of the end.⁸⁰ As to the apocalyptic harlot of Revelation 17, Lacunza tears down the two traditional opinions of Catholic exegetes: one, that the prophecy was accomplished in pagan Rome; the other that it will be accomplished in an-

aquí revelado, manifiesto, perfecto y consumado aquel mismo misterio de iniquidad que ya se comenzaba a obrar aun en los tiempos de Pablo.”

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 4:102 [3:74].

⁷⁶ Several times Lacunza affirms that “el Apocalipsis no ha tenido hasta ahora su cumplimiento” *Ibid.*, 1:407-410 [1:284-286]; “Los últimos tiempos son el asunto inmediato y único de su profecía” 1:427 [1:298]; See also, 2:30 [1:346]; 3:99, 137, 151 [2:304, 305, 332, 343]. “Poco antes de la revelación del Antecristo . . . y sólo entonces, se empezarán a ver los grandes y admirables misterios que contiene el Apocalipsis y a verificarse sus profecías; las cuales, digan otros lo que quisieren, hasta ahora no se han verificado, no digo todas o muchas, pero ni una sola” (*ibid.*, 3:151 [2:343]).

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 4:328 [3:240], Lacunza says: “El Apocalipsis es la llave verdadera y única de todos los profetas. A todos los explica, los aclara, los compendia, los extiende y llena frecuentísimamente no pocos vacíos que ellos nos dejaron”. This sounds very familiar to another sentence: “In the Revelation all the books of the Bible meet and end. Here is the complement of the book of Daniel” (Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* [Mountain View: PPPA, 1963], p. 585).

⁷⁸ I disagree when Froom says that “in certain features, however, Lacunza was a futurist” (3:319). Farther on, he says that “in his general view of the Apocalypse, Lacunza was still a futurist” (3:322). Indeed, Lacunza was a committed futurist.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 3:100 [2:305]. He says Revelation has allusions from the Pentateuch, the Psalms and the prophets. “El Apocalipsis . . . no es tan oscuro si se quiere atender a sus vivas y casi continuas alusiones. Toda su oscuridad, o la mayor y máxima parte, pudiera pasar de la noche al día, si se estudiasen dichas alusiones” (*ibid.*).

⁸⁰ “Sí, amigo, nuestro sacerdocio: éste es, y no otra cosa, el que viene aquí significado y anunciado para los últimos tiempos debajo de la metáfora de una bestia con dos cuernos semejantes a los de un cordero... El sacerdocio cristiano ayudando a los perseguidores de la iglesia y de acuerdo con ellos por la abundancia de su iniquidad” (*ibid.* 1:454, 460 [1:317, 322]).

Lacunza identified the future apostate clergy of the Roman Catholic Church with the antichrist and claimed that when the Jews rejected the Messiah, the center of union of the people of God passed from Jerusalem to Rome, and the Jews were temporarily cast aside by God (*ibid.*, 2:341 [2:121]). But with the defection of the clergy, the center of unity will revert to Jerusalem and to the Jews (*ibid.*, 2:411 [2:172]).

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

other Rome yet future and very like the old idolatrous Rome.⁸¹ These views, Lacunza avers, are pure nonsense.⁸²

Lacunza saw the unfaithful Jerusalem depicted in Ezekiel 16 as the Old Testament prototype of the apocalyptic prostitute, because both Ezekiel and John use the harlot symbol to indict God's unfaithful covenant partner for sexual promiscuity, fornication or idolatry.⁸³ He argues that this harlot will be a future papal Rome, even though by his words we guess that he refers to something that was in process in his own time.⁸⁴ Unmistakably, these words from the pen of this Jesuit point at papal Rome:

Rome, not idolatrous but Christian, not the head of an imaginary Roman empire but the head of Christendom and centre of unity of the true church of the living God, may very well, without ceasing from this dignity, at some time or other incur the guilt and before God be held guilty of fornication with the kings of the earth . . . and this same Rome, in this same respect may receive upon itself the horrifying retribution that the prophecy declares.⁸⁵

Lacunza brings in the man of sin of 2 Thessalonians in his debate on the Antichrist and states that the temple in which the man of sin sets himself up, "is nothing else than the church of Christ."⁸⁶ Lacunza, nevertheless, makes clear that the man of sin is nothing else in his roots, foundation, and beginning, but a great multitude of true apostates, and it does not matter if they call themselves deists or materialists. He never mentions that the Antichrist, the man of sin, is now or will be the bishop of Rome, the true successor of Peter, the Pope.⁸⁷

His inquiry into the subject matter of the Jewish people and their future restoration comprises more than 200 pages and utilizes no less than 210 biblical quotations from 24 books of the Old Testament and from 11 of the New Testament. Lacunza alludes to three conditions of the people of Israel: before the Messiah, as God's church and the true wife of the Lord; after the first coming of the Messiah, as an unfaithful wife, banished from their country and like dry bones; and the third, still future, as restored and planted in her own land, be-

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 2:34 [1:349]. See also 2:32-69 [1:347-373].

⁸² *Ibid.*, 2:45-48 [1:356, 357]. Lacunza refutes with irony these opinions and states: "Si, como se pretende, el estar la mujer sentada sobre la bestia no significase otra cosa que la supuesta alianza y amistad entre Roma idólatra y el Antecristo, parece que el amado discípulo no tuvo razón alguna para una tan grande admiración" (2:52; 1:361]).

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 2:40-66 [1:353-370]. Lacunza says that in Ezekiel 16, we find 17 times the word "fornication" and once "adultery".

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 2:63, 64 [1:369, 370]. "Aquí no se habla de modo alguno de Roma presente sino solamente de Roma futura, que es puntualmente de la que habla la profecía... por eso, ¿no podemos tomar un partido medio que nos aleje igualmente del error funesto y de la lisonja perjudicial?" (*ibid.*). See Fredy Omar Parra Carrasco, 58. He asserts that Lacunza thinks that the harlot symbolizes papal Rome (*ibid.*).

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 2:65 [1:370]. See also 2:66-69 [1:371-373].

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 2:89 [1:388].

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 2:89, 90 [1:388, 389].

GULLON: TWO HUNDRED YEARS FROM LACUNZA

trothed once more to the Lord.⁸⁸ Since “Israel is not a repudiated wife, but only a wife that is serving penitence.”⁸⁹ Lacunza is very emphatic: the Christian church is not Zion.⁹⁰ He suggest that the Jews will find mercy without looking for it, just because of the unbelief of those whom God called, and he concludes that we have reason to expect the future unbelief of the Christian church.⁹¹ In all this analysis, he makes a literal exegesis of all the prophecies concerning Israel.

Speaking of the Christian church, Lacunza asserts that the Catholic church, *unam, sanctam, catholicam, apostolicam, and Roman*, is the true church of Christ, the pillar and foundation of the truth.⁹² The bishop of Rome, the Pope, is the visible head of the true and universal church, and Christ’s vicar on earth.⁹³ He acknowledges that Christ is the invisible head of the church, and the church is the mystical and moral body of Christ, and that this invisible head is only visible through his vicar, Peter’s legitimate successor, high priest and supreme shepherd, to whom Christ left in His place and gave the keys and authority,⁹⁴ even though he recognizes that the actual state of the Christian church in the majority of nations it is neither cold, nor hot, but lukewarm.⁹⁵

Concerning Babylon, Lacunza contends that the ancient Babylon contains another great mystery which has not yet been concluded, because she is like a sign, or likeness, or parable of all that has happened from Nebuchednazzar until now, and yet has to be concluded. Based on Revelation 17:6, he equates the future papal Rome with ancient Babylon.⁹⁶

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 2:181-390 [2:1-158]. He quotes the whole Pentateuch, except Leviticus; Judges, Esther, Job, 1 and 2 Kings, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Psalms, Isaiah, Jeremiah Ezekiel, Daniel (only 9:26), Hosea, Amos, Micah, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, and from the apocrypha Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, 1 Maccabees. From the New Testament, he quotes from the four gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, Romans, Galatians, 1 Corinthians, Hebrews, and the Revelation.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 2:364 [2:138]. “No hay razón alguna para decir que es una esposa repudiada, sino solamente una esposa penitenciada que está cumpliendo su penitencia hasta que acabe de recibir enteramente de la mano del Señor al doble por todos sus pecados” (Isa 40:2).

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 2:322 [2:106]. “Esta antigua esposa de Dios, actualmente *estéril, desterrada, cautiva, destituida y sola*, ha de salir algún día de su estado actual: ha de salir de su destierro, de su cautiverio, de su soledad, de su esterilidad: ha de ser llamada otra vez, y *assumpta* a su antigua dignidad” (*ibid.*, 2:323 [2:106]).

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 2:451-454 [1:203-205].

⁹² *Ibid.*, 2:394, 395 [2:160-162].

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 2:396, 419; 3:55, 243 [2:162, 178, 273, 411].

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 3:241-243 [2:410-411]. In these pages, Lacunza underscores this view three times. “El obispo de Roma, como sucesor legítimo del apóstol San Pedro es el vicario de Cristo, es el sumo sacerdote, el supremo pastor: por consiguiente es el superior y la cabeza visible del cuerpo místico de Cristo, que es la iglesia” (3:243 [2:411]). See also 2:457 [2:453].

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 2:445 [2:197]. Every time Lacunza says: Christian church, he means the Catholic church.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 3:50, 57 [2:270, 274].

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Lacunza makes a particular exegesis of Revelation 12 and holds that the woman is the ancient wife of God, the house of Jacob,⁹⁷ to whom God calls after the 1260 days.⁹⁸ Moreover, in all the periods spoken of in Revelation 12, the Antichrist had not yet come into the world,⁹⁹ and the war between Michael and the dragon must happen after the birth of the child but will precede the tribulation of the Antichrist.¹⁰⁰ On the time periods of Revelation 12, Lacunza claims that the 1260 literal days (Rev.12:6) is the duration of the Antichrist's persecution,¹⁰¹ but he completely overlooks the period of persecution mentioned in Revelation 12:14.

It is interesting to note, however, how Lacunza interprets the periods of time and believes that the day of the Lord, that is to say, the day of his coming, will be no less than 45 days after the tribulation of the Antichrist who will persecute the church for 1290 days. How then does Daniel speak of 1290 days of tribulation and John in Revelation only 1260 days? Because of the prophecy of Christ in Matthew 21:24, "If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect, those days will be shortened."¹⁰² In this form he resolves this apparent discrepancy about the duration of the Antichrist's tribulation.

Lacunza applies the parallel prophecies of Isaiah 2:1-4 and Micah 4:1-3 to the peoples that will be left on earth after the second coming of Christ, after the fall of the stone, after the fourth beast of Daniel 7 is slain and its body thrown into the blazing fire; in short, after the complete downfall of the Antichrist. These people, relatively few if compared with the earth's population, and their descendants will populate the earth for many centuries, or, in the words of John, one thousand years.¹⁰³

In the last section of his work, Lacunza expounds the conclusions of his observations with reference to the millennial kingdom of Christ on this earth after his second coming. He reasons that the antediluvians lived long lives on this earth due to the uniform climate of the earth. The same will happen in the mil-

⁹⁷ Lacunza spends more than 150 pages in the study of this chapter, *Ibid.*, 3:75-234 [2:288-403]; 3:98 [2:304].

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 4:152, 184 [3:110, 132].

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 3:118 [2:319].

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 3:156, 177 [2:346, 347, 361]. Lacunza affirms that if we understand this, we will discern the role of Michael in Daniel 12:1 and what Jesus says in Matthew 24:21. Therefore, according to Lacunza, Revelation 12 explains the prophecy of Daniel 12:1, 2, (*ibid.*, 3:175-179 [2:359-362]).

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 3:152, 184-197 [2:343, 366-375].

¹⁰² Lacunza doesn't explain further the 1290 and the 1335 days of Daniel 12. See *Ibid.*, 4:92-99 [67-72].

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 3:355-359 [2:494-498] "Los que quedaren vivos después de la venida del Señor . . . después de la ruina entera del Antecristo . . . después de arrojada al fuego la cuarta bestia . . . Estas reliquias de las gentes y pueblos que quedarán vivos después de la venida del Señor . . ." (*ibid.*). See also, 4:21 [3:15]. For Lacunza, the one thousand years may be one hundred thousand or one million years.

GULLON: TWO HUNDRED YEARS FROM LACUNZA

lennium, although he thinks that there will be sin and sinners, mourning and pain, but this will be unusual in those times.¹⁰⁴

The New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven is a real city,¹⁰⁵ and its inhabitants, the martyrs and men of prominent sanctity, will enter and will go out of the city at any time to visit the earth and also the heavenly bodies and the work of the Creator.¹⁰⁶ Lacunza maintains that not all the saved people will enter the city: only those who came to life in the first resurrection.¹⁰⁷ He has the singular idea that those who “are still alive and are left” (1 Thess. 4:17) at the second coming will be like secondary apostles to teach the remnant of the nations that were left alive on earth.¹⁰⁸ Lacunza also holds that many of the wicked, whom he calls “corpses” based on Isaiah 66:23, 24, will be resurrected in the first resurrection, to suffer in hell.¹⁰⁹

Lacunza affirms that in the new earth there will be another Jerusalem, with a temple to offer sacrifices. This is the capital city described in Ezekiel 40-48, where holy people will dwell, sojourners of the people of Israel who have not gone through death at the time of the second coming.¹¹⁰

Lacunza points out five means by which the earth will have universal peace and justice, only one religion and one faith: (1) Christ will be personally on the earth; (2) the dragon will be bound in the abyss with his angels and pseudo-prophets; (3) universal peace and justice will rule the earth; (4) there will be one language in all the globe, the primitive language of mankind; and (5) the people

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 4:53, 66, 79 [3:38, 48, 57].

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 4:118-122, 151 [3:86-88, 109].

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 4:126-129 [3:91-94].

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 4:141-144 [3:102-104]. He claims that Christ will bring with Him the souls of many saints, but they will be resurrected in the second resurrection and the universal judgment, at the end of the millennium. “Vendrán estas almas bienaventuradas con Cristo a nuestra tierra: más no resucitarán hasta la general resurrección de toda carne” (*ibid.*, 4:144 [3:104]). Lacunza explains: “Todos los . . . que a lo menos hicieren penitencia de todos sus pecados, aunque esto sea a la hora de la muerte, entrarán *aliquando* [alguna vez] a la vida eterna o al reino de Dios . . . más . . . se puede y se debe negar que puedan estos tener parte alguna en la primera resurrección, y por consiguiente en la santa, y celestial Jerusalén” (*ibid.*, 4:142 [3:103]).

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 4:130-136, 273, 253-275 [3:94-98, 197, 198, 183-200]. Lacunza builds his reasoning on 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17, and their occupation as new teachers of the new earth, on Isaiah 18:2; 24:13; 18:7; Psalm 96:3, 10; Isaiah 66:19; Luke 12:37; 19:17; Matthew 24:46; Isaiah 24:14. “Estos . . . serán como unos segundos apóstoles, y maestros nuevos de la nueva tierra, que enviados a todas las reliquias de las gentes deberán recogerlas, instruir las, civilizar las, santificar las, y como criar las de nuevo” (*ibid.*, 4:135 [3:98]). They will be like angels who go from one side of the world to another without any need of transportation (*ibid.*, 4:273 [3:197, 198]).

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 4:145-151 [3:105-109].

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 4:194-252 [3:141-182]. “Los antiguos sacrificios, que según las Escrituras, volverán a aparecer en el siglo venturoso, en la nueva tierra, en el nuevo y último templo de Jerusalén todavía futura, no serán entonces otra cosa, que una nueva y sapientísima liturgia instituida, y ordenada por el sumo, y eterno sacerdote Cristo Jesus” (*ibid.*, 4:235 [3:168]). This Jerusalem is not the holy city of the New Jerusalem, that according to Lacunza will come down out of heaven at the time of the coming of Christ in glory and majesty. See *ibid.*, 4:100-118 [3:73-86].

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

will come as pilgrims to Jerusalem and its temple, center of unity of all the earth. This journey will be free to every individual, and compulsory, as a fundamental law for every nation, tribe, and people, by means of delegates. They will see Christ in all his glory; they will see and experience the holiness of the city and of its inhabitants, and they will see hell and its renowned reprobates resurrected to shame and everlasting contempt, which in that time will be on the surface of the earth.¹¹¹ Lacunza hints that it is possible that they will see from the outside the holy city that has come down out of heaven.¹¹²

Lacunza is unable to explain the reason why Satan is released from his prison to deceive the nations, and he asserts that John does not give any reason at all, only shows the outcome. He says that all originates with the lukewarmness in those pilgrimages to Jerusalem, and the Lord will chastise them gently as a father, then they will have no rain, and finally, God will open the door of the abyss to give freedom to Satan.¹¹³

It is fascinating to notice the steps Lacunza envisages that lead to the perversion of the globe: lukewarmness, love of personal comfort, sensuality or vain ostentation, avarice, injustices and a great hypocrisy. But this will be after a long, long time, almost an evolutionary process that can take a million years. Satan will be released from his prison and will find the nations which are in the four corners of the earth almost in the same condition as when he was bound. He will induce and infuriate them against the Jews, telling the nations that they have been deceived by the Jews for many centuries, and he personally will lead all this multitude, but not all will be deceived by him.¹¹⁴

Lacunza concludes his work by speaking of the general resurrection and the universal judgment when those who have done good will rise to eternal life, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned and thrown into the eternal fire. In the last chapter, Lacunza contends that the righteous will live forever on this new earth where Jesus Christ was born and died for us.¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 4:277-309 [3:201-226]. “¿Qué medio tan excelente, y tan eficaz en sí mismo, esta peregrinación a Jerusalén, para conservar en toda su perfección la fe, el temor de Dios, y la inocencia en todos los habitantes de la tierra! . . . Mas el gran trabajo es, que la observación de esta ley fundamental no será perpetua” (*ibid.*, 4:308, 309 [3:226]). “Este residuo de las gentes, y toda su posteridad, por muchos siglos, será obligado como por una ley fundamental, e indispensable, a presentarse una vez al año en Jerusalén (sin duda por medio de dos o tres enviados de cada tribu, pueblo, o nación)” (*ibid.*, 4:332 [3:242]).

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 4:302 [3:220] In his words: “No es inverosímil que vean por de fuera la ciudad santa bajada del cielo; y si acaso esta se les oculta (como yo sospecho por estar cubierta por de fuera de alguna nube, de un modo semejante a lo que sucedió antiguamente en el Monte Sinaí), que vean a lo menos esta nube.”

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 4:332-335 [3:243-244].

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 4:335-350 [3:244-254].

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 4:361-433 [3:263-315].

GULLON: TWO HUNDRED YEARS FROM LACUNZA

Lacunza's Eschatological Ideas

A careful survey of the work of Lacunza shows that he had many of the particular tenets of the extreme form of modern futurism. Also, a search of *La venida del Mesías* shows the following contemporary theological ideas:

1. The futurist interpretation of Revelation—from chapter 4 to the end of the book—is a consecutive prophecy of the last times yet to be fulfilled.¹¹⁶

2. The appearance of the antichrist is expected shortly before the coming of Christ. Lacunza maintained that the antichrist had not yet arrived in the world.¹¹⁷

3. The antichrist's persecution will last 1260 days, which is exactly 42 months or three and a half years, the exact time of the great tribulation.¹¹⁸

4. The woman who appears in Rev 12 is not the church but represents the house of Israel, the ancient spouse of God, or the house of Jacob.¹¹⁹

5. The battle mentioned in Rev 12:7-9 is not in the past, but in the future, in the last days, in the times of the antichrist.¹²⁰

6. The future regathering and conversion of Israel will occur during the tribulation of the antichrist, when God shall call “a second time the remnant of Abraham, Isaac, and of Jacob, faithfully accomplishing to them all the promises which he made them, even with an oath.”¹²¹

7. The 144,000 of Rev 7 are Jews and will be the third part left in the land as Zechariah said.¹²²

8. The restoration of the tabernacle of David and the restitution of the kingdom to Israel are future. Lacunza gives two meanings to this crucial passage. The first is the vocation of the Gentiles, the second, after this, is the vocation and the gathering together of the remnant of Israel dispersed among all the nations.¹²³

¹¹⁶ I only mention some doctrines found in Lacunza. He affirms that only the first three chapters are in the past. See *ibid.*, 1:408-410 [1:285-287] 3:136, 137 [2:332].

¹¹⁷ “El Anticristo, está todavía por venir” (*ibid.*, 1:128 [1:89]; 3:84 [2:294]. See also 1:431 [1:301, 302] where Lacunza says: “El Antecristo, perfecto, y completo, como lo esperamos para los últimos tiempos.”

¹¹⁸ For the three and a half years, see, *ibid.*, 1:43, 412, 450, 451, 463 [1:29, 288, 314, 324]; 2:2, 179 [1:327, 451]; 3:84, 90, 136 152, 217, 225 [2:295, 298, 332, 343, 391, 398].

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 3:75-403 [2:288-404]).

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 3:175-176 [2:359, 360]. According to Lacunza, the battle of Michael with the dragon and the expulsion of the dragon and his angels is yet to come.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 3:232 [2:404]. Lacunza argues that the return had not yet been fulfilled: “La vuelta de la cautividad, destierro y dispersión de los hijos de Israel de que hablan las profecías, no puede ser la vuelta de algunos individuos de solas dos tribus, lo que sucedió en tiempos de Ciro” (*ibid.*, 3:40 [2:263]).

¹²² *Ibid.*, 3:112 [2:314]. Two-thirds of Israel in the land will perish and only one-third will escape. “parece pues, sumamente verosímil, que las dos terceras partes de la casa de Jacob, persigan con todas sus fuerzas a la otra parte, que ha creído” (*ibid.*, 3:115 [2:316]).

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 3:234-331 [2:405-477] Lacunza devotes 73 pages to explain Amos 9:11,12 that is quoted in Acts 15:16-18. Lacunza strongly argues that Jesus promised a future restitution of the kingdom to Israel.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

9. The division of the holy land is made among the remnant of the twelve tribes of Israel.¹²⁴

10. All unfulfilled prophecies of the Old Testament will reach complete fulfillment at the Second Coming.¹²⁵

11. Mount Zion (Jerusalem) will be raised among all the mountains, meaning that the city of David shall then be lifted up, the tabernacle of David reestablished.¹²⁶

12. The judgment and chastisement will be visited on the remnant of the nations and peoples who shall remain alive at the coming of the Lord. Some of them will enter the millennial earth.¹²⁷

13. The temple of Jerusalem will be restored and the ancient rites and sacrifices in the millennial kingdom will be reinstated. In the Millennium, not only will sacrifices not be forbidden but they will take place by God's approval and command, as the sacrifices at the temple of Jerusalem continued for forty years after the death of Christ.¹²⁸

14. The existence of the heavenly Jerusalem in the Millennium and the relationship of the immortal resurrected and translated saints with the inhabitants of the earth in the Millennium who are still in their natural bodies.¹²⁹

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 4:194-252 [3:141-182].

¹²⁵ "Then in that day (we say in conclusion), in that second time of the Messiah, shall be verified fully and perfectly, without wanting one iota or tittle, all the prophecies of which we have been speaking, and all the rest which were not verified in the former time" (*ibid.*, 3:360 [2:498]). "Then, in short, shall those innumerable prophecies be verified, of which the prophets, especially the Psalms, are full, where are announced to us, the conversion, the restitution, the future assumption of the remnant of Israel, and the change of their present state into another infinitely different" (*ibid.*, 3:222, 223 [2:396-397]).

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 3:354, 355 [2:494].

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 3:358-360; 4:20, 21 [2:496-498; 3:14-15]. As a consequence of this judgment and this chastisement, those who shall remain alive, and their posterity, will live in peace. Lacunza also postulates an interval between the coming of the Lord and the Millennium with a duration of 45 days. And they will be blessed because they will be of the few untouched by the two-edged sword of the King of kings, and they will be worthy to enter the millennial earth (*ibid.*, 4:96-99 [3:70-72]).

¹²⁸ Lacunza is crystal clear and argues that the sacrifices in the temple of Jerusalem are prohibited in the Christian church, but not forever. He reasons that because there is no temple in Jerusalem, no sacrifice could be offered. Therefore, sacrifices will continue to be prohibited until the end and the consummation of the age, according to Dan 9:27. But when the temple is rebuilt, there will be sacrifices. "The ancient sacrifices which, according to the Scriptures, shall come to reappear in the future age, in the new earth, in the new and last temple of Jerusalem, will be nothing else than a new and most wise liturgy instituted and ordained by the Eternal High Priest, Jesus Christ" (*ibid.*, 4:235, 211-251 [3:168; 152-182]). "I know in like manner, that the sacrifice of Christ upon the cross having been most fully verified, the sacrifices of that temple did not cease, but continued without any alteration" (*ibid.*, 4:228 [3:163]).

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 4:100-151 [3:86-109]. Lacunza remarks that the inhabitants of the New Jerusalem shall go from the city and personally visit the whole orb of the earth. It is conspicuous that the four propositions about the heavenly Jerusalem by a modern futurist are a perfect summary of Lacunza's view: (1) that the heavenly Jerusalem is the eternal habitation of the resurrected and translated saints; (2) that this heavenly Jerusalem is in existence in the Millennium; (3) that the Scriptures teach that

GULLON: TWO HUNDRED YEARS FROM LACUNZA

15. In the Millennium, the terrestrial Jerusalem will be the capital and center of unity of the whole earth, and there will be in this capital a magnificent temple as Ezekiel saw. All nations will go to Jerusalem.¹³⁰

16. Some deaths will occur in the Millennium, but rarely shall lamentation and crying be heard in those blessed times.¹³¹

17. The few who remain alive upon the earth after the Second Coming, and all their most numerous posterity, will for many centuries, will for a thousand years, “continue the judgment of Christ upon the living; or which appears the same, his kingdom over the living and the sojourners, until the end of the Millennium.”¹³²

18. Gog and Magog of Revelation 20 are not the same as those that appear in Ezekiel 38 and 39. The events of Ezekiel must happen before the coming of the Lord, when the Jews are in the land of their fathers; the other is one thousand years after the Second Coming. The Gog and Magog of the Revelation are the nations in the four corners of the earth. In number they are like the sand on the seashore, and all of them are people who will be deceived by Satan at the end of the millennium.¹³³

19. Lacunza has some allusions, although in an embryonic form, that seem to imply that after the Second Coming of Christ some people will remain alive during the time of the antichrist’s tribulation.¹³⁴

20. Lacunza refers to the Millennium as a more perfect era or dispensation when universal peace and universal righteousness will reign.¹³⁵

there is some participation of these resurrected saints in the government of the Millennium; and (4) that there will be some kind of relationship between the resurrected and translated saints with the saints of the millennial earth. See John F. Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom* (Findlay, OH: Dunham Publishing Co., 1959. Reprint, Grand Rapids: Academie Books, Zondervan, 1981, 1988).

¹³⁰ Lacunza, *La venida del Mesías*, 4:67, 233, 292 [3:49, 166, 212].

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 4:53, 66, 79 [3:38, 48, 57].

¹³² *Ibid.*, 4:20, 21 [3:14, 15]. We must remember that Lacunza maintains that the one thousand years are not a thousand literal years.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 4:345-360 [3:251-262]. Lacunza argues that Ezekiel speaks of the conversion, the restitution, the assumption, and the fullness of the precious remnants of Jacob, against which the multitude of Gog shall set themselves with all their might (*ibid.*, 4:354 [3:258]).

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 3:191, 192 [2:370-371] “Para las gentes que quedaren vivas en la tierra, después de la venida del Señor, como es ciertísimo que han de quedar” (*ibid.*); 3:355 [2:497-498] “Los que quedaren vivos después de la venida del Señor, como parece ciertísimo, que han de quedar” (*ibid.* 3:355 [2:494, 495]); “Me parece ciertísimo que quedarán vivos muchos individuos” (*ibid.*, 4:14-16 [3:7-10]).

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 4:277-308 [3:199-222]. Lacunza says that the Millennium is the fifth eternal kingdom which will be established upon the earth, and the residue of nations, no less than the remnant of Israel, will multiply in peace and will fill the whole earth. Lacunza goes on to say that “all times have not been equal and uniform; that God hath in some times given more than in others; that in the latter times there has always been more given than in the times before; that his mystery towards men hath been more opened from day to day” (*ibid.*, 4:275 [3:199]).

Conclusions and Evaluation: Key Ideas in Lacunza

1. First of all, we agree with Froom when he says that “Lacunza was a solitary voice just before the early dawn of the nineteenth-century revival of the advent hope and the beginning of the great second advent world movement.”¹³⁶ Indisputably Lacunza has his own merits.

2. Lacunza holds to the literal interpretation of the Scriptures, but his interpretation of the 1,000 years seems to be allegorical. He never affirms clearly that the one thousand years are 1,000 literal years. He goes on to say that “it can be 100,000 or one million years of justice and innocence,”¹³⁷ whereas when he speaks of the three and a half times or 1260, or 1290, or 1335 days he always interprets them as literal days.¹³⁸ Consequently, a contradiction seems to exist in his exegetical method. His method is not consistent. Lacunza, who analyzes and examines everything in detail, never gives any reason for this exegesis of the one thousand years, or, for that matter of the prophetic periods of time.

3. He does not explain why mortal people who enter the millennium will live so many years as he assumes, without first being changed. He claims that after the second coming of Christ, the promise of Isaiah 65:17-25 and 2 Peter 3:13, the new heaven and the new earth, the home of the righteous, will be fulfilled on this earth in the millennium, before the universal resurrection.¹³⁹

4. Concerning the book of Revelation, he correctly says that it has many allusions to the Old Testament, and it is the true and unique key to all the prophets and must be decoded according to the Old Testament.¹⁴⁰ Lacunza is right when he affirms that the Apocalypse has to be studied in the light of the Old Testament, but he is wrong when he claims that all its prophecies are in the future.

5. The determining key to his system is his interpretation of the stone in Daniel 2 as the second coming of Christ in glory and majesty and not as His first coming or as the Catholic church being the great mountain, and he is right. Lacunza maintains that the two advents of Christ are the center of all prophecy and the goal of all history.¹⁴¹

6. Concerning the interpretation of Daniel 7, Lacunza is whimsical and destroys the parallelism with the rest of the prophecies in Daniel. In his exegesis of Daniel 2, he follows a certain historical continuity. In Daniel 7, he destroys this

¹³⁶ Froom, 3:207.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 4:337 [3:248].

¹³⁸ See for instance, *ibid.*, 4:97 [3:70].

¹³⁹ See, *ibid.*, 4:63-65, 92-99, 259-276 [3:46-48, 66-72, 186-200].

¹⁴⁰ See for instance, *ibid.*, 4:328 [3:239-240]. In his own words: “¿Cómo de ha de entender este Libro Divino, si los lugares más notables a los que alude frecuentísimamente, ya sea los libros de Moisés, ya de los Salmos, ya de los profetas; si estos lugares, digo, no se reciben, sino en cuanto pueden ser favorables? . . . El Apocalipsis, Señor mío, no es tan oscuro si se quiere atender a sus vivas y casi continuas alusiones . . . Toda su oscuridad pudiera pasar de la noche al día, si se estudiassen dichas alusiones” (*ibid.*, 3:100 [2:305]).

¹⁴¹ See for instance, *ibid.*, 1:280-283 [1:195-197].

GULLON: TWO HUNDRED YEARS FROM LACUNZA

historical continuity when he argues that Mohammedanism is the second beast, and false Christianity the third. Moreover, if the beasts come up out of the water one after another, and if the chapter has some historical sequence as he claims, then he is incorrect on all counts.¹⁴²

7. While Lacunza completed his book at the beginning of the French Revolution, he lived on for another decade and could have revised it, but he didn't understand the event of 1798 when the Pope was taken prisoner and died in French captivity. He says that the mystery of the mortal wound of the beast is something that occurs in the future because the Antichrist is in the future, and his explanation of this fact is confusing and vague.¹⁴³

8. Lacunza follows the hermeneutics of literalism, and for this reason he contends that all Old Testament prophecies about the kingdom will be fulfilled literally in the millennium in a literal Israel. Nevertheless, to explain why the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, will come down out of heaven at the second coming, and not at the end of the one thousand years, he seems to apply the recapitulationist method of interpretation. He never uses the typological method to interpret the Old Testament prophecies concerning the kingdom. Lacunza never grasped the gospel principle that Abraham is the father of all believers, and his exegesis is not Christ centered.¹⁴⁴

9. For Lacunza, the essential thing is the future, the kingdom, the new heaven and the new earth. Therefore, Lacunza doesn't interpret the centuries between the apostolic church and his own time. He almost bypasses the Christian era and acknowledges no signs of the coming of Christ, except the Antichrist and the conversion of the Jews. He never brings into discussion the eschatological discourse of Jesus about the signs of the end of the age. There is no exegesis of Matthew 24 or Mark 13. His preoccupation seems to be with the Old Testament, the Jews, and the Antichrist, in the context of a somewhat allegorical millennium.

10. Even though he speaks of the harlot as papal Rome, nevertheless he never suggests that the papal institution could be the Antichrist. The Pope, La-

¹⁴² See for instance, *ibid.*, 3:128-131 [2:326-329].

¹⁴³ See *ibid.*, 1:433-442 [1:303-308].

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 4:100-104 [3:73-76]. He acknowledges that this event appears in chapter 21, after the universal resurrection and judgment of chapter 20, but he contends that this is a casual circumstance and explains: "San Juan observa y sigue en este lugar el mismo orden, y método, que ha venido observando constantemente en toda su profecía: es a saber, cuando dos o tres o más misterios concurren en un mismo tiempo, los divide o los separa el uno del otro; habla del uno como si no hubiese otro, y este lo lleva hasta su fin: concluido este, vuelve cuatro pasos atrás, y tomando el otro, lo lleva del mismo modo hasta su fin . . . Este orden y método del Apocalipsis desde el principio hasta el fin, es facilísimo, y sería convenientísimo observarlo bien: sin la cual observación, y conocimiento pleno, no concibo como pueda entenderse bien este libro divino, que comprende en tan poco volumen tantos y tan grandes misterios, pertenecientes todos, a lo menos desde el capítulo 4, a la revelación de Jesucristo, o lo que es lo mismo, a su segunda venida en gloria y majestad" (*ibid.*, 4:102 [3:74]).

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

cunza recognizes, “is Christ’s vicar on earth and head of the true church” until His coming.¹⁴⁵

11. In this same vein, Lacunza provides the first insight of modern ecumenism when he states that the Catholic church is the pillar and foundation of the truth, the incorruptible and faithful depository of the truth, and the bishop of Rome, the Pope, is the true center of the whole circumference of the Christian world.¹⁴⁶

12. Concerning the existence of life in the cosmos, of rational creatures in other worlds, like us, Lacunza believes that it may be possible, because God is all-powerful, but no one knows for sure. In any case, according to Lacunza, if there are creatures with body and soul, similar to us, they must belong to Jesus Christ. Lacunza ponders if before or after the death and resurrection of the man-God, they have had some divine mission by means of the ministry and work of the holy angels and of some illustrious righteous of every globe, like an Enoch, a Noah, an Abraham, a Moses, a David. He also wonders if some or all of them have sinned. But in any case, declares Lacunza, all the countless worlds that we see, and those that we can’t see, are the eternal inheritance of the man-God, and therefore pertain to all of us, who are his youngest brothers, “heirs of God and coheirs with Christ” (Rom. 8:17), particularly after the universal resurrection.¹⁴⁷

13. Lacunza has a good principle of hermeneutics when he says that we must explain an unclear text through hundreds of clear textual references and not the other way around.¹⁴⁸

14. In interpreting the Old Testament prophecies, Lacunza emphasizes the hope of a future Jewish restoration. He applies the messianic Old Testament prophecies to Jesus the Messiah, who will reign over history after the restoration of the Davidic kingdom after his second coming. This is evident throughout his treatise. On the other hand, when Lacunza contends that the thousand years could be 200,000 generation, he does not keep a balance between history as such and the millennial Kingdom of Christ.

15. Another important consideration is that Lacunza never worries about the exact time of the second coming of Christ. He never gives any reason for the apparent delay. He never exegetes the famous texts of 1 Peter 3:8 or Psalms

¹⁴⁵ *La venida del Mesías.*, 2:396 [2:162]. All the authority of this church “está y estará hasta que él venga, en sus legítimos sucesores, que son los obispos, y sobre todo en el sucesor del príncipe de los apóstoles, San Pedro, que es el obispo de Roma, al cual llamamos todos los católicos el papa, o padre común, o el *sumo pontífice*, y a quien reconocemos por vicario de Cristo en la tierra” (*ibid.*). See also 3:243 [2:411].

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 2:394-396 [2:160-162] Says Lacunza: “Por consiguiente, reconocemos a este obispo de Roma por el verdadero centro de unidad, a donde deben encaminarse, y llegar, y comunicar con él, todas las líneas que parten de toda la circunferencia del orbe cristiano; y las que no se encaminaren a este centro, ni comunicaren con él, van ciertamente desviadas, ni pertenecen a la unidad esencial, al cuerpo de Cristo, ni a la verdadera iglesia cristiana” (*ibid.*, 2:396 [2:162].

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 4:405-412 [3:293-299].

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 4:89 [3:64]; see also 4:253-255 [3:183-184].

GULLON: TWO HUNDRED YEARS FROM LACUNZA

90:4. Consequently, he never asks himself the question that seems to preoccupy so many Christians today: when will this happen? (Matt. 24:3). He lived in the midst of the eschatological agitation of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Europe and America. He was apocalyptic, saw the imminence of the kingdom of God, and lived in a atmosphere of imminence.

Finally we must say that one essential contribution of Lacunza had been the recovery of the faith in the second coming of Christ, filling an objective empty space in the theology of the last part of the eighteenth century. His work not only furthered futurism but was very timely in furthering the great awakening of the nineteenth century, as well.

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Living Under the Word: The Pragmatic Task of Moral Vision, Formation, and Action

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My sons got a kick out of the Tabasco commercial that premiered during SuperBowl XXXII. They'll never forget the red-neck guy sitting on his front porch rocking chair eating thick crust pizza. Several empty jars of hot Tabasco lay strewn on the porch by his feet. Beads of sweat hung on his rotund face like he'd just come in from the rain. He had this sun-burned blush about him. A crazy stare in his eyes. Above the crunch of a mouthful of pizza crust one hears the high whine of a mosquito. The guy takes his gaze off the pizza and watches the mosquito land on his bare leg and then pierce through the skin. The mosquito soon fills and flies off. About ten feet away—BOOM!. It explodes as if hit by a heat-sinking missile. Too much Tabasco for that guy. Whenever we see a bottle of Tabasco now, our minds are filled with that incredible imagery of a mosquito exploding in mid-air. It's great marketing. Tabasco. It's hot stuff!

J. B. Phillips once said: "If words are to enter men's hearts and bear fruit, they must be the right words shaped cunningly to pass men's defenses and explode silently and effectually within their minds."¹ As Solomon says, "*The Preacher sought to find delightful words and to write words of truth correctly*" (Eccl 12:10). He's talking about words easy to grasp. Words readily applied to life. Words that would win a hearing and make a difference. Like Tabasco sauce couched in what outwardly appears to satisfy thirsting hungry souls. Think of it, someone comes in for a drink of something they think they want or see, and as they go away—BOOM!—something explodes in their head. Something ex-

¹ J. B. Phillips, as quoted by Charles R. Swindoll, *Living on the Ragged Edge* (Waco: Word Books, 1985), 368.

LICHTENWALTER: LIVING UNDER THE WORD

plodes in their conscience. They've suddenly seen truth. Suddenly had some new moral insight. Abruptly met God in a new and unexpected way.

Solomon worked hard to find living words, practical words, picturesque words with which to present deep eternal and moral truth. That is the challenging task of Christian ethics—making Scripture (*moral truth*) come alive across the landscape of people's moral vision. I can't help but think of the challenge we have in keeping proper balance between relevance and truth. Can something be both true and seemingly irrelevant? Can something be both untrue and seemingly relevant? Of course!

Most people today aren't looking for truth—they are looking for relief, for hope, for meaning, for happiness. Their existential *angst* causes them to plug into whatever appears to relieve their pain or solve their problems. Most people in our postmodern world find the Bible irrelevant. They would find Church and worship and Christian lifestyle irrelevant as well. Scripture's moral vision is seen as irrelevant, cultural, belonging to another age. And yet, Scripture is filled with incredibly relevant moral truth.

Our challenge is to *show* the Bible's moral relevance by applying its message to people's lives, to show that it is both incredibly truthful and incredibly relevant. When we share biblical principles in a way that meets a need, it creates a hunger for more truth. Being genuinely relevant creates a genuine interest in truth. We cannot *make* the Bible relevant. It *already IS* relevant. Rather, we are to *show* its relevance by applying its message personally to people's lives.

In his book about the disintegrating moral culture in contemporary society and what this now means for the church, David Wells asks, "How does Christian faith speak most effectively to a culture whose moral fabric is torn, a culture in which sin has disappeared conceptually and in which secularized life is offering up its own forms of salvation?" He suggests that the Church will have to have its moral vision restored in two principle ways if it is to seize this moment successfully:

First, it will have to become courageous enough to say that much that is taken as normative in the postmodern world is actually sinful, and it will have to exercise new ingenuity in learning how to speak about sin to a generation for whom sin has become an impossibility. Without an understanding of sin—sin understood within a powerfully conceived moral vision of reality—there can be no deep believing of the Gospel. This, then, is not an optional task but an essential and inescapable one.

Second, the Church itself is going to have to become more authentic morally, for the greatness of the Gospel is now seen to have become quite trivial and inconsequential in its life. If the Gospel means so little to the Church, if it changes so little, why then should unbelievers believe it?

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

It is one thing to understand what Christ's deliverance means; it is quite another to see this worked out in life with depth and reality, to see its moral splendor. It is one thing to know the Gospel; it is quite another to see it lived. That is when its truth catches fire in the imagination.²

Not only must moral vision be cast in a way that ignites imagination, BUT somehow that moral vision must bring sufficient moral formation to character and thought that it leads to decision and moral action. Helping people grasp the Scripture's moral vision, be internally formed by it, and ultimately obey it—that's our pragmatic task! In the end there needs to be an increased willingness to obey that moral vision. We need more than just knowledge on a given moral issue; we need obedience and the willingness to obey the moral summons of the Bible. We need to be less smart and more obedient.

The Not So Easy Task

But how do we do it? Showing the relevance of Scripture for contemporary (and for many, postmodern) life is challenging. Developing the moral themes of Scripture in a way that connects the biblical world to the contemporary world is not as straightforward as many would wish. People in the pew have generally assumed that the connection between Scripture and moral decision-making was obvious, even though Scripture has often played little or no role in their actual day to day decisions. Even Christian ethicists have been inclined to speak to contemporary moral issues either with minimal reference to Scripture or with little concern for the technical and historical questions of biblical scholarship. Thomas Ogletree notes there has been "a troublesome gap between biblical studies and Christian ethics."³ James Gustafson describes biblical ethics as "a complex task for which few are well prepared; those who are specialists in ethics generally lack the intensive and proper training in biblical studies, and those who are specialists in biblical studies often lack sophistication in ethical thought."⁴

Part of the difficulty lies in the reality that some of the moral issues in the Bible are issues we no longer care about, and we are faced with moral issues today that Scripture doesn't address directly or at all. In addition, the nature of the Bible's moral content appears foreign to our postmodern existential thought. Bridging the differing cultures, time, interests, values, needs, and agendas is not always an easy task.

² David F. Wells, *Losing Our Virtue* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 179–180.

³ Thomas W. Ogletree, *The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1983), xi.

⁴ James M. Gustafson, "The Place of Scripture in Christian Ethics: A Methodological Study," *Interpretation* (October 1970): 430.

LICHTENWALTER: *LIVING UNDER THE WORD*

Models for Bridging the Gap

Various approaches exist for establishing the relationship of Scripture to Christian ethics.⁵ Typologies for Scripture's role in Christian ethics include: (1) providing revealed morality (where Scripture is absolute authority and biblical ethics equals Christian ethics); (2) a witness about God or His will (where Scripture becomes the Word of God via personal encounter through witness); (3) a source of moral images (where one is confronted with relative impressions of moral facts and values); (4) a shaper of moral identity (where the character of the moral actor is shaped, and the Christian mind is formed for moral decision making); and (5) a resource for normative reflection (where the Bible as the Word of God is ultimate authority through which norms are provided either as specific rules or as general principles or presuppositions).

We will not take the time to develop these models except to note that our position here tends toward the last model. This paper assumes Scripture is the ultimate authority in the ethical enterprise. The use of reason, Holy Spirit guidance, and the reflective role of community are important elements in the equation as well.

The Fourfold Task of Biblical Ethics

According to Richard Hays, developing the moral themes of Scripture requires us to engage in four overlapping critical operations:⁶

The Descriptive Task. The descriptive task has to do with reading the text carefully. The descriptive task is fundamentally exegetical in character. It has to do with the question, "What does the Scripture say?" We read the individual New Testament or Old Testament texts or passages with the purpose of under-

⁵ See Walter C. Kaiser, "The Use of the Bible in Establishing Ethical Norms," *Toward Old Testament Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1983), 39-56; Miroslav M. Kis, "The Word of God in Christian Ethics," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 4, no. 2 (1993): 199-208; idem, "Biblical Interpretation and Moral Authority," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 6, no. 2 (1995): 52-62; James M. Gustafson, "The Place of Scripture in Christian Ethics: A Methodological Study," *Interpretation* (October 1970): 430-455; John Brunt and Gerald Winslow, "The Bible's Role in Christian Ethics," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* (Spring 1982): 3-21; David K. Clark and Robert V. Rakestraw, eds., "The Use of the Bible in Ethical Judgments," in their *Readings in Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 179-182; John Frame, "The Word of God and Christian Ethics," *Readings in Christian Ethics*, ed. David K. Clark and Robert V. Rakestraw (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 183-184; and Richard N. Longenecker, *New Testament Social Ethics for Today* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984), 1-9.

⁶ Richard B. Hays outlines this fourfold task in his *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation; A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (Harper-San Francisco, 1996), 3-7. While his concern is primarily New Testament Ethics, Hays' outline is useful for developing the moral vision of Scripture as a whole.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

standing the distinctive moral vision embodied in each text, and in time, in each individual book in the biblical canon. We do this without prematurely harmonizing them. We are simply to note the distinctive moral themes and patterns of reasoning in the individual New Testament or Old Testament witnesses.

The Synthetic Task. The synthetic task means placing the individual text, passage, or book in its larger canonical context. This has to do with finding coherence in the moral vision of Scripture as a whole. Is it possible to describe a unity of ethical perspective within the diversity of the Old and New Testament canon? What, if anything, makes these diverse writings hang together as a guide to the moral life? Care needs to be taken that the synthetic task does not create a homogenizing interpretation that neutralizes any particularly challenging passage we may encounter. We assume a vast theological and moral unity between the Old and New Testaments, and within Scripture as a whole. This common moral vision, however, does not neutralize or homogenize the individual witnesses.

The Hermeneutical Task. How do we bridge the temporal and cultural distance between ourselves and the text? What does Scripture mean for us? This is the hermeneutical task—relating the text to our own contemporary situation. In particular, how do we appropriate the moral vision of Scripture as a word addressed to us? How do we actually use Scripture in doing ethical reflection?

The Pragmatic Task. Christian ethics ultimately comes down to the very practical question: how shall Christians shape their life in obedience to the moral vision of Scripture? In other words, what shall we do? How concretely does the moral vision of Scripture speak to our contemporary exigencies? The pragmatic task has to do with living out the Word in concrete everyday life.

We will concentrate on the last two of these tasks.

The Ups & Downs of Moral Vision

Scripture authoritatively communicates moral vision across varying modes of conceptual imagery.⁷ This is in keeping with normal human moral reflection and the essential ingredients in any comprehensive ethical theory.⁸

⁷ Gustafson, 431; Hays, 208-209.

⁸ According to Holmes, moral reflection includes at least four levels—overarching theological/philosophical bases or presuppositions, moral principles, moral rules, and specific cases where some unavoidable exception to moral rules appeals for resolution (moral dilemmas). See Arthur F. Holmes, *Ethics: Approaching Moral Decisions* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1984), 50-56. Henry Aiken posits four levels of moral reasoning: (1) expressive level—related to value and evaluative moral judgment, i.e., spontaneous reaction to people, things, ideas, etc.; (2) level of moral rules—when values conflict rules simplify moral behavior, clarify doubt, and show us the way to go; (3) level of ethical principles—asks the question of meaning, “Why should I follow this rule this way?”; (4) the post-ethical level—Why should I be moral, i.e., the level of moral perspective, choice

LICHTENWALTER: LIVING UNDER THE WORD

In other words, these modes of conceptual imagery are not arbitrary conceptual constructs formulated by theologians or ethicists in their attempt to appeal to Scripture in ethical discourse. They simply reflect the comprehensive way in which Scripture naturally communicates moral vision to human beings. Human beings are moral agents, and these biblical modes of conceptual imagery parallel the comprehensive dynamics of human moral reflection. Each mode of expression is an authoritative expression of biblical moral vision. These differing modes of moral conceptual imagery include:

Principles: general frameworks of moral consideration by which particular decisions about action are to be governed.

Rules: direct commands or prohibitions of specific behaviors.

Stories/paradigms: stories or summary accounts of characters who model either exemplary or reprehensible conduct.

Worldview: the overarching perceptual categories through which we interpret reality.

What God is Doing: moral perspectives modeled in God's own acts, words, emotions, and thinking.

Values: God's scale of preference and examples of value-systems falling within broader principles.

Moral Direction: the unequivocal moral direction Scripture projects, implicitly or explicitly, generally or specifically, on given issues.

Principles. Principles are general frameworks of moral consideration by which particular decisions about action are to be governed. They express timeless truths that have universal application. Principles are the ultimate ethical concepts, inclusive, universal, and exceptionless, and can never give way to something more inclusive or expedient.⁹ Principles are the broad moral outlines of God's will from which we derive understanding of more concrete norms and rules.¹⁰

Rules. Rules are direct commands or prohibitions of specific behaviors. They are direct statements of duty requiring obedience.¹¹ Such concrete injunctions of Scripture are usually expressed in the context of specific areas of human life (sexuality, work, finances, interpersonal relationships, etc.). In other words, they are "area rules" that transcend both culture and time because they refer to areas of human life rather than specific cases. At times, though, rules may express specific directives for a given case or situation. Some rules in this context

and conclusions (Henry David Aiken, *Reason and Conduct: New Bearings in Moral Philosophy* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1978), 65-88.

⁹ Holmes, 51, 52.

¹⁰ Kis, "The Word of God in Christian Ethics," 205.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 207.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

may never have been broader “area rules” but situationally encapsulated injunctions that express (and perhaps retain) a given cultural framework.

Rules apply principles and express the priorities of value.¹² As applications of principle, rules communicate the reality that the purpose of principles is not moral abstraction, but guidance toward concrete moral action. Rules thus serve as examples of how principles find application. In other words, Scripture does not leave up to our imagination how to apply its principles.¹³ But rules are always minimums. Genuine biblical-centered principled living will always call for ever deepening and ever more tangible expressions—reaching towards applications we never dreamed of and a consistency that flavors our whole character and life. Rules express the priorities of values in that their existence safeguards the values they uphold, preserve, or concretely define.

Stories/Paradigms. Scripture is filled with stories or summary accounts of characters who model either exemplary or reprehensible conduct. Stories stir emotions, communicate values, capture imagination, motivate to action, instill moral vision, provide examples of conduct. Bible stories don’t present us with a polished ideal to which we aspire, but with rough-edged actuality in which we see humanity being formed—the God presence in the earth/human condition.¹⁴ Stories engage us existentially and can deeply inform our moral life.¹⁵ The story of God’s redemptive work casts a pregnant moral vision upon our moral intelligence. As Burton writes:

The ethical interest of stories does not lie in general moral principles which become evident—rather it lies in the interplay of such principles with the flawed character of the protagonists in the stories, producing complex actions in which we can recognize our own moral dilemmas and obligations.¹⁶

Paradigms are a way of looking at something, an illustration, an interpretive framework that informs methods and principles of solution—whether in mathe-

¹² E.g. the principles of modesty, gender-distinction, and simplicity stand behind Paul’s concrete injunction concerning women and adornment (1 Tim 2:9, 10). The principle or moral innocence lies behind his request “to be wise in what is good, and innocent in what is evil” (Rom 16:19). The principle of moral innocence has to do with our memory pool and the kinds of things we expose our minds and senses to.

¹³ Take, for example, love. We are to love, but who are we supposed to love?—God and our neighbor. But how do we love God and our neighbor?—the first four commandments tell us how to love God, and the last six commandments tell us how to love our neighbor. The Sermon on the Mount and other Scripture provide even deeper, more comprehensive applications of the command to love. Comprehensive concrete application is always assumed.

¹⁴ Eugene H. Peterson, *Leap Over A Wall* (HarperSanfrancisco, 1997), 5.

¹⁵ John Burton, *Ethics and the Old Testament* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997), 34.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 36.

LICHTENWALTER: *LIVING UNDER THE WORD*

matics, physics, ethics, etc.. Paradigms encompass and interpret a larger, more comprehensive conceptual picture than simple models or individual stories do.¹⁷ Stories shape paradigms.¹⁸ When Scripture combines the model aspects of vivid characters and actions of particular biblical stories into larger, more comprehensive characters and patterns, it creates paradigms that shape inner moral image.¹⁹ Paradigms can be viewed from two broad perspectives: (1) as providing an abstract basic principle that “is not so much imitated as applied”²⁰ and (2) as an imprinted inner gripping image which is not so much applied as imitated.²¹

Worldview. Worldview is the overarching perceptual categories through which we interpret reality.²² This includes the theological/philosophical bases or presuppositions that frame our worldview. Worldview provides the broad outline of the context in which moral issues and thinking take place. Scripture’s worldview includes its representation of the human condition, its depictions of the character of God, its portrayal of the great controversy between Christ and

¹⁷ See my discussion, Larry L. Lichtenwalter, *Eschatological Paradigm and Moral Theory in Contemporary Christian Ethics*: Stephen Charles Mott and Thomas W. Ogletree (Ph.D. diss., Andrews University Theological Seminary, 1997), 70-78.

¹⁸ Waldemar Janzen, *Old Testament Ethics: A Paradigmatic Approach* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994), 20. According to Janzen, “Ethical model stories flow together directly to form a paradigm before the mental eye, as pieces of a jigsaw puzzle fit together to yield a picture” (Ibid., 27).

¹⁹ Ibid., 20. Janzen use five such story-framed paradigms to construct his Old Testament ethics, i.e., the ideal family member, worshiper, priest, king, prophet. According to Janzen, “. . . biblical Israelites did not carry with them a stock of maxims or principles, but mental images of model persons. Such inner images had wholeness and embodied the rich and multifaceted qualities of exemplary behavior appropriate to a given sphere of life. In other words, before the Israelite’s inner eye stood a vivid, lifelike yet ideal family member, worshiper, wise person, king, or prophet” (Ibid., 27).

²⁰ Christopher J. H. Wright, *An Eye for and Eye: The Place of Old Testament Ethics Today* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1983), 43. In this case a “basic principle” that remains unchanged forms the link between the paradigm and the new situation to which it is applied (see Janzen, 27). The principle remains unchanged, though details or situations differ.

²¹ The point here is that paradigms can become effective in shaping people ethically through their complete and direct impact on the inner moral eye. A paradigm need not be reduced first to a set of abstract principles that must then be translated into life. Rather there is a “personally and holistically conceived image . . . that imprints itself immediately and on the characters and action of those who hold it” (Janzen, 27, 28). Such paradigms by nature encompass, elicit, affirm, and mediate both law and principle, but not through a reductionistic abstraction.

²² Hays refers to this mode of biblical moral expression as symbolic world. The problem with the term symbolic is that it can be interpreted as suggesting that such biblical perceptual categories are metaphorical, figurative, allegorical, or in some way detached from reality. The moral/spiritual metaphysical context in which Scripture frames human existence is real. Better terminology for this mode of biblical moral expression include worldview, metaphysics, or theological/philosophical bases. The biblical worldview provides overarching truths that shine on our human condition.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Satan. It includes, too, such fundamental realities as an *ex nihilo* creation, judgment, and a moral universe.

What God is Doing. Pregnant moral perspectives are modeled in God's own acts, words, emotions, and thinking. What God does is significant, paradigmatic. The various ethical materials of Scripture are placed within the overarching reality of what God is doing in history. Scripture, then, does not teach independent ethical universals. God is the universal, and God's acts supply means and power for ethics.²³

When Peter witnessed the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the house of Cornelius he exclaimed, "Who was I that I could stand in God's way?" (Acts 11:17). The moral implications of what God was doing with the Gentiles was to be imitated by both Peter and the Church. When his brothers bowed down to him with their faces to the ground, Joseph remembered the dreams he had about them (Gen 42:9). That moment became a master key unlocking his understanding of what God was doing. The moral implications of that flashback were unavoidable—treat his brothers with grace, kindness, forgiveness, compassion, generosity (Gen 45:4-24; 50:15-21). Jesus' moral orientation was set in the context of what His Father was doing—"the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner" (John 5:19).

God is always at work around us. Moral responsibility in this context includes insight into the moral nature of His work. The moment we grasp that insight we are thrown into contrast with God. We cannot stay the way we are and go with God at the same time.²⁴ To move from our way of thinking or acting to God's way of thinking or acting requires moral decision and adjustment. "Be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love" (Eph 5:1, 2a).

Values. Scripture illumines the reality of God's scale of preference and provides examples of value-systems falling within broader principles. Values have to do with preferences, worth, what is esteemed, prized, or highly regarded as good. Values have to do with what is important to us, and in what order. They point to the quality of a thing that makes it desirable, useful, or an object of interest. A given value is a status on a scale of preference.²⁵ Values attract and

²³ Stephen Charles Mott, "How Should Christian Economists Use the Bible? A Study of Hermeneutics," *Bulletin of the Association of Christian Economists* 13 (Spring, 1989): 11-12.

²⁴ Henry T. Blackaby and Claude V. King, *Experiencing God* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 60.

²⁵ There are differing kinds of values—objective (intrinsic), subjective (extrinsic), and instrumental (pragmatic). Traditional ethical systems each express some kind of valuation, i.e., deontological (value is placed on a principle or an act in itself), teleological (value is placed on good results, ends, consequences), instrumental (value is placed on motives, means, or the moral agent), existential (value is focused on personal choice, what self creates, the moment).

LICHTENWALTER: LIVING UNDER THE WORD

motivate the will.²⁶ They calibrate (prioritize) standards, rules, and principles. Values also justify rules and principles.

Scripture concerns itself with the great issues of life and deals heavily with values—values in relation to God, others, self, the created world. It provides God’s scale of preference (Rom 12:1-3; Eph 5:10; Micah 6:6-8; Matt 23:23; Matt 15:22). It articulates both the “what” and the “feeling” of values (the objective and existential). It presents values in extrinsic, intrinsic, and instrumental forms. Scripture is the ultimate authority in value formation.

Examples of valuation in Scripture can be found in the stories of Abraham and Joseph. When Abraham told Pharaoh that Sarah was his sister, he valued life over truthfulness, and financial gain over his own wife’s sexual integrity. God’s intervention, however, showed a contrasting value-system—truthfulness over life, Sarah’s sexual integrity over financial gain (Gen 12:10-20). Joseph’s response to the sexual propositions of Potiphar’s wife shows how he found strength in two valued relationships (Gen 39:7-9). He could not bring himself to violate his trusted relationship with his boss nor, more important, his valued relationship with God. His experience shows how the issue of personal relationships is strategically central to moral excellence. We will rarely deny ourselves for a mere list of rules, even less for an institution. But we will deny self in order to preserve the priority of a valued relationship.²⁷

Moral Direction. Scripture moves in certain moral directions both generally and specifically on given issues. Rules, principles, stories, what God is doing, worldview, and the moral values Scripture expresses together lead or push in a particular moral direction. We need to look for the direction Scripture is pointing and allow the Holy Scripture to orient us in this direction, as well.

Examples of ways in which Scripture provides moral direction include the status of women and oppressed peoples and the place of outward adornment in the context of cultural assimilation and moral/spiritual identity. Status (social position) has to do with the value that culture places on various groups of people and is one of the most basic elements of a social system. It is a way of control-

²⁶ A basic question in ethics is the disparity between what one knows to be right and one’s doing right. How is it that one can know moral principles or rules, even believe them to be true, yet not obey them? Part of the answer lies in valuation. If we don’t, in our heart of hearts, internally value what particular moral principles or rules point toward, we will likely not be motivated to articulate them in our lives—or we might do so only legalistically, or minimally. In this case intentionality loses integrity. The promise of a new heart where God’s will is planted in our mind and heart has valuation in focus (Jer 31:33, 34; Ezek 36:25-27). And so does Paul’s assertion that “the love of Christ compels us” to the place where we no longer live for ourselves, but for Him who died and rose again in our behalf (2 Cor 5:14, 15). Value is a powerful motivation toward action.

²⁷ Joseph M. Stowell, *Following Christ: Experiencing Life the Way it was Meant to Be* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 86.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

ling people. Because of it, some are weak and some are strong.²⁸ Notwithstanding the record of the actual status and treatment of women in biblical culture,²⁹ as well as several pointed Scriptural passages that seem to sanction such valuation and treatment (Eccl 7:28; 1 Cor 14:34, 35; 1 Tim 2:11-15), the moral vision of Scripture as a whole unequivocally points in a consistent direction of equality, respect, compassion, and justice.³⁰

As Mott writes:

A priority for the early church was to determine if the relationships among its members would be characterized by the status distinctions of the surrounding culture. The answer was far reaching. In the new reality made present by Jesus Christ, the major status distinctions of the culture—slavery, nationality, and sex—were considered null and void (Gal 3:28).³¹

²⁸ This inequality is socially useful. The existence of roles is inherent in being social. See Stephen Charles Mott, "The Use of the New Testament for Social Ethics," *Journal of Religious Ethics* (Fall 1987): 234-237.

²⁹ In order to correctly grasp the moral vision Scripture articulates, one must be sensitive to the difference that exists between, (1) the contemporary culture of biblical times (the lifestyle, customs and values expressed by the nations and peoples of the then known world); (2) the culture of biblical characters (the lifestyle, customs and values expressed in the lives of individuals knowing or representing God); and (3) heavenly culture (the values and lifestyle Scripture projects as the ideal and true and which has been expressed most fully in the life of Jesus Christ). As per above, Bible stories don't present us with a polished ideal to which we aspire, but with rough-edged actuality in which we see humanity being formed. When we understand these distinctions, we can read between the lines better and understand that not everything God's people did represents what God would have had them do. Yet the overall direction of Scripture on a given moral issue, together with the principles, rules, and values that Scripture conveys, points toward what we could call heavenly culture—the ethos of a redeemed people fully in harmony with God's ultimate purpose for human beings.

³⁰ That direction is seen through such passages and stories as: (1) the creation account of God splitting His image—*imago dei*—male and female (Gen 1:26, 27); (2) woman being the crowning moment of creation because she would make man complete and enable him to live life fully and responsibly, as well as wisdom literature's personification of wisdom as woman because without her, man is incomplete (Gen 2:18; Prov 9:1-6; 1:20, 21; 8:1-36; 2:2-4); (3) God's protection of Sarah after Abraham's indecent proposal (Gen 12:17-20); (4) Hagar, an Egyptian woman, naming God (Gen 16:13, 14); (5) how Esther begins with concerns that Vashti's example would upset social mores and undermine male social position as master in his own house (Esther 1:15-22) and flips it all upside down as Esther becomes master over the very men who would control not only her destiny but the destiny of her people, etc. Of course there are the status boundaries that Jesus crossed by his words and actions with regard to women.

³¹ Mott, "The Use of the New Testament for Social Ethics," 236, 237.

LICHTENWALTER: LIVING UNDER THE WORD

Scripture sets the question of outward adornment in the context of cultural assimilation and moral/spiritual identity.³² While it does not reject outward adornment altogether,³³ Scripture alerts us to the way we experience and come to share the values of our culture by participating in its forms³⁴ and draws a direct connection between luxury in adornment/dress and idolatry.³⁵ In addition, there is a tendency in Scripture to devalue the significance of jewelry as a symbol of ultimate value.³⁶ Focus is consistently inward toward character and outward toward behavior.³⁷

Scripture authoritatively communicates moral vision across varying modes of conceptual imagery. This diversity reflects a comprehensiveness that enables Scripture to cast its moral vision across all of human life, thought, and experience. While Scripture does not provide a concrete example, principle, rule, etc. on every possible temptation or moral dilemma, nevertheless, all spheres of human moral life are within its purview. There is a broad outline of the context in

³² For example, in a solemn moment of family worship expressing spiritual revival and consecration, Jacob's family removed certain garments, idols, and pieces of jewelry from their bodies (Gen 35:1-4). Scripture conveys two important principles with regard to culture through this story: (1) the artistic expressions of culture that we are inclined to bring to our bodies or lives are value laden, i.e., they express moral or spiritual value which the wearer or participant wittingly or unwittingly identifies with; (2) consecration to God finds tangible expression in shedding those cultural idioms that convey ungodly values, i.e., while we can have external forms in our life without consecration to God, we cannot have consecration to Him without it affecting the external forms that in one way or another either nurture or compete with that very consecration. Doing and being are inseparably linked.

³³ In Scripture, jewelry is used for: personal adornment (Isa 3:16-23; Ezek 16:11-15; 23:40; Jer 2:32; 4:30; Hosea 2:2, 13; 1 Tim 2:9; 1 Pet 3:3; 2 Kings 9:30; Song of Solomon 1:10, 11; Rev 17:4, 5); as a form of currency (Gen 24:22); for offerings (Ex 35:22; 30:11-16; Num 31:50, 51); as evidences of wealth (Gen 24:35, 10, 22, 53; 15:14; Exod 11:2; 12:36; 3:22; 32:2-5; 35:20-22; Rev 18:12; Job 42:11); to designate social status (James 2:2-4; 2 Sam 1:10; 2 Kings 11:12; Psalm 89:39; 132:18; 45:13, 14; Ezek 28:11-19; 16:10-13; Isa 3:16-26; Rev 17:4); as symbols of power and authority (Gen 41:42; Dan 5:29; Esther 3:10, 12; 8:2, 8, 10, 15; Zech 6:11-13; 2 Kings 11:12); as imagery for God's gracious redemption and our value in His sight (Isa 61:10; Mal 3:16-18); for religious purposes (Ezek 16:17; Exod 28:1-43; Hosea 2:13; Gen 35:2-4), and to ward off evil powers and dangers (Isa 3:3). Obviously, some of these uses are clearly unacceptable, while others are quite appropriate.

³⁴ It is one thing for the power of a given culture and its tangible expressions to be everywhere around us and all pervasive in its moral/spiritual influence, but it is another thing for us to bring to our body, our life, or our lifestyle, those very objects, behaviors, experiences, or icons. The moment we do, we identify with them. Their moral spiritual values somehow attach to our inner private world. Culture is no longer objective, out there. Now it is internalized. We are being shaped by it within.

³⁵ Rev 17:4; Isa 3; Gen 35:1-4; Ex 30 and 33.

³⁶ Prov 3:13-15; 8:10, 11; 20:15.

³⁷ 1 Tim 2:9, 10; 1 Pet 3:3-7; Isa 1-3.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

which moral issues and thinking take place. The stories, values, moral direction, worldview, ways of God, principles, and rules, together frame any given moral issue. The reflective framework most consistent with the moral vision of Scripture is one where ethics is in close relation with theology.³⁸ “All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:16, 17 NASB).

Wending Our Way

Since Scripture obviously conveys moral vision across varying modes of conceptual imagery, it is only natural to ask, “How does one wend one’s way in the light of Scriptural moral vision?” Being able to move between the different levels of moral reflection and conceptual imagery is important. It is important because it relates to issues of consistency and specificity of application as well as using Scripture with integrity. Not only do we need to avoid any kind of cut-and-paste methodology, but we need to avoid the destruction of context by homogenizing or proof-texting, as well. We cannot move abstractly or arbitrarily away from the form in which the texts present themselves to us. Nor can we turn narratives into law or rules into principles. We must respect the particularity of the forms through which the whole witness of the whole Scriptural canon lays claim upon us. We need to accept each of these modes and develop skills necessary to respond to the voice of Scripture in each of these modes.³⁹

However, we also need to understand the organic link that exists between these varying modes of conceptual imagery. Stephen Charles Mott suggests a hermeneutical principle:

The authority of God in the concrete injunction must be interpreted with attention to God’s authority in mighty acts, in the theological affirmations, and in the prevailing ethical principles. And the specific teachings and propositions are needed to give concrete interpretation of the broad and general truths and actions.⁴⁰

³⁸ “The study of biblical ethics requires focus on . . . the theology in the Scriptures which both validates and provides content to the moral teachings. For the people of the Bible, morality was not separated from religion in the way that it has been both in theory and in practice in later developments; ethics was not separated from theology” (Gustafson, 431). See also Alister E. McGrath, “Doctrine and Ethics,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 34, 2 (June 1991): 145-156; James Gustafson, “Theology in the Service of Ethics: An Interpretation of Reinhold Niebuhr’s Theological Ethics,” *Reinhold Niebuhr and the Issues of Our Time* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986), 24-45; Oliver O’Donovan, “How Can Theology Be Moral?” *Religious Ethics* 17, 2 (Fall 1989): 81-94.

³⁹ Hays, 294.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

LICHTENWALTER: LIVING UNDER THE WORD

In his ethical method, Mott is concerned with understanding the place of concrete decision-making within different aspects of ethical thought. He is interested in showing how principles and concrete injunctions relate in Scriptural thought. He is concerned with the question of how to credibly translate ethical reflection from one level to another.

In this context, Mott interprets organically the diverse, but complementary, ways in which Scripture is authoritative for ethics. According to him, the concrete biblical injunctions must be interpreted with attention to God's mighty acts, theological affirmations, and prevailing ethical principles. Likewise, the specific teachings and propositions are needed to give concrete interpretation of the broad and general truths and actions. Functionally, this provides the way for responsibly opening up the ethical meaning of Scripture across different levels of moral reflection and application.

One can credibly translate ethical reflection from one level to another because the biblical materials themselves provide both the conceptual structure and the example to do so. Scriptural moral vision is constantly flowing up and down, back and forth, between these varying modes of conceptual imagery. The bridge between these varying modes of conceptual imagery is the reality that each is yielding the normative moral content of Scripture. This is true whether or not the varying modes of conceptual imagery reflect similar moral themes. It is particularly pregnant, however, when they are.

When we understand this organic relation between the differing modes of conceptual imagery, the comprehensive moral vision that Scripture casts becomes more instructive, concrete, and relevant. It becomes more instructive in that one is moved away from mere externals and rules toward moral discernment and being. It becomes more concrete in that every story, every rule, every act of God, conveys the reality that moral vision ultimately leads toward and comes down to tangible words, acts, thoughts, decision, i.e., doing. It becomes more relevant in that values, moral direction, principles, as well as the existential dynamic of stories, connect human moral life across time and culture.

On many moral themes, Scripture conveys moral vision across every one of these different modes of conceptual imagery. On some issues, however, the moral vision is only conveyed in its more abstract forms. The former provides us concrete illustrations of both being and doing, as well as the organic link between being and doing. The latter simply challenges us toward doing that which is consistent with being. The latter, undoubtedly, demands greater spiritual and moral discernment. The former provides templates, examples of how a given moral issue includes both being and doing.

It should be noted at this point that our presuppositions of Scripture determine our perception of the level of moral vision it casts. If we see Scripture as

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

providing only abstract moral imagery, generalizing principles, or relative values, then the importance of the reflective community in the interpretive process rises proportionally. In addition, the task of contemporary application would of necessity be predominantly in the hands of the believing community or individual. If, on the other hand, we view Scripture as providing substantial, concrete ethical injunctions or specific moral principles—as well as clear values and unequivocal moral direction—then the biblical materials themselves are much more likely to remain the controlling element in the interpretive process. Scripture will bring both structure and guidance to the pragmatic task of application.

The comprehensive way Scripture communicates moral vision across varying conceptual imagery in effect points toward a view of revelation/inspiration consistent with that reality. If we allow the moral vision of Scripture to come to us in the comprehensive way that it does, Scripture itself will remain the authoritative controlling element in our moral reflection.

As suggested above, the bridge between the varying modes of conceptual imagery in which Scripture communicates moral vision is the reality that each is yielding the normative moral content of Scripture. That bridge is also reflected in the reality that these varying modes are in keeping with normal human moral reflection and the essential ingredients in any comprehensive ethical theory. Comprehensive moral vision is only possible when such elements as principles, rules, worldview, and values are all part of the equation.

The Pragmatic Task

A time management expert was speaking to a group of business students and, to drive a point home, used an illustration they would never forget. As this man stood in front of the group of high-powered overachievers, he said, “Okay, time for a quiz.” Then he pulled out a one-gallon, wide-mouthed mason jar and set it on a table in front of him. Then he produced about a dozen fist-sized rocks and carefully placed them, one at a time, into the jar.

When the jar was filled to the top and no more rocks would fit inside, he asked, “Is this jar full?” Everyone in the class said, “Yes.”

Then he said, “Really?” He reached under the table and pulled out a bucket of gravel. Then he dumped some gravel in and shook the jar, causing pieces of gravel to work themselves down into the spaces between the big rocks. Then he smiled and asked the group once more, “Is the jar full?”

By this time the class was on to him. “Probably not,” one of them answered.

“Good!” he replied. And he reached under the table and brought out a bucket of sand. He started dumping the sand in and it went into all the spaces left between the rocks and gravel. Once more he asked the question, “Is this jar full?”

LICHTENWALTER: LIVING UNDER THE WORD

“No!” the class shouted.

Once again he said, “Good!” Then he grabbed a pitcher of water and began to pour it in until the jar was full to the brim.

Then he looked up at the class and asked, “What is the point of this illustration?”

One eager beaver raised his hand and said, “The point is, no matter how full your schedule is, if you try really hard, you can always fit some more things into it.”

“No,” the speaker replied, “that’s not the point. The truth this illustration teaches us is: if you don’t put the big rocks in first, you’ll never get them in at all.”

That’s the pragmatic task of moral vision: getting the “big rocks” into people’s lives.

Putting the big rocks of moral life in first means creatively unlocking and clearly conveying Scripture’s moral vision to our people. Firing their imagination with the reality that Scripture speaks with authoritative relevance across the spectrum of human life as a whole and their own experience in particular.

Putting the big rocks of moral life in first means developing the moral themes of Scripture in such a way that people begin to move beyond a mere awareness of what Scripture has to say about our moral life toward internalizing that moral vision in their inner private world. Moral vision must be sustained and articulated to the place where it brings moral formation, molds character, touches being. This assumes coaching people toward moral maturity to the place where they have their senses trained to know good and evil (Heb 5:12-14). It also assumes we have helped them understand the comprehensive way in which Scripture conveys moral vision across varying modes of conceptual imagery and helped them understand as well the relationships between the varying modes of moral conceptual imagery. It is important for our people to understand moral vision and understand Scripture in a Spirit-led way. They must learn to think morally as well as doctrinally, and ultimately to think and act biblically.⁴¹

Putting the big rocks of life in first also means helping people see the straight line that flows from moral vision to moral formation and from moral formation to moral action. People need to learn “the gist of faithful and reflective moral action.”⁴² They need to know how to translate the moral summons of Scripture into the varying spheres of human life—personal ethics, work, marriage, church life, parenting, sexuality, values, money, power, politics, leadership, social ethics, etc.

⁴¹ See James Montgomery Boice, *Mind Renewal in a Mindless Age* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993).

⁴² Gaylord Noyce, *The Minister as Moral Counselor* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 20.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Putting the big rocks of life in first is a call to read Scripture for its moral content and go on to develop its moral themes—opening moral vision, bringing moral formation, encouraging moral action. The Apostle Paul gives us an example of articulating moral vision, bringing moral formation, and encouraging concrete action. You can see it in his letters to the Corinthians, Thessalonians, Romans. When we get a feel for the variety of moral issues he addressed, when we listen to how he leads people to think about themselves in light of the work of Jesus in their behalf and what it means to be “in Christ,” when we see how he addresses both thinking and behavior—and at bottom argues for moral integrity in keeping with spiritual integrity—we gain insights into the comprehensiveness as well as the concreteness of our pragmatic task.

Methodologically, putting the big rocks of life in first assumes each of the four-fold tasks outlined above. The descriptive, synthetic, hermeneutical, and pragmatic tasks must each come into play. There must be critical engagement with Scripture itself, allowing Scripture to formulate its own categories of moral reasoning and assert its own moral agenda and values.⁴³ Scripture’s view of reality and ways of approaching moral thinking must be the guiding template.

More specifically, we need to allow Scripture to engage us through each of its modes of conceptual imagery. In the process, we need to be consciously aware of the particular mode or modes through which a given passage, story, or book is conveying moral truth. We may notice one mode of conceptual imagery on a given moral issue/theme in one area of Scripture, and a different mode of conceptual imagery on that same moral issue/theme in another passage. Thoughtful synthesis at this point brings together, not an arbitrary cut-and-paste proof-texting moral picture, but a comprehensive moral image and summons. Such a process will allow the moral vision of Scripture to both motivate and guide moral agents.

Finally, we need to build bridges between the moral vision of Scripture and contemporary life through “life stories.” There are many benefits to using stories to communicate moral truth. Stories capture interest. Stories hold attention. Stories stir emotions. Stories help us remember. Stories impact us in ways that precepts and propositions never do. If you want to change lives, you must craft the moral message for impact as well as information.

⁴³ It is not uncommon for individuals to try to find analogies between classical moral theories and the Bible, where the contrasting views of reality found in philosophical ethics and biblical ethics are somehow made to merge. Philosophical ethics revolves largely around categories like consequentialist (value), deontological (rule), and perfectionist (virtue) conceptual frameworks, where issues of intentionality, intersubjectivity, and self-formation are key. Attempts to show the relevancy of the biblical materials through these categories are useful, though not necessarily accurate in terms of exegesis, theology, biblical moral direction, or genuine spiritual/moral life. See Ogletree, 1-46.

LICHTENWALTER: LIVING UNDER THE WORD

Scripture is filled with life stories. Contemporary life is filled with life stories. The pragmatic task of moral vision, formation, and action facilitates shared stories. By this I mean the values or moral themes of a particular biblical story can find correspondence in the real life stories of contemporary life. Likewise, the values or moral themes of a given contemporary story can find correspondence somewhere in Scripture. The needs of human beings and the reality of human moral life is unchanged throughout time and across culture. Stories facilitate a commonness.

At bottom the pragmatic task of moral vision, formation, and action has to do with “living under the Word of God.” It has nothing to do with moralism or perfectionism, but the Lordship of Jesus Christ in every area of our being and doing. On the heels of a grand doxology extolling the depths and riches of God’s sovereign grace bringing providence, Paul sums it up well:

I implore you by God’s mercy to offer your very selves to him: a living sacrifice, dedicated and fit for his acceptance, the worship offered by mind and heart. Adapt yourselves no longer to the pattern of this present world, but let your minds be remade and your nature transformed. Then you will be able to discern the will of God, and to know what is good, acceptable, and perfect. (Rom 12:1, 2)

Biblical Truth in the Context of New Modes of Thinking

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The following anecdote illustrates the problem we face in transmitting truth and values to the next generation. A young student with a brilliant intellect enters a computer network in a foreign country with his password, downloads the log-in and password files with approximately 3500 names and passwords and passes them through a cracking program which he has downloaded from the internet in order to crack the passwords. After he has been caught, he acts surprised that anyone could find anything inappropriate in his actions. His philosophy: there is no moral problem in breaking into or entering a house that does not belong to you. You can roam about, looking at anything you like, especially the hidden things that take some ingenuity to find, and you are fine as long as you do not take anything with you or do any damage to the house. If you also do this with the intent to demonstrate the security loopholes to the owner, you should be commended and praised for such action. At the same time the young man is a good Christian and claims to follow the Biblical standards for moral behavior. He is a typical representative of the new computer generation, born with a computer-mouse in his hand. He is also a typical representative of those who have the “new mind.”

This paper seeks to briefly address three related issues: first, the question of how new scientific evidence about a “new mind” can and does affect the thinking, especially among the younger generation; second, how this new mind deals with biblical and Adventist faith; and finally, how truth and values can be transmitted successfully in these postmodern times.

The New Mind

It has been known for quite some time that our brains have altered lately in their way of processing stimulation. Studies which tested a large number of people have shown that the brain has established new limits for stimulation. At first

VOGEL: BIBLICAL TRUTH AND NEW MODES OF THINKING

only the senses of smell and taste were affected, but since the early eighties scientists have found that now all sensory perceptions are included. This means that now it has become increasingly difficult to stimulate certain centers in the brain. The brain, in fact, refuses to respond to a large number of stimuli. It has been found that our sensitivity for stimulation drops about one percentage point per year, which means that finer stimuli are filtered out and only the coarser thrills are registered.¹

At the same time the brain apparently has made changes in its internal strategy. Psychophysicologists who are working in the field of behavioral neurobiology have found many indications that new and strong stimuli are processed differently than before. It can be observed that interlinks are reduced and the capacity is increased considerably through parallel stimulation lines. Before, a visual stimulus, for example, was processed through various parts of the brain and may have also activated the sense of smell. Now it seems that whole sections of the brain are skipped and the visual stimulus goes directly and exclusively to the visual center in the brain. The advantage is that the other areas of the cortex remain free for the processing of specific stimuli while the visual stimulus reaches its goal with high speed. The disadvantage is that the stimulus is only insufficiently or not at all interlinked and provided with emotions. This has serious consequences, because information is processed in the “new brain,” or better the “new mind,” without being evaluated!²

Some scientists claim that when it comes to changes of the mind a generational gap can be observed. Those born before 1949 apparently have what has been called the “old mind.” Those born between 1949 and 1969 have a “modified old mind,” while those born after 1969 have already been provided with the “new mind.” Of course, it has to be noted that this kind of conclusion is largely based on evolutionary ideas which hold that changes in influence and behavioral patterns eventually result in modifications in organic structure. While this may

¹ The information provided in this section is largely taken from Michael Kneissler, “Unser Gehirn baut sich soeben radikal um,” *PM* 11 (1993): 14-20. *P.M.* is a German monthly magazine on popular science. The following books are highly recommended for additional reading on the same subject: Jane M. Healy, *Endangered Minds: Why Children Don't Think and What We Can Do About It* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990); idem, *Failure to Connect: How Computers Affect Our Children's Minds—for Better and Worse* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998); Marva J.I Dawn, *Is It a Lost Cause? Having the Heart of God for the Church's Children* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997).

² To illustrate, when so-called “flesher videos” of “snuff flicks” (where real people are being tortured and dismembered and killed in front of the camera) are shown to adults, they feel compassion, abhorrence, and revulsion. Most of them refuse to continue watching the film. However, most children do not have the same problem. Apparently without emotion, they merely judge the dramatic quality and excitement of the action. If they find these to be acceptable, they continue to watch; if not, they turn it off, and that's it. There seems to be no moral evaluation or empathy.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

be true in some instances, the brain is structurally the same for everybody: about 20 billion cells with up to 100 billion bits input per second, which amounts to 100 billion decisions every second! Therefore the idea that people are already born with a different kind of brain or mind which predisposes them to a certain kind of thinking or behavior has to be questioned. However, it seems to be true that the rapid increase of stimuli and the immense influx of information in today's world, coupled with a diminished ability or willingness to evaluate these stimuli and information, leads to changes in the processing and storing of information in the mind.

Noteworthy in this respect, and especially for our context here, is the fact that long-term studies³ have shown how the "new mind" works. Because of parallel circuits and link-ups it is able to accept and store different stimuli concurrently and independently. This leads to an increased acceptance of dissonance. One psychologist comments: "These young people have grown up with contradictions and are able to handle them."⁴ Earlier the same ability would have been called schizophrenia, but today it has become normal. Someone has called this the "new indifference." This is the capability of the parts of the mind to reconcile the irreconcilable and to give everything equal validity simply by the refusal of the mind to relate contradicting information to each other.⁵ It seems obvious that this is largely due to the overstimulation in our world today. This means that the mind is confronted with an increasingly broad spectrum of stimulation in less and less time: the quality and emotional impact of the stimulation changes more and more rapidly. This results in what has been called the "flickering of the senses." The mind has lost the standards by which to judge the incoming information and consequently gives in to a new "dialectic of sensory processing." The mind is merely busy with processing the waves of stimulation and stores opposing and contradictory information uncensored. It does not produce a synthesis.

The New Mind and Thinking

As Daniel Goleman has pointed out in his highly informative book *Emotional Intelligence*, "emotion is so crucial to effective thought, both in making wise decisions and in simply allowing us to think clearly."⁶ He mentions a study that was done with primary school boys who had above-average IQ scores but

³ These studies are conducted by the Association for Rational Psychology in Munich. Every five years 4000 people are tested concerning their processing of sensual stimulation. These tests are standardized and highly sophisticated and are therefore considered reliable.

⁴ Henner Ertel, quoted in the above mentioned article in *P.M.*

⁵ Kneissler thinks a good illustration is young people who use spray cans and fight the depletion of the ozone layer at the same time.

⁶ Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence* (New York: Bantam Books, 1995), 27.

VOGEL: BIBLICAL TRUTH AND NEW MODES OF THINKING

nevertheless were doing poorly in school. Neuropsychological tests showed that they had impaired frontal cortex functioning, i.e., the parts of the brain that control the emotions and are interlinked with the other thinking processes were not working properly. “Despite their intellectual potential,” Goleman writes, “these are the children at highest risk for problems like academic failure, alcoholism, and criminality—not because their intellect is deficient, but because their control over their emotional life is impaired.”⁷ If the current overstimulation leaves the brain impaired in its vital processes, as has been pointed out above, it follows that the lack of emotional intelligence also impairs the thinking processes which are so important when it comes to accepting and evaluating information. Goleman quotes Dr. Damasio, a neurologist at the University of Iowa, who argues that people who have lost access to their emotional learning are greatly handicapped in their rational decision making. He says: “The emotional brain is as involved in reasoning as is the thinking brain.”⁸

The fascination with computers, which have made life so easy and yet so dependent on machines, has led to a new understanding of the world we live in. It has become so much smaller in human perception, but at the same time it has become more difficult to grasp. “Virtual reality” is not reality, and many young people have no appreciation for reality any more and have difficulty relating to real things and people.⁹ We hail the breathtaking progress that the electronic information highway has brought, and rightly so: it would be wrong (and hypocritical) to denounce it all as bad. However, we cannot close our eyes to the negative effects this development has on people and on their thinking, and consequently on their lives. As already mentioned, science has pointed out that the vast amount of information that is entering the brain every single day is processed and stored in such a way that it becomes increasingly difficult to evaluate it properly.

One important result of this new processing in the new mind has led to a new logic. Classical logic has always maintained that a is not non-a, what Aristotle called the Law of Non-Contradiction. All arguments and propositions that lead to acceptable and livable conclusions are based on that kind of logic. Paul and other biblical writers employed logical reasoning in order to convince others of the correctness of their faith and their belief system. The new logic is prepared to question all of that. A can now be non-a, as long as their contradiction

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid. 28.

⁹ For example, what drives a young Christian girl to give her body measurements and her phone number to a chat partner, somebody she has never seen or heard but is willing to confide in enough to reveal private matters? The computer provides a certain kind of anonymity which protects but also makes for social distance and indifference.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

is not felt too hard in everyday life. This leads to pluralism in the thinking of the individual, not just in a group or church.

All of this naturally ties in with postmodern thinking, which, according to most researchers in the history of philosophy, began with the social revolution at the end of the 1960s. Is it coincidence that according to researchers in the field of behavioral neurobiology those born after 1969 supposedly have the new mind? Could there be a correlation between postmodern philosophy and the way the mind works? As is well known, the most important “unbelief” of postmodernism is that there is no unchanging, ultimate, or absolute truth. “Modernists did not believe the Bible is true. Postmodernists have cast out the category of truth altogether.”¹⁰ Even scientific knowledge is not beyond suspicion any more, since it is “biased and socially constructed. That is, truths are relative and depend on what one’s culture regards as truth.”¹¹ Postmoderns are wary of many things that were hallmarks of the modern age but most of all of anyone who tells them what is right and wrong.¹²

Naturally, “such an epistemic shift to thoroughgoing epistemological relativism”¹³ would have a radical impact on hermeneutics. The issues of the definition of truth and its relation to the cultural context, of the interpreter and the production of meaning, as well as of the authority of Scripture and pluralism have become part and parcel of the postmodern paradigm.

The New Mind and Truth

The question that must be raised now in the context of this paper is: how does the new mind affect the search for truth? How does it relate to biblical doctrine, to spirituality, to Adventism? If it is true that the information overload and the resulting overstimulation has an impact on the reasoning of unbelievers, it would be naive to think that believers are exempt from these issues and problems. Since we do not follow the evolutionist model, we do not hold the view

¹⁰ Gene Edward Veith, Jr., *Loving God with all your Mind* (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1987), 192.

¹¹ David L. Goetz, “The Riddle of Our Postmodern Culture,” *Leadership* 18 (1997): 54.

¹² D. A. Carson, *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 20: “If one cannot talk about the objective truth of the matter, then the interpretations are merely personal or at best culturally conditioned options. No interpretation can be dismissed, and no interpretation can be allowed the status of objective truth. To dismiss an interpretation presupposes you have some criterion to allow you to do so—and if an interpretation is merely one among many possible interpretations, it is pointless to argue for its unique worth or against the equal validity (or nonvalidity!) of another’s interpretation. On the other hand, if you claim the criterion is the truth itself, you betray an old-fashioned bigotry, your enslavement to an eclipsed modernity. You have failed to recognize the subjectivity of all interpretations, the significance of the ‘turn to the subject.’”

¹³ *Ibid.*, 173.

VOGEL: BIBLICAL TRUTH AND NEW MODES OF THINKING

that the neurobiological changes with regard to the brain and the mind should lead to the conclusion that the individual is not to be held responsible for his or her decisions and actions. Rather, the insights from science help us understand better the complex situation the younger generation is facing today; they help us see more clearly the reason why there is such widespread acceptance of opposing and even contradictory views among young people today.

Taking the additional factor of the current postmodern paradigm into consideration, it is no wonder that a new mind, backed by a new world view, would also view biblical faith and Adventism differently than we are used to. A recent article in an independent Adventist magazine speaks of “a fundamental change . . . taking place in the religious and theological needs of younger members of the church . . . [there is] a need to reinterpret the basic tenets and presuppositions of traditional Adventist theology in order to make them meaningful, applicable and relevant to the current social and cultural situation.”¹⁴ The new mind is clearly visible in the following statement: “What does the ideal young adult theology look like? *It is the same as always, but different!*”¹⁵ The author then lists a number of points where he thinks young adult Adventist theology is different. Sincerity and authenticity are extremely important; therefore young adults are more concerned with the principle than the letter of the law. For example, community and fellowship are more important than the notion of breaking the Sabbath. The new mind? It wants to keep the Sabbath as a principle but discards the notion of commitment to biblical truth, even if that means that the very principle of the Sabbath is violated.

According to the author of the article, young adults also care very little about missionizing and converting others to some notion of absolute truth. They are, however, very concerned with social outreach and even desire to share their personal views about religion, “but this desire is not accompanied by the notion that one truth is truer than others. . . . subjectivity is important.”¹⁶ He continues with this insightful statement: “Most of the young adults I know spend little time thinking about traditional Adventist understandings of the imminent end of the world. *Not that they completely discard such teachings, but they simply do not emphasize them.* Apocalyptic scenarios aren’t very helpful for constructing positive ways in which to deal with people on a daily basis.”¹⁷ The new mind? It seriously believes that it is possible to hold on to some doctrine or belief without emphasizing it, which is tantamount to saying it is not important, and therefore it

¹⁴ Rubén René Dupertuis, “Young Adults Make Adventism Their Own,” *Adventist Today* (March-April 1997), 20.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 21 (emphasis supplied).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.* (emphasis supplied).

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

could be discarded! The new mind simply is not willing to fully reflect on things. If it would, and if it would also adhere to some form of classical logic, it would rather quickly arrive at an either-or position.

Young adults also “are more concerned with being fulfilled spiritually than in taking part in traditional church activities.”¹⁸ The same sentiment is borne out in another article about the needs of the younger Adventist generation, in which the author lists “10 things Generation X Adventists want from a Church Worship Experience.”¹⁹ What is most striking is the fact that the list does not contain one single hint to what God wants; it is, rather, a wish list of what humans want from God when they worship Him. The new mind? It is so preoccupied with processing the information overload that it has lost the capability to evaluate the incoming information. Since it is not evaluated, the influx of stimulation breeds the egotistical notion of relevancy: Something can only be good if it feels good and “makes sense.”²⁰ Something that is not relevant is not true.

While rejecting objectivity, postmodernism is more interested in the supernatural, but not on the basis of biblical revelation. There is a different paradigm of spirituality. “The old paradigm taught that if you have the right teaching, you will experience God. The new paradigm says that if you experience God, you will have the right teaching.”²¹

The typical intellectual inconsistency of the new mind can also be seen in the notion of de-emphasizing doctrine while emphasizing spirituality at the same time. One striking phenomenon of the postmodern and pluralistic mindset which is hardly ever noticed is the increasing openness towards spirituality without the foundation of biblical truth. I am not so much referring to the strong influence of New Age and Eastern philosophy, which has replaced many Christian and biblical ideas in the Western world, especially among the generation on the executive floors of national and international corporations. Certainly this has a strong impact on the philosophical landscape and contributes to postmodern thinking, which favors individual experience. However, I am rather thinking of the attempt to dismantle the authority of the Bible and its exclusive truth claim on the one hand and yet to experience spiritual depth in practical terms on the other. This particular attitude is especially noticeable in two of the most prominent

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Steve Daily, “The Lazarus Generation: Listening to and Believing in Generation X,” *Adventist Today* (September-October 1996), 15-16.

²⁰ Dupertuis, 21: “[Young adults’] theology is rooted in the tradition of their forebears but is articulated and *put into practice in a way that makes sense in their time*” (emphasis supplied). It is rather striking to see that this very idea pops up throughout the article; in fact, it is the main point. Of course, those growing up in the seventies believed the same of themselves.

²¹ Leith Anderson, *A church for the Twenty-First Century* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1992), 20, quoted in Veith, 211.

VOGEL: BIBLICAL TRUTH AND NEW MODES OF THINKING

existentialist theologians of our century, Rudolf Bultmann and Paul Tillich. While both of these men took a very critical stand on the Bible—the scope of this paper does not allow for an elaboration here—they both sought deep spiritual experience, so much so that it stunned observers. Bultmann believed until his end that the critical honesty and objective doubts of rationalism, which his father came to embrace while Rudolf was a student,²² could not be separated from the deep inner knowledge of his mother’s pietism.²³ While Tillich rigorously subjected the knowledge of truth and Scripture to his own rational philosophy, he nevertheless delivered powerful sermons from the pulpit, talking as if he believed that the events recounted in Scripture really happened. “Tillich as a preacher is infinitely more faithful to the Word than Tillich the system-builder.”²⁴ Colin Brown concludes: “At bottom there seem to be two Tillichs.”²⁵

This dichotomy is startling and somewhat discomfoting, since it shows that apparently it is possible for the human mind to disassociate an alleged personal faith experience from the faith in the truthfulness of the Bible. I wonder if Bultmann and Tillich should not be reckoned among postmodern thinkers, because their existentialist philosophy, and particularly their dichotomizing, resembles postmodern thought and practice.

The New Mind and the Transmission of Truth and Values

There can be no doubt about the difficulties we are facing when we attempt to minister to the young mind. As we have seen, philosophically and organizationally the new mind is a formidable obstacle to biblical truth, especially because of the rejection of absolutes (postmodernism) and the increasing inability to interconnect information into a whole concept and evaluate that information (the new mind). But there is hope! There is no need to give up in the face of the daunting task to transmit biblical and Adventist values to young people.

I would like to suggest ten points that should be kept in mind:

²² The impact his father’s radical shift from believer to doubter had on Rudolf Bultmann can be seen in the fact that he always remembered the exact date when it happened.

²³ See the account of Bultmann’s life and thought by his student Walter Schmithals, “Wissenschaftliche Wahrhaftigkeit und innere Wahrhaftigkeit: Zum 100. Geburtstag von Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1984),” *Charisma und Institution*, ed. Trutz Rendtorff (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1985), 368-380. Schmithals, on p. 380, also recounts the comment by Bultmann on the last stanza of a well-known German hymn that was sung to him and his wife one evening by several of his students. Repeating the words by heart, Bultmann said that he considered it the most beautiful prayer he knew. The stanza reads in English: “God, make us see your salvation and not trust in earthly things, not follow after vanity; make us simple [in believing] and pious and joyful before you on this earth.”

²⁴ George H. Tavad, *Paul Tillich and the Christian Message* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1962), 139.

²⁵ Colin Brown, *Philosophy and the Christian Faith* (Chicago: InterVarsity Press, 1969), 200.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

1. We have to present biblical truth as a wholistic truth. In recent years doctrines have come into disrepute, many times not even so much because of specific teachings they entail but because we live in an age where doctrine *per se* is viewed as dry, boring, irrelevant, and divisive. People have sadly learned to dichotomize Jesus and theology, love and doctrine. “*Love* is understandable—warm and fuzzy. *Doctrine*, on the other hand, sounds cold, difficult, and demanding.”²⁶ Theology’s bad reputation has caused widespread illiteracy on even basic beliefs among evangelical Christians and Adventists. This ignorance and demise of doctrine has also led to an impoverished spiritual life, since “a person who does not know what is available to him or her does not know enough to seek it out and receive it.”²⁷ Spirituality needs a sound theological foundation, lest it become a shallow and merely mystical experience.

While it is true that this deplorable situation has come about because “we have taught it [doctrine] as a cognitive system of facts about God and have separated it from the most vital issues of life,”²⁸ another and even more significant reason lies in the dichotomy of doctrine and the person of Jesus Christ, which in turn is caused by today’s deterioration of the authority of Scripture and the resultant haphazard use of the Bible in Christian circles. It is little wonder that if something is ripped apart that actually is inseparable, the parts will be deficient if looked at just by themselves and not in relation to the other part. But this is exactly what has happened with Jesus and His doctrines, which in fact are nothing less than the expression of what He really is. Since a Jesus that has been reduced by leaving out the importance of doctrine is a “tame Jesus of love,” an unbiblical notion, the trend to a relativistic and pluralistic theology is encouraged. After all, doctrine does not really matter anymore. Likewise, if doctrine is severed from the person of Jesus Christ, it tends to become a legalistic sledgehammer or the mere plaything of the theologians, ultimately killing the genuine striving for truth and preparing for the inroads of pluralism. The only solution to this dilemma is to return to the biblical understanding of truth, which does not divide between the person of the Creator and Savior and His teachings. The only solution is the return to *wholistic* theology.

2. We should not be afraid to declare with humble boldness that there is indeed something like absolute truth. The relativistic philosophy which is so pervasive in today’s society either denies the existence of absolute truth, i.e., truth

²⁶ J. Stephen Lang, “Is Ignorance Bliss?” *Moody* (January/February 1996): 13 (emphasis his). William C. Placher, “Why bother with theology?,” *Christian Century* 111/4 (1994): 104, concurs: “Theology has a bad reputation in most Christian churches these days—it’s regarded as obscure, hard to understand, irrelevant, a bit of a joke. Congregations want pastors or priests who are good counselors, good administrators, good preachers.”

²⁷ Kenneth Taylor as quoted in Lang, 15.

²⁸ Joseph M. Stowell, “Dealing With the ‘D-Word,’” *Moody* (January/February 1996): 6.

VOGEL: BIBLICAL TRUTH AND NEW MODES OF THINKING

that surpasses time and space and is therefore universally valid, or seriously questions man's capability of grasping it. For many the former is dependent on the latter: if the human mind cannot know absolute truth, it is essentially non-existent. Others would still allow for absolute truth somewhere "out there" while refuting the idea of being able to know what it is.

The Christian claim to exclusive and absolute truth rests on the claim of divine revelation in the person of Jesus Christ and in the inspired Word of God in Scripture. The concept of divine inspiration "commits the believer to the view that these texts are the word of God, they are normative for religious belief, and that what the texts tell us is *true*."²⁹ It has to be acknowledged, of course, that in order to arrive at some reasonable and consistent knowledge of the truth on the basis of Scripture, sound hermeneutical guidelines for its interpretation have to be adopted. These should be in harmony with the basic self-claim of the Scriptures of being God's Word. Therefore, theories of interpretations that are based on the principle of doubt and other critical assumptions fall short in this endeavor.³⁰

It should be noted that in Jesus Christ and Scripture, which testifies of Him (John 5:39), man has received a divine revelation that enables him to know truth as it is. Since man is trapped in sinful finality he will never be able on this earth to come to an exhaustive and comprehensive knowledge of truth. Neither is there any room for an arrogant triumphalism that forgets to humbly recognize that sinful beings are saved by grace. However, this should not lead to the assumption that truth cannot be known at all or that there is no absolute and universal truth. Through the acceptance of Jesus Christ and His word it is possible to know the truth and embrace the genuine freedom that it brings, in contrast to the idea of the autonomous freedom of the mind.

For a knowledge of the truth both are essential: a personal acquaintance with the person of Jesus Christ by accepting Him as the incarnated Word of God and as a personal savior, and also a submission to the authority of the inscripturated Word of God in the Bible. Both testify to the absolute truth. Only if, according to Jesus, "His word abides in you" can His truth be known. This wholistic truth (Jesus and Scripture) has to be received by wholistic man (body, mind and soul). However, in humble recognition of his finality, man should admit that unless he is willing to be initiated into the truth by the One who is the truth, he cannot grasp it.

²⁹ Terry O'Keeffe, "Religion and Pluralism," *Philosophy and Pluralism*, ed. David Archard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 65.

³⁰ For a detailed treatment of proper hermeneutical guidelines see Richard M. Davidson's "Interpreting Scripture: An Hermeneutical Decalogue," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 4/2 (Autumn 1993): 95-114.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

3. If our mind—be in “old” or “new”—is to grasp biblical and divine truth, it is dependent on the only One who can say of Himself: “I am the truth” (John 14:6), and He is also the One who proclaims truth and helps the human mind to grasp it. “For the knowledge of Christ as the Truth, one is dependent on the Holy Scriptures. This knowledge can be appropriated only if one repents and turns to God, who forgives sins, and if one lives as God wants” (see John 7:17)³¹ The very fact that Christ as God is the Truth should make us humble enough to realize that our finite reason is limited, that “spiritual realities elude the reach of human logic alone, that we must be dependent upon the revelation of God’s Word—not our twisted, fallen minds—to discern the truths of an infinite God.”³² When Jesus quoted from Deut 6:4, 5 “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might,” he chose to add: “with all your mind” (Mark 12:30). This would mean that our “whole educational enterprise . . . should be caught up in the desire to love God with all of the mind.”³³ In concrete terms it means that because of human sinfulness, which also affects the mind (Eph 2:3), “sinful reason stands in need of conversion just as the rest of man needs to be renewed. Human beings become truly ‘reasonable’ in the biblical sense when ‘we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ’ (2 Cor 10:5, NASB).”³⁴

At this point I would like to add some practical suggestions:

4. We should never be intimidated by the faulty logic and inconsistency of the new mind. Too often we have given in to the psychological pressure that young minds can put on those who believe in “traditional” or “orthodox” doctrines. We have a wonderful wholistic system of truth to share which is tremendously relevant to the needs of young and old alike. Any notion of an inferiority complex on our part is out of place. Moreover, we should not be overly intrigued by ideas that many times are not much more than the processing of a person’s own biographical past.

³¹ Hendrik M. Vroom, *Religions and the Truth: Philosophical Reflections and Perspectives*, trans. J. W. Rebel (Grand Rapids, MI/Amsterdam: Eerdmans/Editions Rodopi, 1989), 240.

³² Veith, 140.

³³ *Ibid.*, 144-145. He adds: “The whole process of curiosity, questioning, and discovery can be a journey, full of wonder and praise, into the mind of God, who created everything. Whatever can be studied, whether human nature or the physical universe, is what it is because God willed it and made it. To uncover the hidden laws that govern matter, to disclose the patterns of subatomic particles, to discover how human beings grow and interact, to discern an underlying pattern in history or in astronomy—all of these amount to nothing less than discovering God’s will. Just as God is inexhaustible, knowledge is inexhaustible. Our curiosity and understanding can never be fully satisfied in our earthly lives. As thirst is evidence for water, our yearning for knowledge points to Heaven, in which all desires will be fully satisfied . . . (1 Corinthians 13:12)” (145).

³⁴ Frank M. Hasel, “Theology and the Role of Reason,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 4/2 (1993): 184.

VOGEL: BIBLICAL TRUTH AND NEW MODES OF THINKING

5. We should not take the new mind, or any mind for that matter, as the starting point for our theology or practical living. Sometimes it seems that we have been trying to win the favor of young adults at all costs, even the cost of truth.

6. We should lovingly but consistently bring to bear on the mind the clear orientation of biblical authority. It is true that many times young people have had to witness gross inconsistencies on the part of the preceding generations, and their sensors are finetuned to pick up any such dichotomies. In typical youthful zeal they tend to throw the baby out with the bathwater. However, we have to educate them that it is not fair to use these faults of others as an argument to discard traditional truths and values altogether. We have to demonstrate consistency in our own lives and give ample evidence that to follow the biblical mandates is to have life in its fulness.

7. We should work towards the conversion of the mind and not only the conversion of the heart. This can be done by lovingly accepting the young adult as he or she is. After all, the current generation is “a generation dominated by technology, half of them are divorced, one in three were abused, and it is the most aborted generation ever.”³⁵ By God’s grace and personal contact it will be possible to see converted hearts *and* minds.

8. We should teach our children from their earliest days that what is true is more important than what is relevant. We should also tell them that truth may not appear relevant at first sight, but will reveal its relevancy to the honest and serious seeker.

9. We must always be aware of the fact that biblical truth and Adventist faith and practice form a counter-culture to the prevalent culture and its subsets. This is especially true for the subculture of the young, which is characterized by MTV, substance abuse, and a deterioration of moral values. If we cave in to their ideas, which are clearly shaped by that culture, we are in danger of losing the contours of our distinct Adventist worldview and lifestyle practice, which are superior to anything this world can offer.

10. We should never give up in our attempt to demonstrate how a consistent biblical lifestyle can help change the mind. Abstinence from certain practices can work wonders. The information overload has to be reduced. This would provide the space for something that is not too popular among the young but nevertheless very essential: the need to think about and reflect one’s ideas and actions. The new mind does not like to think, because it is busy with processing the information overload and therefore does not find it easy to judge and evaluate. We have to challenge young minds with the idea that the Creator has given

³⁵ Norman R. Gulley, “The Fall of Athens and the Challenge of Postmodernity,” Unpublished Paper, 15.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

them the ability to think, and they should use it to their own good. It is simply too cheap to live without reflection on how one should live. Anyone who is waiting lives differently. We profess to be waiting for Jesus Christ to return and take us home. If we are truly waiting, we will live differently.

Conclusion

We have seen that we are faced with a daunting and challenging task. The challenge and the task can be summarized in this way:

1. Information overload and postmodern thinking have bred a new mind which is less and less capable of grasping biblical truth. Logical and consistent thinking have become more and more difficult, and the new mind is less able to evaluate in a wholistic fashion the information that is being processed. The increasing lack of emotional intelligence leaves the frightening prospect of people who have high IQs but very little good judgment to cope with life and its complex issues.

2. All of this has a tremendous impact on the way biblical and Adventist truth and values are processed and evaluated. The new mind, together with the new relativistic and pluralistic philosophy of the *Zeitgeist*, is less willing to humbly accept truth from divine revelation. The growing suspicion towards institutionalized Christianity and the emphasis on the relevancy of faith rather than on its truth make it hard for the younger generation to take the Bible and its claims seriously. The frequent inability to see the total sum of all the facets and thus the uniqueness of the Adventist message leads to a deplorable shallowness in the understanding of what Adventism is all about.

3. The challenge that is posed by the new mind can be met by the faithful adherence to the clear truth of Jesus Christ and His word. The following counsel by Vernon Grounds sums it all up very well:

It is our privileged task, our holy task, our awesome task, to guard his [Jesus'] truth zealously and transmit it without adulteration to our own generation and on to many generations that may follow us. Obviously we are unable to do this by ourselves. We can only do it by prayerful dependence upon the Holy Spirit and with sincerest humility. We can do this only as we entreat the Holy Spirit to lead us personally into a deepening understanding of that truth. For it is only as the truth enlightens our minds, possesses our hearts, and is incarnated in our lives that we can perform this task. And above all, we must be willing to stand rocklike in the midst of the truth-denying, truth-adulterating currents of our day. We must try prayerfully not to become bigots and yet meekly endure the accusation of bigotry. We must try prayerfully not to be fanatics and yet meekly endure the accusation of fanaticism. We must try prayerfully not to be narrow-minded and yet meekly endure the accusation of narrow-mindedness. As trustees of God's truth we must exercise our Spirit-guided judg-

VOGEL: BIBLICAL TRUTH AND NEW MODES OF THINKING

ment as to what teaching, what doctrine and what theology is not in alignment with God's truth, pointing out where it deviates from the Biblical norm. Prayerfully we must guard ourselves against pharasaic self-righteousness and proud exclusivism. . . .

Prayerfully we must guard ourselves against becoming overly judgmental, labeling individuals who do not agree with us in every jot and tittle of theology as heretics as if we were in a position to pass sentence on their motives. We must nevertheless serve God faithfully as trustees of his truth. And in doing that, despite the heavy burden of our responsibility, we will experience the blessing of living in the light, the joy and the hope of God's truth, the truth that makes us free indeed.³⁶

³⁶ Vernon Grounds, "The Truth about Truth," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 38/2 (1995): 228.

Journal of the Adventist Theological Society, 9/1–2 (1998): 128–140.
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Suffering Many Things

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And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years,
and had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent
all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse,
. . . (Mark 5:25–26).

[The following paper was a plenary address at the Jerusalem Bible Conference.]

You may have read about the experience of Ellen Dipenaar, a dedicated Christian who lived in South Africa several years ago, who came down with leprosy and was sent to a leprosarium. While she was receiving treatment, her only son died of polio, her husband succumbed to cancer, and her sister died in a car accident. As if this was not enough, she discovered that growths on her legs were gangrenous, a condition that led to amputation. Saddest of all, when her doctor prescribed eye-drops, the nurse who administered the medication made a serious mistake: instead of eye-drops, she administered acid—a mistake that led to Ellen’s blindness!

Crucial Questions. I think of many faithful Seventh-day Adventists around the world who are “suffering many things” on account of their faith. *Why is it that sometimes when one makes a commitment to be faithful to Christ, one’s situation goes from bad to worse?*

I think of Adventists who are in prison, or who have lost their jobs because they would not compromise their biblical convictions through Sabbath work, lying, or fighting in their tribes’ or nations’ wars. I think of Adventist refugees who are starving to death in troubled regions of the world because they will not eat unclean foods, sometimes the only available provision to keep themselves alive. I think of Adventists who have been disowned by their families, divorced by their spouses, and killed by their neighbors because of their religious convictions.

Where is God when His children “suffer many things”? What should Christians do when, after taking a stand for God, things go from bad to worse? A par-

KORANTENG-PIPIM: SUFFERING MANY THINGS

tial answer to these perplexing questions may be found in Mark 5. This chapter in the gospel of Mark may well be described as a chapter of sorrows.

Mark 5: A Chapter of Sorrows

Mark 5 begins with the painful account of a man living in a tomb, possessed by evil spirits. Another man emerges from his house broken-hearted because his only daughter is seriously ill. Then we are told of a woman who, for twelve years, has been slowly bleeding to death. Finally, we are taken into a home where a young girl lies dead.

Mark 5 is a chapter of sorrows, describing individuals who are “suffering many things”—demon possession; sudden, acute illness; chronic, incurable illness; poverty; ridicule and scorn; and death.

We will focus on verses 21 to 43. In this passage, the account of the woman with an issue of blood is intricately woven together with Jairus’s experience.

Structure of Mark 5:21-43. The passage divides into three distinct parts:

Part I (vs. 21-24) begins on a note of urgency, with an emergency in the house of Jairus, who comes to Jesus, asking Him to heal his dying daughter (cf. Luke 8:42—“only” daughter). Jesus responds immediately. As He heads towards the home of Jairus, a large crowd goes with Him.

Part II (vs. 25-34) opens abruptly with a shift from the emergency situation of Jairus to an anonymous woman with an issue of blood. Her arrival on the scene causes a delay in the journey to the home of Jairus. For twelve years this woman has unsuccessfully tried everything. Finally, she decides to go to Jesus by pressing through the crowd and touching the hem of His garment. Just then, Jesus asks what seems to the disciples to be a rather ridiculous question: “Who touched my clothes?” At Christ’s persistence, the woman confesses what has happened, and Jesus encourages her to go home in peace.

In Part III (vs. 35-43) the narrative shifts back to Jairus. Messengers from his house arrive with the bad news of the child’s death. Jesus ignores the news, urges Jairus to have faith, and goes to his home with Peter, James and John. Despite the scorn and ridicule of professional mourners, Jesus raises the dead child back to life and charges the parents not to publicize the miracle.

We see that the passage focuses on Jairus, shifts to the woman, and finally moves back to Jairus. It sandwiches one story (the woman’s) within another story (Jairus’s). Inasmuch as the passage begins and concludes with Jairus, we can say that Jairus is the principal focus of the entire passage. However, the key to understanding his story lies in the story of the woman with an issue of blood. This “Story Within the Story” offers valuable lessons on what we must do when, after taking a stand for Jesus, our situations go from bad to worse.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

A Closer Look at “The Story Within the Story”

A casual reading of Mark 5:21-43 reveals some general parallels between the two stories of Jairus and the woman: both have desperate needs; both go to Jesus for help; and both are helped by Jesus. However, when we study the two accounts more closely, we discover some interesting contrasts:

1. *Names.* Whereas Jairus is identified by name, the woman’s name is not given; she is simply identified as “a certain woman” (v. 25). Thus, we have a prominent, well-known person and an anonymous, unknown individual.

2. *Condition.* The woman’s condition may be described as chronic (she has battled an incurable illness for twelve years). On the other hand, Jairus’s daughter’s situation is acute (a sudden terminal illness that will soon lead to her death).

3. *Time/Duration.* The woman has suffered in her condition for twelve years. This is also the age of Jairus’s daughter (we are told that “she was of the age of twelve years,” v. 42). In other words, the year in which the child is born is the exact year in which the woman begins bleeding! Thus, while Jairus’s daughter experiences twelve years of vitality and health, the woman suffers twelve years of continuous dying. Jairus experiences twelve years of joy and hope; the woman suffers twelve years of deterioration and despair.

4. *Religious Status.* Jairus is a ruler of the synagogue. But the woman, because of her issue of blood, would be an outcast of the synagogue, for according to Leviticus 15:25-33 and Numbers 4, the woman’s condition makes her unclean, and any contact with others makes them too unclean.

5. *Social/Economic status.* The woman is economically handicapped, having spent all that she has on many physicians. But Jairus is a man of means, with servants and social respectability.

6. *Options.* For the woman, Jesus is the *last* resort. She has unsuccessfully tried other remedies and options. But apparently, for Jairus, Jesus is His *first* choice; he goes straight to Jesus when his child takes ill.

7. *Advocate.* The woman has no one to plead her case with Jesus, so she has to go herself. Jairus serves as a mouthpiece to plead the case for his daughter.

8. *Manner of Coming.* The woman comes to Jesus secretly, anonymously. But Jairus comes to Jesus publicly and openly.

9. *Direction of Approach.* The woman approaches Jesus from behind (v. 27), falling later at His feet at the end of her encounter with Him. On the other hand, Jairus comes to Jesus face to face, falling at Jesus feet at the beginning of his encounter.

10. *Result of Delay.* Because of Jesus’s delay in going to Jairus’s home, the woman is healed. But because of the delay, Jairus’s daughter dies.

11. *Word from Jesus.* Jesus speaks to the woman only after the *good* news of her healing. But He speaks to Jairus in the text only after the *bad* news of the child’s death.

KORANTENG-PIPIM: SUFFERING MANY THINGS

12. *Testimonies.* Though the woman comes to Jesus secretly, her healing is made public. On the other hand, though Jairus comes publicly to Jesus, the healing of his child is to be kept secret (v. 43).

The above differences and similarities in the two stories help us understand why Mark sandwiches the story of the woman within that of Jairus. Later we will return to consider the significance of the differences. Now we will focus on Jairus.

The Trial of Jairus Faith

Jairus exercises great faith when he comes publicly to Jesus, an unpopular decision that could cost him his job as a ruler of the synagogue. He could come to Jesus secretly like the woman or like Nicodemus, another ruler of the synagogue (John 3). But Jairus takes a stand for the Man of Galilee. He recognizes that the Man who associates with sinners and tax collectors is none other than the Messiah.

Jairus has come to a point in his life where nothing, not even his social standing, job, or wealth, matters to him more than one simple fact: his child is dying. Only a Savior can save her. Every other earthly consideration pales into insignificance. Thus, he makes a costly decision for Christ. He *does* right because it *is* right and leaves the consequences to God. And God always honors those who take a stand with Him, regardless of foreboding circumstances.

Christ rewards this faith by immediately setting out to Jairus's house. But since every true faith requires public testing, Jairus's faith is also tried. Notice how Jesus allows Jairus's faith to be tested.

Delay by the crowd. Jesus is on a life and death errand—an emergency situation in Jairus's home—and the crowd impedes his movement. Jesus could drive away the throng that surrounds him (v. 21). But He chooses not to do so. Later on, when the child dies, Christ sends away the crowd (cf. v. 37). But now, when we expect Him to do something about the crowd which is jostling and obstructing His movement, Christ does nothing about it!

Can you imagine the driver of an ambulance caught in traffic and yet refusing to sound his sirens? Can you imagine how Jairus feels when the crowd delays the movement of Jesus to his home?

Why does the Lord often delay when we trust Him with our urgent cases?

Silence of Jesus. Jairus experiences another trial. Notice that besides not asking the crowd to give way, Jesus also does not speak a word of encouragement to Jairus, assuring him that all will be well. Instead, Jesus allows his movement to be interrupted by the woman (v.25-34).

Why does the Lord often allow our cherished plans to be interrupted? Why does the Lord speak to others, but not to Jairus? Why does He sometimes seem to care about others, while appearing indifferent to our plight? And worse still, why does Jesus stop and ask a seemingly pointless question: "Who touched my clothes?" (v. 30)?

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

To the disciples this is not logical, since Jesus has been jostled and touched by a host of individuals (v.31). The fact, however, remains that what Jesus says may not always be logical to our rational minds. It is illogical to insist that we should never lie, steal, kill, or break any of God's Ten Commandments to save life. The Christian does not always operate on human logic, but faith in God and His Word. We are urged: "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths" (Prov 3:5, 6).

But the question still remains: *Why is it that when we put our trust in the Lord He sometimes allows our plans to be interrupted? Why does the Lord seem silent to us when, at the same time, He appears to pay attention to others? Why does He call on others while He appears to pass us by?*

To Jairus, the delay by the crowd, the interruption by the woman, and Christ's silence and stopping is a real trial of his faith. I can imagine Jairus saying to himself: "Master, if we continue delaying my child will die! Our immediate mission is to assist a dying girl. Why are you concerned about the insignificant question about who touched your clothes? Further delay will be catastrophic."

But Jesus still delays.

Further Delay by the Woman. Jesus looks in the direction of the woman and speaks to her (v. 32, 34), but not a word to Jairus. Can you imagine what is going through Jairus's mind? I can hear him saying to himself: "Lord, this woman's situation is chronic, not an emergency like mine!"

In verse 33 we read that, "in fear and trembling," the woman falls at Christ feet and tells all. She is afraid because: she has broken the rules of the Torah (God's law) regarding ritual uncleanness, and by touching Jesus, she fears, she has made Him ritually unclean (Num 5:1-4; cf. Lev 15:25ff.). Even worse, she is asked to acknowledge her uncleanness in the presence of a leader of her local synagogue. Besides the courage such a step would involve, Jesus is asking her to do something humiliating: talk about her problem in front of men. It is one thing for a woman to discuss this kind of problem with other women; it is another to declare the uncleanness before a large crowd, including the disciples of Christ and the ruler of the synagogue.

Meanwhile, as the woman tells "all the truth" (v. 33), Jairus waits impatiently. Can you imagine what telling "all the truth" (v. 33) entailed? I can hear the woman saying to Jesus:

Master, when my problem started, I thought it was my normal monthly period. But this prolonged beyond the regular time. Therefore, I consulted with my family doctor, who also referred me to some brilliant Jewish specialists in a leading Tel-Aviv hospital. When the specialists were unable to do anything about the situation, I was encouraged to try some alternative or non-traditional (read as New Age) medicine—acupuncture, hypnotism, yoga, biofeedback, homeopathy, massage therapy, therapeutic

KORANTENG-PIPIM: SUFFERING MANY THINGS

touch, etc. These were no help either. Then I heard that I should go and swim in the Dead Sea. I tried it, but it didn't work. Some friends of mine also urged me to try some African and Indian herbs. These helped a little bit. But I soon realized the situation was getting worse. Then I was told by some TV evangelist that by touching the TV screen the demons causing my ailment would be cast out. Master, I even sent a thanks offering ("seed of faith money") to the televangelist. But it did not help. My health insurance has been cancelled; I have exhausted my entire pension and social security funds; I am currently on welfare and food stamps.

The Bible simply says that the woman "came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth." While she tells "all the truth," Jairus is seemingly ignored by Christ. Jesus

patiently listens and gives encouragement to the woman: "Daughter, your faith [not your superstitious touch of my garment] has saved you; go in peace." But not a word to Jairus.

From Bad to Worse. Just then messengers from Jairus's home arrive with bad news: "Thy daughter is dead" (v. 35). We can imagine Jairus saying to himself: "I told You so! I knew that with all these delays, it would come to this."

Have you ever heard those words?

"Your loved one is dead!"

"Your job is ended!"

"Your career is over!"

"Your future is hopeless!"

"Your marriage is over!"

"Your cancer is terminal!"

Often, these cruel words come when you've just committed or rededicated your life to Christ. The verdict is announced when you're trying to do what is right, such as getting out of an immoral relationship, or returning a faithful tithe.

Why is it that when you are trying to do the right thing, things go from bad to worse? You do your best to honor God's Sabbath, only to lose your job; you try to do God's will and your husband threatens divorce; you try to tell the truth under dire circumstances and you are fired from your job.

Have you ever experienced that? Have you ever been told: "Yours is a hopeless case. Don't waste Christ's time"? Jairus experiences this when he is told: "Your daughter is dead. Do not trouble the Master."

More Trials. But Christ's words and actions after the bad news may test the faith of Jairus even more. Observe that when the situation becomes hopeless, Jesus speaks some strange words to Jairus: "Be not afraid . . . only believe [i.e. keep on believing]" (v. 36).

To us, this may sound hopeful, but we know how the story ends. Think of how it sounds to Jairus to be told, "Be not afraid." Afraid? What is there to fear

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

now? The worst has occurred. And believe? What is there to believe? The girl is dead!

Someone has said that whenever God says, “Don’t be afraid,” it is time to start worrying, because He is about to ask you to do the impossible (think of Abraham, Moses, Gideon, Jeremiah, Mary).

But *whenever Jesus says “Be not afraid,” that command is also a promise.* It is estimated that there are some 365 “Fear Nots” in the Bible—at least one for each day’s need. Therefore, when we’re told, “It is finished,” Jesus says, “Fear not. It is the beginning.” When we’re told, “I’m sorry, that’s the end,” Jesus says “Fear not. It’s not the end; it is to be continued.”

The real question for us to answer is: Do we trust God enough to believe in His word? Do we believe that He knows what is best? Do we believe He has power to save—even in difficult situations?

Those words of Jesus, “Be not afraid . . . only believe,” are calculated to encourage Jairus so he does not give up. For just then, Jesus does another strange thing: He drives away the crowd, save Peter, James, and John. Why does he now send away the crowd? Why does He choose to do so now that all is lost? Why hasn’t Christ sent away the crowd earlier, when there was hope for the child’s healing?

Perhaps Jesus is teaching Jairus that God’s ways are not our ways. His timing is always the best. All we have to do at all times is to trust Him.

Trials at Home. The trial of Jairus is not over when he nears home (v. 38-40). He is greeted by the weeping of mourners, confirming that indeed, the child is dead. What will Jesus do now that the situation has gone from bad to worse?

Speaking to Jairus, whose faith is then wavering, Jesus declares that the child is not dead but only sleeping. You see, though death is the most hopeless condition in this life, Jesus calls it “sleep.” And if death is simply “sleep,” then there is hope for the most hopeless situation. That’s why we are to be “faithful unto death.” And this is why we must not attempt to save our jobs, positions, or even our lives at the cost of our obedience to the One who calls death merely sleep.

But Jairus’s faith is to be tried one last time. At the words of Jesus that the child is not dead but asleep, the mourners stop their weeping and laugh Him to scorn. Their ridicule is not so much directed at Christ as it is at Jairus. The funeral professionals seemed to say: “What does this man think? Doesn’t he know the difference between death and sleep? And, you Jairus, is this the kind of person on whom you are willing to stake your career and child’s life?”

Have you ever experienced ridicule, derision, or scorn on account of your faith? Have you experienced ridicule from the experts, the specialists, family, friends, church members—people who should know better? And have you ever wondered why the wicked mock the righteous? Jairus goes through that experience. Perhaps he asks: *Why does the Lord delay in times of emergency? Why*

KORANTENG-PIPIM: SUFFERING MANY THINGS

does He keep silent when His children need to hear from Him? Why does He allow other people to interrupt the plans of His children? Why does the Lord allow things to go from bad to worse? And why does He permit enemies to subject His children to scorn and ridicule?

Reward of Faith

The Good News is that in all such trials, Jesus is always very near. If we remain faithful He will honor our faith—even as He does for Jairus. For in verse 41, we are told that the One who once stood at Lazarus' tomb and said "Come forth" now goes to Jairus's daughter's room, takes the child by the hand and commands: "TALITHA CUMI." Jesus speaks in Aramaic, but Mark translates His words into Greek, and that Greek is emphatic. He literally says: "Little girl, *It is I who says unto thee, arise*"

—Some may say that you are dead, but "I say unto thee, arise."

—Others may say that your case is hopeless, but "I am the resurrection and the life. I say unto thee, arise."

—Some may tell you your future is ended, but "I am the alpha and omega. I say unto thee, arise."

—Others may think that I am delaying and silent, but "I am He that died and am alive. I say unto thee, arise."

—Some may think there is no way out, but "I am the way, the truth and the life. I say unto thee, arise."

—Others may think that no power on earth can save your situation, but "All power is given unto me. I say unto thee, arise."

The same Jesus who brings life out of death can transform our hopeless situations today. Our responsibility is to remain faithful, no matter what.

Perhaps we may be asking what Jesus is seeking to teach by the delay, silence, bad news, and scorn? Consider four possible reasons:

Divine Timing. One reason is to teach something about the mystery of Divine timing. Despite what may appear as a delay or interruption in our plans and expectations, to the child of God, God's timing is never late.

Never talk about delay, unless you know God's arrival time. We cannot speak about a delay when we talk about the second coming of Christ. This is because Jesus has not given us His arrival time. And neither can we talk about delay with regard to God's plan for our lives unless we fully know what He is seeking to do in our lives. Since God's time never knows a delay, we must always trust Him, no matter how long it may seem to us.

To all who are reaching out to feel the guiding hand of God, the moment of greatest discouragement is the time when divine help is nearest (*The Desire of Ages*, 528).

Jesus sees the end from the beginning. In every difficulty He has His way prepared to bring relief. Our heavenly Father has a thousand ways to provide for us, of which we know nothing. Those

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

who accept the one principle of making the service and honor of God supreme, will find perplexities vanish and a plain path before their feet (*The Desire of Ages*, 330).

When in faith we take hold of His strength, he will change, wonderfully change, the most hopeless, discouraging outlook. He will do this for the glory of His name (*Prophets and Kings*, 260).

Nature of True Faith. Another lesson Jesus was teaching was that true faith steps forward regardless of humiliation, intimidation, scorn, or even loss. It is the nature of true faith to take a stand—even in the face of obstacles. One cannot secretly hold to faith. Faith requires public testing—it calls for a public stand regardless of consequences.

The woman with an issue of blood takes a courageous and humiliating step of faith when she steps forward publicly to talk about her uncleanness. Jairus takes a courageous step of faith when he decides to come to Jesus publicly—even amidst derision.

We must also dare to take a stand for Christ and His truth, no matter what. If teachers can't take a stand for unpopular theological truth, how will our students do so? If pastors and church leaders are unwilling to take unpopular stands, how can they expect their members and churches to do so? If parents are unprepared to honor the Lord, how can their children be expected to make decisions of faith for the Lord?

The days in which we live call for men and women who dare to stand for truth, regardless of consequences. Ellen G. White writes

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 (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 634).

True Christian principle will not stop to weigh consequences. It does not ask, What will people think of me if I do this? or, How will it affect my worldly prospects if I do that? (*The Sanctified Life*, 39).

Christ's ambassadors have nothing to do with consequences. They must perform their duty, and leave results with God (*The Great Controversy*, 609-610).

"It is better to die than to sin; better to want [be in need] than to defraud; better to hunger than to lie" (*Testimonies for the Church*, 4:495).

Reward for Faithfulness. Jesus was also teaching that divine blessing will always attend those who are faithful to the Lord. He will never fail anyone who puts trusts in Him.

Those who take Christ at His word, and surrender their souls to His keeping, their lives to His ordering, will find peace and quietude. Nothing of the world can make them sad when Jesus makes them glad by His presence (*Desire of Ages*, 331).

KORANTENG-PIPIM: SUFFERING MANY THINGS

Those who surrender their lives to His guidance and His service will never be placed in a position for which He has not made provision. Whatever our situation, if we are doers of His word, we have a Guide to direct our way; whatever our perplexity, we have a sure Counselor; whatever our sorrow, bereavement, or loneliness, we have a sympathizing Friend (*The Ministry of Healing*, 248-249).

Not Alone in Suffering. Perhaps the most important reason why Jesus allows the faith of Jairus to be tried is to instruct him through the experience of the woman. Though Jairus's ordeal is bitter, he was not alone in his pain. There is another person also suffering, and for twelve years. Sometimes our trials are designed to help us appreciate others. Pain makes us more sympathetic; disappointment makes us more humble; and hardship keeps us dependent on God.

Jesus is teaching Jairus from the experience of the woman. It is here that the contrasting characteristics we identified earlier between the woman and Jairus become most helpful. If Jesus is able to help the woman's hopeless case, what about Jairus?

—If Jesus can help the woman's chronic disease (twelve years of dying), what about Jairus's daughter's recent illness after twelve years of full life?

—If Jesus can help a woman without a name, what about a person who has a name (Jairus)?

—If Jesus can help an outcast of the synagogue, what about a ruler of the synagogue?

—If Jesus can help a woman who comes secretly, what about Jairus who comes publicly?

—If Jesus can help a woman has no intercessor, no advocate, what about Jairus's child, whose father is her advocate?

—If Jesus can help a woman who comes from behind and superstitiously touches His garment, what about Jairus, who exercises true faith by coming face to face with Christ, kneeling and pleading?

—If Jesus can help a woman who who comes to Jesus as a last resort, what about Jairus, who apparently makes Jesus his first choice?

—If the one who makes a silent request can bear public testimony, what about Jairus, who makes his request in public?

Jesus does not needlessly delay, keep silent, or utter ridiculous or strange words. It is Christ's design to instruct Jairus. This is, perhaps, the most important message contained in "the story within the story": If Jesus did it for the woman, how much more would He not do for Jairus?

Some Lessons for Us Today

What lessons can we draw from "the story within the story"? First, all of us have feel pain. Ours may be similar to Jairus's. Perhaps it is a loved one (child, husband, wife, parents, sister, relative, friend) who is in some serious difficulty. Or it may be that our situation is similar to the woman. We are the one actually

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

bleeding to death. Perhaps it is our health, finances, or family situation that is slowly but hopelessly bleeding.

Whatever our situation, we must go to Jesus with our burdens. We may choose to go to Him like the woman—secretly in the closets of our homes, or silently and anonymously in church (as did Hannah, the mother of Samuel, 1 Samuel 1:9-17). Or we may choose to go to Jesus like Jairus—openly in church or prayer meeting, during the time for prayer requests.

Another lesson we learn is that we must not fear taking a stand for Jesus. The times in which we live call for men and women who dare to risk all for Jesus' sake. If we do not stand up for something, we shall fall for anything. Fear of censure from our critics and fear of losing our jobs should not prevent us from doing the right thing. Neither should we wait until retirement before declaring where we stand on issues. Both the woman and Jairus take risks. And so must we.

Often the follower of Christ is brought where he cannot serve God and carry forward his worldly enterprises. Perhaps it appears that obedience to some plain requirement of God will cut off his means of support. Satan would make him believe that he must sacrifice his conscientious convictions. But the only thing in our world upon which we can rely is the word of God. . . . Matt. 6:33. Even in this life it is not for our good to depart from the will of our Father in heaven. When we learn the power of His word, we shall not follow the suggestions of Satan in order to obtain food or to save our lives. 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*, 121).

Finally, when we take a stand for the Lord and He seems to delay, and our prospects grow darker and darker, we are still to trust Him. Each of us should say with Job: "Though he slays me, yet will I trust in him" (Job 13:15). With the three Hebrew children, we must be able to say: "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. *But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up*" (Dan 3:17-18).

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 (*Prophets and Kings*, 513).

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

KORANTENG-PIPIM: SUFFERING MANY THINGS

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 (*Prophets and Kings* 512-513).

Appeal

Perhaps it appears that the Lord is delaying in answering your prayers.

—You have asked for light, but all you experience is darkness.

—You have asked for health, but you are experiencing more sickness.

—You have asked the Lord for companionship in life, but you are still experiencing loneliness.

—You have asked Him for success, but you see only failure.

—You have asked Him for deliverance, yet you know only distress.

—You have asked him to clear your name, but no one seems to vindicate you.

—You have asked for life, but death is what you get.

“The story within the story” tells us that when you take a stand for Jesus and things go from bad to worse, you are still to trust Him, even if He delays, and even if your plans are interrupted.

When you are told that because of your faith, “your daughter is dead,” tell them she is only asleep; she will rise again.

When you are told “your future is finished,” tell them that your future is in God’s hands, and that He has better plans for your life. What may seem like the end may very well be the beginning of real life.

When you are told that your prospects are bleak, tell them that as long as Jesus lives there is hope.

And when you are ridiculed and told, “don’t trouble the Master,” “it’s a waste of time,” and “there’s no hope,” tell them that no one who goes to Jesus is ever a “trouble” to Him.

There is hope for every one of us who makes a decision of faith to serve the Lord and do His will. Therefore, in all our afflictions, sorrows, pains, let us go to Jesus, and in the words of that familiar hymn plead: “Pass me not, Oh gentle Savior; Hear my humble cry. While on others Thou art calling, do not pass me by.”

Your situation may be desperate. You may have experienced sorrow after sorrow, trouble after trouble. You may have lost your health, wealth, job, friend, or family. You may have been misunderstood or persecuted. Whatever your situation, remember that it was this same situation that Jesus deals with when He meets Jairus and the woman. Someone has said: “Every sorrow is a summons to us to go to Jesus.”

Therefore, when Jesus appears to delay, when He seems silent, or when things go from bad to worse, we must still keep trusting Him. Everything will be all right in the long run.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

The Elder Brother of our race is by the eternal throne. He looks upon every soul who is turning his face toward Him as the Savior. He knows by experience what are the weaknesses of humanity, what are our wants, and where lies the strength of our temptations; for He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. He is watching over you, trembling child of God. Are you tempted? He will deliver. Are you weak? He will strengthen. Are you ignorant? He will enlighten. Are you wounded? He will heal. The Lord 'tellethe the number of the stars;' and yet 'He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.' Ps. 147:4, 3. 'Come unto Me,' is His invitation. Whatever your anxieties and trials, spread out your case before the Lord. Your spirit will be braced for endurance. The way will be opened for you to disentangle yourself from embarrassment and difficulty. The weaker and more helpless you know yourself to be, the stronger will you become in His strength. The heavier your burdens, the more blessed the rest in casting them upon the Burden Bearer (*The Desire of Ages*, 329).

May the Lord help us to *remain faithful*, even if we have to "suffer many things." This is my prayer for each one.

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Faith Under Pressure: The Sabbath as Case Study

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[The following paper was a plenary address at the Jerusalem Bible Conference.]

The Adventist insight into the cosmic conflict provides us unusual advantage in understanding why such antipathy surges around us between God's ways and what often is favored by our culture. A review of the experience of Sabbath-keepers in the past will help us learn what to anticipate in the future, and not only with the Sabbath, but other of God's truths as well.

All of us are sadly familiar with persistent conflicts in human relations, whether interpersonal, family, intra-societal, inter-societal, or, in this century, massive, continent-wide conflicts. A similarly checkered career has marked God's great revealed truths. Each can be traced, one by one, through the valley of the shadow, only to be elevated in another setting.

Sabbath in Hebrew Scriptures. It is remarkable how little discussion of the Sabbath is found in the Hebrew Scriptures. Contrast, for example, the ample attention given to themes such as idolatry. The Sabbath is given at Creation, where it is the crowning act of God, tied directly to the concept of His rest. In fact its observance is not fleshed out in detail, although since the Creator Himself is introducing it to His newly fashioned human creatures, we can assume with confidence that His introduction was a thorough one. We can only imagine what means God employed in orienting the new humans to a totally fresh existence. The Sabbath was a part of it.

Mention of the Sabbath does not occur in the Flood narrative or the Abraham/Isaac/Jacob/Joseph reports, even though it must have been an element in God's revealed plan. We are told that Abraham kept God's charge, commandments, statutes, and laws (Gen 26:5). Just how God's people fared under circumstances unfavorable to Sabbath observance, such as Joseph in Potiphar's service, we are not told.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

With the Exodus the Sabbath comes to the forefront. Manna is given every day with exception of the Sabbath, with explicit instructions about how to relate to it (Ex 16). The law with its Sabbath commandment is given at Sinai, with additional incidents and laws relating to the Sabbath. Deuteronomy traces the reintroduction of the Sabbath back to the Exodus experience. Of course there are additional references to the Sabbath, but long gaps in Hebrew history pass without reference to it. However it is clear that the Sabbath remains a part of the covenant walk with God, designed as a blessing to God's people. At times it appears to have been reduced to ritual formality, a hindrance to ambitious plans, often not good, compelled to wait until sunset to be resumed. Nehemiah insists that the Sabbath be restored among those who returned from the Exile, and there is no question that it remains a part of God's plan (Neh 13:15-22). As a general observation, however, its profile remains unexpectedly low.

Sabbath as Case Study. In the New Testament we find frequent references to the Sabbath because the way it is to be observed became a matter of controversy. At times Jesus seemed to cooperate with the prevailing patterns governing Sabbath observance, at other times deliberately to provoke controversy in order to teach a new understanding of its purpose. Cases of these two are easily seen. Sabbath passages occur especially in the Gospels and Acts, much less so in the Pauline and general epistles. The reference to the Lord's day in Revelation (1:10), although debated, should best be interpreted in light of previous clear usage of the term, where it refers to the Sabbath, rather than the later application to Sunday found in the church fathers.

Jewish-Christian Relations. The hostility between Jews and early Christians reported in the New Testament appears to stem from Jewish leaders, not the common people. The Gospel of John outlines this most clearly, although its frequent reference to "the Jews" is interpreted by some as Johannine bias against all Jewish people. This idea appears to be read into the context, however, for John cites no cases of hostility by the ordinary populace. The clashes arise from rabbinic and priestly leaders. As a historical report of the early church, the book of Acts reports numerous clashes.¹ There is increasing exclusion of Christians from the synagogues, also noted in Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians (I Thess 2:14-16). Christian responses were sometimes provocative, such as the assertion that in no other name can salvation be obtained (Acts 4:12).

Based on the extant evidence, it appears that many Christians, particularly those of Jewish ancestry, continued to attend Sabbath worship in synagogues. These appear in the New Testament as a party continuing practice of the Jewish laws, of which the Sabbath remained a keystone. The Jerusalem Conference (Acts 15) was called to meet certain issues raised by this group, and we find Paul addressing them directly in his epistles to the Galatians and Romans.

¹ Acts 13:50; 14:5, 19; 17:5, 13; 18:13; 19:9; 20:3; 23:12; 24:1-9.

REID: FAITH UNDER PRESSURE: THE SABBATH AS CASE STUDY

Relations between Jewish-Christians and the Jewish community continued to deteriorate, following a sporadic pattern. There is today a scholarly revival of interest in how the two groups, Jews and Christians, arrived at final division. Current opinion identifies both doctrinal and social factors: doctrinal in the role of the Messiah, social in the fact that Jewish identity and covenant were at stake. Who is a Jew and who is not one? Could the Jew who accepted Jesus as the center of God's outreach to humanity continue to be treated as a full brother or sister, or something else?

With the advance of Christian faith into the Gentile world, it seems clear that by A.D. 50 the numerical balance began to tip away from Jewish to non-Jewish Christians. Jewish-Christians, increasingly in the minority, are identified by early church historians as Ebionites, themselves divided into mediating and rigorous parties.

The book of Acts clearly presents the Jerusalem church as the mother congregation, with even Paul returning from his journeys to bring reports to the Jerusalem congregation. Such prestige must have served to maintain the standing of the Jerusalem church as membership increased elsewhere.

Two events of the 60s sharpened distinctions between Jews and Jewish-Christians, although there is no evidence whatsoever that they differed over the Sabbath. James, brother of Jesus and leader of the Jerusalem congregation, was executed, apparently about A.D. 62.² The second came when in A.D. 68 the Christian community fled besieged Jerusalem in response to the warning of Jesus (Matt 24:15-22). This must have been interpreted by the city's defenders as abandonment at just the time of urgent need. The damage of relationships was irreparable.³

Although Jerusalem was rebuilt, it was a much weaker city, stripped of temple, Sanhedrin, and most of its former religious and political structures. Whether any kind of sacrifices were restored in the rebuilt city remains a matter of scholarly debate, but there is little evidence of immediate return by substantial numbers of Christians.

The center of gravity in Jewish life was itself shifting from priestly to rabbinic. In less than one generation rabbinic councils, notably at Jamnia, were busily restructuring the actual format of Judaism. In the process of separation between Jews and Christians, a remarkable fact stands out that presents serious problems for those who claim that Christians early abandoned the Sabbath to substitute Sunday in honor of the resurrection. In all the sources, both biblical and extrabiblical, there appears no support anywhere for the apostolic Sunday observance. Clearly, which day is the holy day was not an issue between Christians of the Apostolic Era and Judaism.

² Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.9.1.

³ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.5.3.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Considerable attention has been given the Jamnia council's inclusion of an anathema in the daily prayer, *Shemoneh Esreh*. Added around A.D. 90, it pronounced a curse upon Nazarenes and Mimim. Probably its purpose was to draw strong distinction between Jews and Christians. If so, it was successful, being cited by Justin, Epiphanius, and later Jerome, who complains, "Three times daily in all the synagogues under the name of Nazarenes you curse the name of the Christians."

It seems clear that in the Jerusalem church, and Judea in general, the fate of Christians was bound up with wider Jewish fate, for strong Jewish affinity continued among Christians.⁴ Christian historians report a period of relative toleration by Jewish leaders between A.D. 70 and the end of the century. After 120, however, we have reports of tension and a developing anti-Christian persecution as extremists gained ground in Jewish community. Bar Kochba's claim to Messiahship, supported by Rabbi Akiba, and the revolt of 131-135, would end in disaster and termination of the Jewish nation. To the degree that Christians identified with Judaism, they too suffered.

Rome and Judaism. Although completed 28 years ago, Samuele Bacchiocchi's study of the abandonment of the Sabbath and adoption of Sunday in the early church remains the definitive work in its field. His argument ties the beginning of Sunday observance to the declining status of Jews in the Roman world, and his conclusions correspond well to the evidence.

By the first century A.D. Jews comprised an important segment of the empire, not so much by reason of numbers as from the diaspora network that planted a Jewish community in virtually every major city, particularly in the East. Their adeptness brought them influence beyond their actual numbers, at the same time engendering envy and resentment. Among these Jewish communities Paul and other Christian workers often began their work.

Jewish separateness and different customs, their religious inflexibility, an often contentious nature, and economic success attracted special attention. Their trademark characteristics were circumcision and Sabbath observance. Resentment developed early in Rome. The sometimes-gossipy historian, Suetonius, reports that in 49 Claudius expelled all Jews from Rome. In Corinth Paul encounters two of these displaced Jews, Aquila and Priscilla. The reason given for the expulsion: Jewish rioting incited by or over a certain Crestus, a name tantalizingly similar to Christ.⁵ Dio Cassius adds that Jews also were prohibited from following their customs.⁶

We can be certain that at this early date the Romans recognized little or no distinction between Jews and Christians. No such distinction is made by Gallio, brother of Seneca, before whom Paul was brought in Corinth. For him it is but

⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.27.3.

⁵ Suetonius, *Claudius* 25.4; Tacitus, *Annals* 15.44.

⁶ *History* 60.6.

REID: FAITH UNDER PRESSURE: THE SABBATH AS CASE STUDY

another dispute among Jews on matters of "your own law" (Acts 18:15), in which he refuses to become involved.

In a few years, however, Roman officers acknowledged a separation, although the Jewish origins of Christianity remained clear. Possibly the insight came to Nero through his wife, Poppea, who Josephus reports was a proselyte to Judaism.⁷ Although the early Nero was relatively benevolent, Tacitus reports that by 64 he was torturing Christians, whom he held responsible for a great fire that for days burned through ramshackle wooden tenements in Rome,⁸ and it was he who ordered the execution of Paul, and, if we are to trust tradition, Peter.

From A.D. 49 Jewish fortunes sank. Roman officials suppressed Jewish riots in several of the great cities. Two years before his untimely end, Nero sent Titus to Jerusalem to deal with the major rebellion there. Its end brought total demolition of the city with exception of the Antonia, the Roman fortress well inside the city. The following 30 years saw a series of persistent Jewish riots in the East, testing Roman patience and alienating the Roman populace. Ostracism grew. Titus abandoned his plans to marry Berenice, sister of Herod Agrippa II. A new capitation tax was levied on Jews. Suetonius reports that in time the tax was extended also to those who "live as Jews."⁹ Following the death of the crazed Domitian, his successor, Nerva, revoked the tax on Christians, by doing so tacitly acknowledging their difference from Jews.

With the turn of the century Jewish fortunes continued almost in free fall. Critics attacked, maligned, gossiped about, and ridiculed Jews. Tacitus, Horace, Cicero, Juvenal, Dio Cassius, and Ovid satirized Jews and cast them in the most unfavorable light. It became chic to mock Jews. Dramatists portrayed Jews as mean, penurious, despicable characters, liars, thieves, treacherous, low life types. The late Menahem Stern has collected in three formidable volumes all the known classical references to Jews.¹⁰ It comprises a sorry lot. To cite only one example from Tacitus:

All their customs, which are at once perverse and disgusting, owe their strength to their very badness. . . . They regard the rest of mankind with all the hatred of enemies. They sit apart at meals, they sleep apart, and though as a nation they are particularly prone to lust, they abstain from intercourse with foreign women."¹¹

Josephus' greatest work, *Antiquities of the Jews*, was his attempt to renovate and, if possible, lift the pall of public scorn against Jews.

⁷ *Ant.* 22.8.11. *vita* 3.

⁸ *Annals* 15:44.

⁹ Suetonius, *Domitian*.

¹⁰ Menahem Stern, ed., *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism*, 3 vols. (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1976-1984).

¹¹ *Histories* 5.5.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

It was at this point, as noted earlier, that Bar Kochba arose with messianic claims. As he was endorsed by the respected Akiba, Palestine's Jews, chafing under taxes, indignities, and Roman scorn, in large part accepted him, leading to a major revolt. Hadrian, a hard military man famed for his penchant for action and interest in boys, seized the opportunity to eliminate once for all the festering Jewish problem. Again Jerusalem was devastated and Palestine's Jewish population essentially depleted by mass removal. Hadrian's new city on the site of Jerusalem, Aelia Capitolina, centered around a temple to Jupiter, and Jews were prohibited from the city. Throughout the empire the practice of Judaism was banned.

Sabbath to Sunday. It is not by accident that our earliest verified reports of weekly Sunday observance come from this very time. Bacchiocchi gives special attention to the Jerusalem congregation, noting that up to Hadrian's destruction of 135, all the bishops of Jerusalem included on Eusebius' list were "of the circumcision." The city was rebuilt as a non-Jewish community, and Eusebius notes a resurgent Christian presence, with the church now under non-Jewish leadership. Bacchiocchi concludes, "The more probable explanation . . . is that after the disappearance of the bishops of the circumcision (ca. A.D. 135), a group of Judaeo-Christians, desirous of re-integrating themselves in the majority, adopted the observance of Sunday in addition to the Sabbath."¹² Note that Bacchiocchi acknowledges by this time a substantial Sunday observance outside Jerusalem.

Hadrian's destruction was final. From 135 there was total cessation of sacrifices, dismantlement of Israel as a nation, and prohibition of Sabbath observance.¹³ Although the decree against Sabbath observance was rescinded by Hadrian's successor, Antoninus Pius, (138-161), the weight of social disapproval led to increasing Christian abandonment of the Sabbath.

We are struck by the failure among Sunday advocates to construct a strong rationale in defense of Sunday. Uniformly, the early patristic arguments focus on the evils of Jewish practice rather than the merits of Sunday observance. The abandonment of the Sabbath with its consequent adoption of Sunday stands as a classic example of religious capitulation in the face of hostile social disapproval.

With the turn away from its original Hebrew roots, Christianity advanced rapidly toward Hellenization. Greek dualism displaced the biblical understanding of reality and rapid changes followed.

It is true that Christians faced severe disadvantages by persisting in Sabbath observance, at times even illegal status. The older religions of the empire had served to create social bonds that held together society. Christianity focused in a different direction. As is well known, early Christians intentionally distanced themselves from the state and its social structures. Christians did not serve in the

¹² Samuele Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday: Anti-Judaism and the Origin of Sunday* (Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University Press, 1975), p. 29.

¹³ *Babylonian Talmud*, Rosh Hashanah 19a.

REID: FAITH UNDER PRESSURE: THE SABBATH AS CASE STUDY

army, refused the festivals of the state gods, and refused to enter into any form of political leadership or civil service. They appeared to their peers as atheists, a charge often made against them. To bear the social burden of the Sabbath as well seemed overwhelming to many. As Sabbath observance declined, in its place arose the honoring of Sunday, a practice far more compatible with the traditional state religions. Social pressure had overcome biblical truth, and the church entered a new trajectory.

Lightfoot's classification of the apostolic fathers' attitudes toward Judaism is helpful. The Didache, Hermas, and possibly Papias are favorable, Epistle of Barnabas and Epistle to Diognetus negative, the remainder mediating. Not surprisingly, the critique of things Jewish found in Ignatius (A.D. 115) develops to Barnabas' open rejection of Sabbath for its Jewish connections (A.D. 135). The earliest detailed description of a Sunday worship service appears in the final section of Justin Martyr's *First Apology* (c. A.D. 153). William Shea's study of Barnabas outlines his anti-Jewish bias, but in a recent paper Shea provides persuasive evidence that the Sunday passage in Justin bears telltale marks of an interpolation.¹⁴

Social Force and Christian Faith. We have traced briefly steps by which Sabbath observance, despite its solid biblical basis, capitulated under pressure from public ostracism and the desire to be accepted. Our review does not address how Sunday observance became the accepted substitute despite its complete lack of biblical support.

Religious history is replete with similar changes. A striking example is the case of conversions to Islam, especially in the seventh century. In rapid succession total populations once nominally Christian changed to an Islam sponsored by the new ruling class, this under the influence of minimal physical, but substantial social coercion.

Some of the most penetrating studies of the interplay between faith and society come from Jacques Ellul. As he observes, "Each generation thinks it has finally discovered the truth, the key, the essential nub of Christianity by venerating itself with the dominant influence and modeling itself on it."¹⁵ Ellul sees the original Christian faith as radical in the sense of making absolute claims. Christ's kingdom was not of this world, but cued to an entirely different authority—God. However, those who were attracted soon saw the utility of using social structures. Early Christianity bought into the legal spirit (Roman), the prevailing philosophical understanding of the world (Greek), and the mode of action (political, institutional). Christianity contextualized, abandoning its radical differences to absorb foreign elements for pragmatic purposes. This insight leads him to cite an example which Adventists can appreciate.

¹⁴Shea, "The Sabbath in the Epistle of Barnabas," *AUSS* 4 [1966], 154-65; and unpublished paper on the Sabbath passage in Justin Martyr [1998].

¹⁵Jacques Ellul, *The Subversion of Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 18.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

A familiar example for the mutation to which revelation was actually subjected is its contamination by the Greek idea of the immortality of the soul. I will briefly recall it. In Jewish thought death is total. There is no immortal soul, no division of body and soul. Paul's thinking is Jewish in this regard. . . . The body is the whole being. In death there is no separation of body and soul. The soul is as mortal as the body. But there is a resurrection. . . . God creates anew the being that was dead. This is a creation by grace; there is no immortal soul intrinsic to us. Greek philosophy, however, introduces among theologians the idea of an immortal soul. The belief was widespread in popular religion and it was integrated into Christianity. But it is a total perversion. . . . All Christian thinking is led astray by this initial mutation that comes through Greek philosophy and Near Eastern cults. . . . This idea completely contaminates biblical thinking, gradually replaces the affirmation of the resurrection, and transforms the kingdom of the dead into the kingdom of God.¹⁶

Adventists are committed to the Scriptures as the source of truth. I wonder, however, whether we are sensitive to the way social forces invade and mutate the faith originally given to the saints. The Christian church moved, step by step, led by a series of leaders persuaded that their choices represented enhancements of the faith, absorbing elements alien to the revealed Word.

The religions of the Roman world were civic religions, social bonds that held society together. Jesus introduced a freedom not before seen, an escape from the bonds of the past, personal, hope-oriented. From civic cement, religion became grace, joy, liberty. In absorbing Roman law Christianity returned to natural law and structure rather than the life validated by God. Greek philosophy turned theology into a search for abstract "truth" where the Scriptures turn us to a search for the Author of truth. God's revelation is historical, to be found in God's intervention in human experience.

The Bible is a series of stories, but not myths intended to unveil abstract truths. The stories are history, the history of God's interchange with His people—temporal. God reveals Himself in action. Profoundly historical, even eternal things appear in temporal garb. The mistake of the early church that haunts us still today is its willingness to absorb alien elements on the premise that they will enhance the growth of God's work. That very process stains the footsteps of a church eventually captured by the very elements it absorbed.

The results: the church became the structural ideology of continuing society—once more the basis for social integration. From a personal walk with God it became a collective ideology. Christianity's prophetic freedom came to be molded into a new garb that outlines a social structure.

Adventists today are in desperate peril that our faith will slip from the person in communion with God into parameters of a cultural subset, something

¹⁶ Ellul, 25n.

REID: FAITH UNDER PRESSURE: THE SABBATH AS CASE STUDY

called Adventist life or lifestyle. As in ancient Rome, religion will have become once more a mere social cement.

It was this perversion of faith that made it necessary for everyone to become a Christian. To defect was to threaten the whole. So saintly men such as Bernard of Clairvaux could pen glorious words such as, "Jesus the very thought of Thee with sweetness fills my breast, but sweeter far thy face to see, and in thy presence rest," only to mount a crusade of torture against heretics.

Not even Luther or Calvin detected fully the perversion represented in such religion, but certain of the Radical Reformers did, and it is to their insights that we today owe a debt of gratitude. In their attempt to return to the New Testament church, they carried us again to the freedom conferred by Jesus. Almost Luther found it in his *Freedom of the Christian Man*, but soon it was smothered under a magisterial church.

From the beginning God set humans free and made them responsible. It was that way in the first Eden: it will be that way in the New Jerusalem.

The Role of Misunderstanding in the Fourth Gospel

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It has long been recognized that John uses a variety of literary devices in the Fourth Gospel to communicate his theology of Jesus to his readers. Some of these devices are more widely recognized than others. John's ethical dualism, for example, has been a frequent topic of scholarly discussion. His extensive use of irony is another commonly regarded feature.

One literary device which has not been as broadly noted is John's use of a technique in which Jesus is misunderstood by His hearers, frequently through the use of words or phrases which can be understood in more than one way, or on more than one level.¹ Jesus speaks at a spiritual level, while His hearers hear Him on a literal or natural level, resulting in misunderstanding. What is the exact role or function of this literary device in the Fourth Gospel? A variety of solutions have been proposed. This paper will re-examine the evidence and attempt to discover how these misunderstandings function in John's Gospel.

Before considering the role of this literary device, we should consider a number of concrete examples from the text. The total number of examples is debated, depending on the criteria used for determining them. Peter Ellis cites seventeen examples.² R. Alan Culpepper lists eighteen examples in which a clear misunderstanding is based on words or phrases with a dual meaning, and three more examples in which there is an apparent misunderstanding based on

¹ E. Richard, "Expressions of Double Meaning and Their Function in the Gospel of John," *New Testament Studies* 31 (1985): 96: "This topic has attracted surprisingly little attention, while the function these expressions serve within the Gospel has gone virtually unexplored." He notes seven such studies (*ibid.*, 96-97), and several others have been done since that time, not all of which were available to consult for this study.

² Peter F. Ellis, *The Genius of John: A Composition-Critical Commentary on the Fourth Gospel* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1984), 7-8.

REYNOLDS: MISUNDERSTANDING IN THE FOURTH GOSPEL

other factors, plus a few other debatable examples that may not really qualify.³ D. A. Carson refers to a "group of about thirty misunderstandings," though he does not list them in his commentary.⁴ I have identified twenty-five clear cases of misunderstandings, plus at least three others that may also qualify, depending on what constitutes a misunderstanding.⁵ At any rate, there are too many to deal with in detail in this paper, so I have selected a number of representative examples.

The first clear case of misunderstanding is found in John 2:19-22. There Jesus is misunderstood when He refers to His body as "this temple" and speaks of raising it in three days after the Jews have destroyed it. While He is speaking of spiritual realities, apparently understanding His physical body as the temple of the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Cor 6:19-20), His hearers think He is speaking of Herod's temple, which at that time had already been forty-six years in the process of reconstruction. They cannot imagine how He can claim to raise it up from destruction in only three days. In this case, unlike the majority of such cases, it is the narrator rather than Jesus who explains the misunderstanding for the benefit of the reader. The narrator also gives a clue to the function of the misunderstanding when he declares in v. 22 that it was only after the resurrection that the disciples recalled this saying and "believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken." This subtly tells the reader that the Scripture had foretold these things, and they should have been recognized and believed, especially when Jesus corroborated the Scripture by His words. Even the disciples did not believe until after the Resurrection, but all should have, for the Scripture had revealed it.⁶

The second misunderstanding is well known, but very important. This time Jesus was not talking to His adversaries, "the Jews," but to Nicodemus, a Pharisee and Jewish ruler who was curious about Jesus but not yet a believer.

³ R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design*, Foundations and Facets: New Testament (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 160-62. Culpepper also cites a study by Herbert Leroy (*Rätsel und Missverständnis: Ein Beitrag zur Formgeschichte des Johannesevangeliums*, Bonner biblische Beiträge, no. 30 [Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1968], 1-6), who uses form-critical analysis to find eleven examples which qualify as concealed riddles, but fails to deal with other examples that do not fit his pattern. Culpepper further cites another study by François Vouga (*Le cadre historique et l'intention théologique de Jean* [Paris: Beauchesne, 1977], 154), who criticizes Leroy for his narrow definition and resulting limitation of examples, but still lists only fifteen examples of misunderstanding in the Gospel.

⁴ D[onald] A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Leicester: InterVarsity, 1991; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 183. Carson had previously published an article on the topic, which I was unfortunately unable to obtain for this study: idem, "Understanding Misunderstandings in the Fourth Gospel," *Tyndale Bulletin* 33 (1982): 59-91.

⁵ The twenty-five I would identify as follows: 2:19-22; 3:3-7; 4:10-15; 4:32-34; 6:32-36; 6:41-51; 6:51-58; 7:33-36; 8:16-19; 8:21-24; 8:24-25; 8:26-29; 8:31-36; 8:37-44; 8:51-55; 8:56-58; 11:11-15; 11:23-27; 12:32-36; 13:33-14:3; 14:4-6; 14:7-12; 14:21-23; 16:16-22; 21:22-23.

⁶ The question Jesus was answering was, "What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?" His sign was the sign of Jonah (cf. Matt 12:39-40).

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

When Jesus told him he needed to be conceived *anōthen* (from above, or again), he either understood or pretended to understand Jesus on the literal-natural level as saying that he needed to be conceived again in his mother's womb. Either this did not make sense to him, or he chose to act as if it didn't, so he asked for clarification, which Jesus was always willing to give to any who asked. Jesus explained that the conception Nicodemus needed was of water and of the Spirit, signifying that Jesus was not speaking on a natural level but on a spiritual level (cf. 1:13,30). Again Nicodemus took the stance of misunderstanding, asking, "How can this be?" To this Jesus expressed surprise. Nicodemus was a teacher of Israel; how could he fail to understand these things? They were in the Scriptures!

The key to the function of this interchange is Jesus' question in 3:12: "I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things?" The purpose of Jesus' dialogue with Nicodemus was to lead him to believe. If speaking of spiritual things in terms of earthly analogies proved unable to lead him to belief, how could Jesus ever communicate with him in terms of heavenly analogies and expect him to believe? To believe in what? Jesus makes this clear in vs. 15-16. The hearer of Jesus' words is to believe in Him, resulting in life eternal. This is, in fact, the explicit purpose of John's Gospel, found in 20:31: "But these [signs] are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name." John never loses sight of this purpose in his selection and wording of events in his Gospel, and neither should the reader. This is a safe guide in determining general function, though the local context is always the final determining factor. Normally the context will yield explicit or implicit clues to the local function of the misunderstanding.

A misunderstanding may be seen from two perspectives: from that of the original participants in the dialogue, and from that of John's readers. The first perspective seems to function similarly to the use of parables by Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels, to discriminate between those who are willing to learn from Jesus and those who are not (cf. Matt 13:10-16). The second is bound up with John's purpose. In trying to bring the reader to belief or to confirm the reader's belief, John leads the reader to see what the original participants did not see, and thus to reject their lack of insight, to understand what they did not understand, and to believe what they did not believe.

The third misunderstanding takes place with a woman in Samaria in 4:10-15. Jesus offers to give this woman "living water." Because of the common use of this expression to signify running or flowing water, fresh spring water, or water from a well that bubbled up, indicating its source from an underground river or spring, thus its vital freshness, the woman was able to misunderstand Jesus on a literal-temporal level, though she was puzzled by His lack of resources for obtaining such water. Jesus explained that the water from Jacob's well could not provide a permanent satisfaction of (spiritual) thirst, but the water

REYNOLDS: MISUNDERSTANDING IN THE FOURTH GOSPEL

He was offering would become in the recipient "a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (v. 14). The woman, still understanding Jesus on a literal-temporal level, replied, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and keep coming here to draw water" (v. 15). Jesus would later explain this truth more fully (6:35; 7:38), but for now He would turn the conversation to other things she could understand. Her continued interest and questions kept Jesus persistent in His efforts to bring her to belief. When, in response to her declaration that she knew Messiah was coming, He finally announced, "I who speak to you am he," she left her water jar and ran back to the town, declaring, "Come see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?"

The function of this interchange was to gently break down the woman's prejudices in order to lead her and her fellow townspeople to belief. This is strongly suggested by vs. 39-42. At first many believed in Jesus because of the woman's testimony, but after, at their urging, He had stayed with them for two days, many more became believers because of his own words, observing, "Now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Saviour of the world."

Nested inside this story of Jesus and the Samaritans is another misunderstanding. When Jesus' disciples return from the town with food, they urge Him to eat something, but He replies, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about" (v. 32). The disciples, not realizing that His mind is on spiritual realities, wonder if someone has brought Him something to eat while they were away. But Jesus readily explains, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work" (v. 34; cf. 6:38-40). Then He goes on to put this in the context of the immediate situation with a metaphor about the harvest, which is promptly shown to be spiritual in its analogy, for He points to the people flocking to Him from town and says, "I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest" (v. 35). Jesus' work was to plant the seed in order to provide a harvest of believers, and He was calling His disciples to assist Him in reaping that harvest.

The function of this little misunderstanding in its original setting seems to have been to direct the disciples' minds away from the temporal to the spiritual and eternal priorities on which Jesus kept focused. His priorities were to become their own. They needed to learn to do the will and work of God as He did. John appears to use it to let the reader know that even Jesus' disciples were not attuned to the spiritual nature of Jesus' mission at this point in their experience. It was only later, after the Resurrection, that they began to understand the true nature of His mission and to grasp the important spiritual truths He had been attempting to communicate. The reader is thus led to identify at a very early stage with the truths which even the first disciples missed.

There are several misunderstandings in John 6, putting a new and different spin on the concept of eating food. After teaching the multitudes by a sign that He was capable of feeding all and still having plenty to spare, He taught the

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

theological truth that He is the true bread which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world (6:32-33). Again, the multitude miss the spiritual truth He offers and understand Him in terms of the temporal bread they have recently eaten. If this is superior bread, they want it henceforth (v. 34). Jesus then explains what He is talking about: "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty" (v. 35).

Jesus' purpose is to invite and encourage people to come to Him and to believe so that they can find spiritual nourishment, resulting in spiritual (eternal) life. He explains, "For my Father's will is that every one who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day" (v. 40).

This is followed by continued misunderstandings. First, Jesus claims to have come down from heaven, whereas they believe that they know His origin, including His father Joseph and His mother (vs. 41-42). Then, when He tells them that the bread that they are to eat is His flesh, which He will give for the life of the world, they begin to debate about how He can give them His flesh to eat (vs. 51-52). Finally, when He attempts to explain further to them the spiritual implications of eating His flesh and drinking His blood, they become offended and refuse to follow Him any longer (vs. 60, 66), even though Jesus tries to make clear that He has been speaking spiritually: "The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life" (v. 63).

These misunderstandings in the original setting seem to have functioned to separate those disciples who were genuine from those who were false (vs. 67-69), though John points out that Jesus knew that the separation was not yet complete at that point, because Judas still remained with the loyal disciples, as Jesus' words made clear (vs. 70-71). John records these major misunderstandings to reveal to his readers the shallowness of the understanding of even those who claimed to be Jesus' disciples. Many, perhaps, among John's readers might have been in the same camp, ready to give up following Jesus if something should offend them. John tries to show the foolhardiness of such a shallow approach to Jesus and the truths He taught. His readers should reject being similarly offended.

There are many more misunderstandings in the Gospel of John. Chapter 8, aside from the *Pericope Adulterae* in vs. 1-11, is one long, unbroken series of misunderstandings. Due to the constraints of this paper, however, it is not possible to review them all. The above examples will have to suffice as a sampling of John's use of this literary device, though not fully representative of all the variety that appears in the Gospel.

We need to consider now the question of the role of these misunderstandings as a deliberate literary device used by John. Is there a single function that this device fulfills in the Gospel? A number of scholars have offered various

REYNOLDS: MISUNDERSTANDING IN THE FOURTH GOSPEL

suggestions as to the function of the misunderstandings in John. We shall consider some of these in light of the evidence before arriving at a conclusion.

C. H. Dodd holds that the misunderstandings are merely a device, following the style of the Hermetic dialogues, to provide opportunity to explain the thought or develop the theme further.⁷ As for following the style of the Hermetic dialogues, Culpepper responds that John has integrated the device into his Gospel "more artistically than in any comparable revelatory discourses" and that "the parallels adduced are not really of comparable quality."⁸ As for providing opportunity to explain the thought or develop the theme further, one cannot argue that this is not done; however, it is not *always* done, at least not immediately. In 4:10-15, for example, Jesus does not explain to the Samaritan woman in full what He means by "living water," though He does tell her that it will become "a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (v. 14). When she continues to misunderstand, however, Jesus changes the subject rather than giving a further explanation (vs. 15-16). John does, nevertheless, provide the reader with an explanation when the topic comes up again later (7:38-39). Likewise, in 8:51-55 there is no explanation given for Jesus' statement that if anyone will keep His word he or she will never see death, perhaps since He has already explained this in chap. 6. Yet it comes up again in chap. 11, where it receives further elaboration.

Herbert Leroy uses form-critical analysis to define the misunderstandings as concealed riddles, all of which were developed from concepts with twofold meanings that belonged to the peculiar vocabulary of the Johannine community. Only those within the community could understand them; their special meaning was impenetrable to outsiders. Thus they functioned to demonstrate that the Jews did not and could not understand Jesus or receive His revelation.⁹ Leroy's definition is too narrow, excluding many of the misunderstandings in the Gospel from consideration because they do not derive from a concept with a twofold meaning; therefore, his conclusion is skewed by his presuppositions and cannot be valid for all misunderstandings. Further, his assumptions about a Johannine community and its special vocabulary are too speculative to be taken seriously.

François Vouga argues, against Leroy, that John does not use misunderstanding as a "technique" which is applied in the same manner in every instance. John's method is supple and variable. The misunderstandings arise from his

⁷ C. H. Dodd, *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963; paper, 1976), 318. Cf. Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray, ed. R. W. N. Hoare and J. K. Riches (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971), 127, n. 1.

⁸ Culpepper, 152.

⁹ Herbert Leroy, *Rätsel und Missverständnis: Ein Beitrag zur Formgeschichte des Johannevangeliums*, Bonner biblische Beiträge, no. 30 (Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1968), 146,157-60, 167, 183-93, cited in Culpepper, 153-54.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

concept of revelation: inevitably those who did not accept Jesus misunderstood Him.¹⁰

It is true that John's method is supple and variable. It is also true that those who did not accept Jesus inevitably misunderstood Him. But the former should provide a constraint on the latter. There are a variety of situations in which the misunderstandings appear, and not all of them pertain to those who did not accept Jesus, rendering Vouga's judgment invalid as a general statement of the function of the device.

C. K. Barrett states that the misunderstandings "represent in miniature the total reaction of Judaism to Christ; the Jews perceived only what was superficially visible in Jesus and naturally rejected the absurd suggestion that he should be the Son of God."¹¹ This is no doubt true as it pertains to those misunderstandings, as in chaps. 5 and 8, that represent the reaction of "the Jews" to the claims of Jesus, but this can hardly explain all of the misunderstandings in the Fourth Gospel. A number of them do not represent a reaction by Judaism to the claims of Jesus Christ—those in chap. 4, for example.

Culpepper has a variety of explanations for the function of the misunderstandings recorded by John. He states first in general that various textual features, including the misunderstandings, "constantly lead the reader to view the story from a higher vantage point and share the judgments which the 'whispering wizard' conveys by means of various nods, winks, and gestures."¹² Later he gets more specific:

Their most obvious function is to enforce a marked distinction between "insiders" and "outsiders," between those who understand Jesus and those who do not. Explanations of the misunderstandings draw the reader farther into the circle of "insiders." . . . The misunderstandings, therefore, lead readers to feel a judgmental distance between themselves as "insiders" who understand the elusive implication of Jesus' revelatory discourses and those who have rejected Jesus. The "outsiders," one is led to believe, must be exceedingly dense or willfully and perversely blind to the truth to have missed it. The distance between the believers and the world, exemplified by the Jews in the Gospel, is therefore maintained and even exaggerated.¹³

¹⁰ François Vouga, *Le cadre historique et l'intention théologique de Jean* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1977), 32-33, cited in Culpepper, 154.

¹¹ C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*, 2d ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978; London: SPCK, 1978), 200.

¹² Culpepper, 151. Cf. Mark W. G. Stibbe, *John*, Readings: A New Biblical Commentary (Sheffield: JSOT, 1993), 17-18.

¹³ Culpepper, 164. Cf. D. Moody Smith, *The Theology of the Gospel of John*, New Testament Theology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 113-14.

REYNOLDS: MISUNDERSTANDING IN THE FOURTH GOSPEL

Beyond this most obvious function he adds two more. First, he mentions that the misunderstandings serve "to remove any doubt or misperception about key points in John's theology."¹⁴

The most significant function of the misunderstandings, however, is to teach readers how to read the Gospel. The misunderstandings call attention to the Gospel's metaphors, double-entendres, and plurisignations. They also guide the reader by interpreting some of these and ruling out the literal, material, worldly, or general meanings of such references. Readers are therefore oriented to the level on which the Gospel's language is to be understood and warned that failure to understand identifies them with the characterization of the Jews and the others who cannot interpret the Gospel's language correctly.¹⁵

Culpepper is very perceptive in this assessment of the function of the misunderstandings in John's Gospel. He recognizes that there is not a simple answer or a single function that accounts for all of the evidence, and he recognizes the practical nature of the literary device in assisting the reader in making judgments about Jesus Christ and His mission and message. Still, he focuses too exclusively on the interaction between John and the reader and not enough on the interaction between Jesus and His original hearers. His attention to the literary aspects of the narratives causes him to tend to overlook the theological thrust of the original historical setting. He attributes all of the eighteen instances of misunderstanding which he treats in his section on the topic to "an ambiguous statement, metaphor, or double-entendre in Jesus' conversations," though admitting that "several other passages involve misunderstandings in one way or another but depart from this pattern sufficiently to be treated as variations of it."¹⁶ This seems from a careful analysis of the passages to be an oversimplification, though generally true for the eighteen passages he has selected. His selection is too limited, however, for there are at least twenty-five clear examples of misunderstanding in the Gospel.

Because Culpepper has focused so strongly on the literary aspects, he barely notes the major feature of most of the passages in which misunderstanding takes place, namely, the key role of belief in Jesus' person and mission.

John Painter has also given close attention to John's use of misunderstanding as a literary device. He takes a redaction-critical approach to the issue, arguing that the misunderstanding motif has its roots in history, that the situation that called forth the Gospel and determined its pattern was the division that existed between Judaism and the "Sect of the Way" after the "Test [Eighteenth] Benediction" was published about A.D. 85 to exclude heretics from the synagogue. The Evangelist—not John, but a later disciple of the beloved witness—wrote the Fourth Gospel to promote a reinterpretation of Messiah and the

¹⁴ Culpepper, 164.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 165.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 160.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Son of God, since even those who believed Jesus understood Him in terms of expectations within Judaism. The misunderstandings provided the Evangelist with the opportunity to clarify the person and mission of Jesus in new terms.¹⁷ He holds that authentic understanding was not possible in the days before Jesus' glorification, but that in the days when the Evangelist wrote, it had become possible, so it was necessary that these misunderstandings should be cleared up.

This reconstruction based on redaction-critical principles is not only rather speculative but is at odds with the facts of the Gospel itself, which reveals that there were in fact some who were willing and able to understand Jesus' claims and did believe in Him, though their early understanding was not necessarily complete (e.g., 1:48-50; 4:39-42,48-50; 6:67-69; 7:31; 8:28-30; 9:35-38; 10:41-42; 11:23-27; 17:6-8).¹⁸ To argue that authentic understanding was not possible before Jesus' death and resurrection seems to assume more than is warranted by the text.

What, then, is the function or role of misunderstanding in John's Gospel that takes account of all of the evidence? In order to answer this, we need to consider the evidence of the variety of John's use of this literary device. "The Jews" and unbelievers are not the only ones who misunderstand Jesus. He is also misunderstood by His disciples (repeatedly), by Martha (11:23-27), and by the early believers (21:22-23). Not all misunderstandings are based on words or phrases with double meanings. Not all are explained within the context. Not all have to do with believing the claims of Jesus. Not all are prior to the Resurrection. It would seem, therefore, that it is not possible to lump all of the misunderstandings into one classification and offer a general statement that will apply to all of them. There is simply too much diversity.

Nevertheless, the vast majority of the misunderstandings—twenty out of twenty-five—do fall into one category, and that is Jesus' claims about Himself which call for a response of belief. These seem to be the most important of the misunderstandings in the Gospel. The others may simply be, in some cases at least, like 21:22-23, for example, a reflection of the historical reality that misunderstandings frequently take place in any communication, or they may be an outgrowth of John's fondness for picking up on such devices and working them into his story to enhance the contrasts which his ethical dualism highlights or to clarify a historical or theological point, as in 3:3-7 and 11:11-15.

The misunderstandings seem to function to highlight the two levels of understanding that take place in the Gospel. On the one hand is the spiritual or heavenly level that Jesus came bringing, to teach the true way to eternal life. On the other hand is the temporal or earthly level that most people operate at, including most of Christ's professed disciples, which leads to darkness and loss

¹⁷ John Painter, *John: Witness and Theologian*, 3d ed. (Victoria, Australia: Beacon Hill, 1986), 12-13.

¹⁸ The misunderstanding in 21:22-23 is a prime example of a post-Resurrection incident which does not fit Painter's theory.

REYNOLDS: MISUNDERSTANDING IN THE FOURTH GOSPEL

of eternal life. John wants to show that one must cross over from the earthly to the heavenly, from darkness into light, from death into life. By his careful construction of the narratives, John leads his readers to see and understand what the original participants could or did not, and thus to believe the claims of Jesus and avoid the ignorance displayed by the original characters in the drama.

John includes selected passages in his Gospel which explain the relationship between willingness to believe and understanding (e.g., 3:18-21; 5:44-47; 7:16-17; 10:24-28; 12:35-40,44-46). John's readers need to be willing to believe. Then they will be able to walk in the light of spiritual truth taught by Jesus, rather than continuing to walk in the darkness of unbelief as so many others before them.

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Ellen G. White's Conceptual Understanding of the Sanctuary and Hermeneutics

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The subject of hermeneutics has received much attention within Adventism in recent years. This is certainly not a new discussion, but as each new generation of believers takes ownership of the Seventh-day Adventist doctrines, message, and mission, old issues resurface and require new answers. I believe one way of finding answers to our current questions is to look at the way our pioneers studied Scriptures and found answers for themselves.

In this paper, I wish to present how Ellen G. White's literal or plain reading of Scripture influenced her understanding of the sanctuary doctrine. She understood the doctrine of the sanctuary to be the basis of the Seventh-day Adventist message. In a 1906 letter to G. C. Tenney, she commented: "The correct understanding of the ministration [of Christ] in the heavenly sanctuary is the foundation of our faith" (Letter 208, 1906). Ellen White's conceptual understanding of the heavenly sanctuary and its ministries is a good example of the impact of hermeneutics upon one's belief system. Based primarily upon chapters in two of her most popular books, one in *Patriarchs and Prophets* and the other in *The Great Controversy*,¹ this study will show how she conceived many parallels between the heavenly sanctuary and its ministration and the earthly tabernacle and its services as a result of her hermeneutical principles.

¹ Ellen G. White, *The Story of Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1958), and *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1950). I will give in-text abbreviated references to these two books.

FORTIN: ELLEN G. WHITE'S CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDING

“According to the pattern”

Ellen White built her understanding of the sanctuary doctrine on parallels she saw between the heavenly sanctuary and the earthly tabernacle that Moses and the Israelites built in the Sinai desert after their exodus from Egypt. Her insights were shaped by her belief in the literalness of God's instruction to Moses. “Have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them. Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you” (Ex 25:8, 9 NIV).

In spite of its apparent simplicity, this story has raised a number of perennial questions, in particular: What was this pattern Moses saw? and how real was it? Although a number of theologians have dismissed the literalness of the heavenly pattern, this was not the case with Ellen White. Relying upon this story in Exodus and other texts of Scripture which also refer to it, like Hebrews 9:23,24, she concluded that Moses saw a real sanctuary in heaven and built the earthly copy accordingly. “God Himself gave to Moses the plan of that structure, with particular directions as to its size and form, the materials to be employed, and every article of furniture which it was to contain. . . . God presented before Moses in the mount a view of the heavenly sanctuary, and commanded him to make all things according to the pattern shown him” (PP 343).²

This idea is very important if we are to grasp Ellen White's understanding of the doctrine of the sanctuary. Her belief in a heavenly pattern in the construction of the earthly tabernacle stems from the hermeneutic which leads to her literal reading of Scripture and is based, I believe, upon two basic concepts in her thought.

Heaven is a real place. The first basic concept is that there is a real heavenly temple of which the earthly sanctuary and its services were but a miniature representation. In other words, since God himself showed Moses the original heavenly temple as the pattern for the building of the earthly tabernacle, there is no doubt in Ellen White's mind that the heavenly sanctuary is a real place. According to the account given in Scripture, the earthly sanctuary was neither “invented” nor “devised” by Moses in the Sinai desert. “That sanctuary in which Jesus ministers in our behalf,” affirmed Ellen White, “is the great original, of which the sanctuary built by Moses was a copy” (PP 357).

Heaven is the abiding place of a real God. This leads us to the second basic concept in Ellen White's thought: the heavenly sanctuary is the abiding place of a real God. Like the biblical prophets,³ Ellen White believed God is a real God and not simply an immaterial force or some metaphysical power. He truly exists; He is a personal being. God is a transcendent being, not a pantheistic influence in the universe.

² Ellen White indicates in her earlier writings that Moses saw a miniature sanctuary in heaven as the pattern to follow on earth. See *Spiritual Gifts* (Battle Creek, Mich.: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Pub. Association, 1858-1864), 4:5.

³ See Isaiah 6:1-2; Psalm 9:4; Daniel 7:9-14; Malachi 3:1.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

In the course of His relationship with Israel, God desired to dwell close to His people. Hence, the earthly tabernacle became His dwelling place as He sojourned with them to the promised land. He dwelt in the sanctuary, manifesting His visible presence in the Shekinah above the mercy seat of the ark of the covenant (Ex 25:22).

Although faithful to Scripture, this concept of pattern must be kept in perspective. Ellen White remarked that no earthly structure could represent the vastness and glory of the heavenly temple, the abiding place of the King of kings. "Yet important truths concerning the heavenly sanctuary and the great work there carried forward for man's redemption were to be taught by the earthly sanctuary and its services" (PP 357; GC 414).

For Ellen White the concept of a real sanctuary in heaven is of unquestionable importance. Based on her literal reading of Scripture, this basic concept influences her understanding of the whole doctrine of the sanctuary, its services, and the mediatorial ministry of Christ in heaven. Her clearest expressions on the sanctuary services both on earth and in heaven were articulated in the chapter "The Tabernacle and Its Services" in *Patriarchs and Prophets* (343-358) and in the chapter "What is the Sanctuary?" in *The Great Controversy* (409-422). These chapters will be the basis for the remainder of our study in this paper.

Comparisons of the Superior to the Inferior

Ellen White used a number of parallels or comparisons to highlight the reality of the heavenly sanctuary and its ministry as a pattern for the earthly tabernacle. The six parallels from these two chapters that I would like to outline in this study go from the superior (the heavenly pattern) to the inferior (the earthly shadow). In each comparison she clearly saw that the direction of the parallel is from the heavenly pattern to the earthly shadow. The cue is undoubtedly from heaven.

The Two Divisions of Christ's Mediatorial Ministry. The first parallel deals with the two divisions of Christ's mediatorial ministry. "As Christ's ministration was to consist of two great divisions, each occupying a period of time and having a distinctive place in the heavenly sanctuary, so the typical ministration consisted of two divisions, the daily and the yearly service, and to each a department of the tabernacle was devoted" (PP 357).

In this comparison she conveyed two important points which are again based on her literal reading of Scripture. First, if in the Old Testament the services in the tabernacle have two divisions, daily services and a yearly ritual, it is because in heaven after His ascension Christ was going to have two phases to His mediatorial ministry. Second, if the earthly tabernacle has two different apartments, the holy and most holy places, it is also because at His ascension Christ's mediatorial ministry was going to be performed in two different places in the heavenly sanctuary. Thus, for Ellen White, the ministration of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary is divided according to time and place and is the reason

FORTIN: ELLEN G. WHITE'S CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDING

for the various temporal and spatial aspects of the earthly services. What happens in heaven is the norm for what happens in the earthly tabernacle.

Daily Intercession. A second parallel Ellen White makes is in reference to the daily intercessory services. “As Christ at His ascension appeared in the presence of God to plead His blood in behalf of penitent believers, so the priest in the daily ministration sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice in the holy place in the sinner’s behalf” (PP 357).

Here Ellen White refers to the daily services performed in behalf of individuals. As she understands these levitical services, the repentant sinner brought his offering to the tabernacle and, placing his hand upon the head of the animal, confessed his sins. This symbolic gesture represented the transfer of guilt from the individual to the innocent victim. After the individual had slain the animal, she holds, the priest took the blood of the sacrifice and entered the holy place to sprinkle the blood in front of the veil before the ark of the covenant.⁴ “By this ceremony the sin was, through the blood, transferred in figure to the sanctuary” (PP 354).

She indicates that this ceremony was an earthly representation of Christ appearing in the presence of God at His ascension to plead his blood in behalf of penitent sinners. Thus, she believes, part of Christ’s heavenly ministry after His ascension is to transfer our guilt from ourselves to heaven through His blood. His blood shed on the cross was the death penalty for our guilt and He, both sacrifice and priest, takes the benefits of His sacrifice and pleads before the Father on our behalf.

She provides another fascinating comment on this in *The Great Controversy*: “As anciently the sins of the people were by faith placed upon the sin offering and through its blood transferred, *in figure*, to the earthly sanctuary, so in the new covenant the sins of the repentant are by faith placed upon Christ and transferred, *in fact*, to the heavenly sanctuary” (GC 421, emphasis added). Again notice here that she is consistent with her understanding of the parallel between the superior heavenly reality and the inferior earthly shadow. The transfer of sins from the sinner to the earthly tabernacle is symbolic. She uses the expression “in figure” to describe this transfer. It is a symbolic transfer. Yet, where does the real transfer of sins through the blood of Christ occur? In heaven. She

⁴ Ellen White understands that “In some cases the blood of the victim was not taken into the holy place” (PP 354). In such cases, as found in Leviticus 4, the priest ate part of the victim and/or placed blood on the altar of burnt offering. However, “Both ceremonies alike symbolized the transfer of the sin from the penitent to the sanctuary” (PP 354-355); (see also the Appendix Note 6 in PP 761). In actuality, of course, the blood of daily sacrifices was only rarely carried into the holy place—for the sins of a priest or the whole people—but the process serves as a useful synecdoche for atonement. The biblical text mentions only once that the placing of the hand on the head of the victim so it can “make atonement” was accompanied by confession (Lev 16:21), but perhaps we can generally assume that a person who brought and sacrificed an expensive animal was repentant and seeking cleansing from sin.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

uses the expression “in fact” to describe the reality of a transfer of sin between the repentant sinner and Jesus dying on the cross.

The Record and Cancellation of Sin. This brings us to the third parallel, which deals with the record of sin after confession and repentance. “The blood of Christ, while it was to release the repentant sinner from the condemnation of the law, was not to cancel the sin; it would stand on record in the sanctuary until the final atonement; so in the type the blood of the sin offering removed the sin from the penitent, but it rested in the sanctuary until the Day of Atonement” (PP 357).

Ellen White’s thought here differentiates between the repentant sinner who is released from the guilt of sins and the record of sins transferred to the sanctuary. Based on her reading of the levtical daily and yearly services, she concludes that while the sinner is released from the guilt of sin, because the innocent sacrifice has paid the price through death, the sin has been transferred to the sanctuary and abides there, in the presence of God, until the Day of Atonement services. Again her comparison is from the superior reality in heaven to the shadow on earth. The Day of Atonement ceremonies in the earthly sanctuary were patterned after the divine way of dealing with sin.

End Time Judgment and Yearly Judgment. The fourth comparison deals with the judgment. Reading from Revelation 20:12, Ellen White refers to the day of judgment in which the dead are to be judged according to their works, as written in the heavenly books. “Then by virtue of the atoning blood of Christ, the sins of all the truly penitent will be blotted from the books of heaven. Thus the sanctuary will be freed, or cleansed, from the record of sin” (PP 357-358). Here we find that the blood of Christ, which was used to plead in behalf of sinners and to transfer the guilt of repentant sinners to the very presence of God, is also efficient to cleanse the heavenly sanctuary from the record of all the sins accumulated there.

This heavenly procedure was depicted on earth through the cleansing of the tabernacle on the yearly Day of Atonement. She also conceives the typical Day of Atonement ritual to be a figure of the final day of judgment as depicted in Revelation 20.

In this fourth comparison we see that Ellen White believes in the double efficacy of the blood of Christ, to be at the same time the means of transferring to heaven the sins of repentant sinners (according to Leviticus 4) and to be the atoning sacrifice to cleanse the heavenly sanctuary from the record of sins (according to Leviticus 16:15-17). Many theologians have wondered how the blood of Christ could, at the same time, be used to transfer our guilt to heaven in the antitypical daily service and also have the cleansing power to accomplish the yearly ritual of the Day of Atonement. This provides no difficulty for Ellen White. Christ’s blood accomplishes both the daily and yearly blood rituals.

Final Blotting Out of Sin. The fifth parallel deals with the blotting out of sin. “As in the final atonement the sins of the truly penitent are to be blotted

FORTIN: ELLEN G. WHITE'S CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDING

from the records of heaven, no more to be remembered or come into mind, so in the type they were borne away into the wilderness, forever separated from the congregation" (PP 358).

At the end of the final judgment, when sins are blotted out from the presence of God, they will never be remembered again. This truth, Ellen White explains, was portrayed on the Day of Atonement when after the sanctuary was cleansed of the sins accumulated therein for a year, the high priest transferred them symbolically upon a scapegoat which was sent into the desert to die.

This comparison brings out another point in Ellen White's understanding of the forgiveness of sins. Only the sins of the repentant sinners are truly forgiven or blotted out in the final judgment. The conclusion is that other sins are not blotted out and sinners bear their consequences and receive judgment according to their works.

Satan Is the Scapegoat. The last parallel deals with the imagery of the scapegoat, its identity, and the end of the great controversy. "Since Satan is the originator of sin, the direct instigator of all the sins that caused the death of the Son of God, justice demands that Satan shall suffer the final punishment. Christ's work for the redemption of men and the purification of the universe from sin will be closed by the removal of sin from the heavenly sanctuary and the placing of these sins upon Satan, who will bear the final penalty. So in the typical service, the yearly round of ministration closed with the purification of the sanctuary, and the confessing of the sins on the head of the scapegoat" (PP 358).

Ellen White's identification of this scapegoat as Satan is closely integrated with her understanding of the origins of the cosmic great controversy. She understands Satan to be a real evil angelic being and the originator of the concept of sin and the instigator of all sins that caused the death of Christ. Therefore, as a matter of universal justice, she believes Satan is ultimately responsible for the death of the Son of God. This, she also believes, was the intent of the scapegoat ritual on the Day of Atonement which foreshadowed Satan's destruction as the author of sin. Thus "will Satan be forever banished from the presence of God and His people, and he will be blotted from existence in the final destruction of sin and sinners" (GC 422).⁵

⁵ Most non-Adventist theologians have had difficulties with this interpretation of the scapegoat as Satan, preferring to understand that Jesus is the scapegoat who bore sins into the wilderness away from his Father. However, the interpretation of the scapegoat as Satan can be supported from Scripture when one looks closely at the Hebrew words used in Leviticus 16:8, "He [the high priest] is to cast lots for the two goats—one lot for the Lord and the other for the scapegoat" (NIV). The sentence structure lets the reader understand that the lots were cast between two individuals, one for the Lord and the other for the scapegoat. Furthermore, many scholars have noted that the Hebrew word for scapegoat, *azazel*, refers to a deity of the wilderness in other Semitic languages, even though the etymology for this usage in Hebrew is inconclusive thus far. Although the sentence structure clearly allows for the lots to be cast between two individuals, the Lord and Azazel, one should be careful to not conclude from this that Satan is some type of god: however pretentious he may be, he never was

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

What impact does Ellen White's literal reading of Scripture have upon her conceptual understanding of the sanctuary? The impact is immense. She truly believed the testimony of Scripture about a real heavenly sanctuary as the pattern for the earthly tabernacle. In fact, she saw this heavenly sanctuary in vision, which made the testimony of Scripture even more forceful to her. The heavenly pattern is not only in the physical appearances of the earthly shadow, although a faint reflection of the heavenly they may be. It concerns also all the mediatorial services and ministry. All the daily and yearly rituals were depicting through symbols the future mediatorial ministry of Christ in heaven. What happens in heaven is the cue for what happened in the earthly tabernacle. The superior heavenly sanctuary and its ministries are the reality depicted through symbols on earth.

Ellen White concludes this series of comparisons with a reference to the great controversy theme. This theme is, I believe, at the center of her theology. "Thus in the ministration of the tabernacle, and of the temple that afterward took its place, the people were taught each day the great truths relative to Christ's death and ministration, and once each year their minds were carried forward to the closing events of the great controversy between Christ and Satan, the final purification of the universe from sin and sinners" (PP 358).

divine. It also seems clear from the contrast that the Lord or Jesus cannot represent both individuals. For further study on this subject, see Arnold V. Wallenkampf and W. Richard Leshner, eds., *The Sanctuary and the Atonement: Biblical, Historical, and Theological Studies* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1981), 120-125.

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The Contributions of Theophilus Brabourne to Our Understanding of the Sabbath

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Theophilus Brabourne¹ was an English minister who wrote extensively on the Sabbath² during the 1600's.³ A well-known writer on the Sabbath issue in England, Bryan W. Ball, writes that Brabourne's book *Discourse vpon the Sabbath Day* (1628) was "the first major work to appear in the seventeenth century advocating the Christian observance of Saturday."⁴

The purpose of this paper is to provide a brief introduction to the life of Brabourne, an introduction to his writings⁵ on the Sabbath issue, and a discus-

¹ Brabourne most often used this spelling for his name, although several variations exist. All quotations from Brabourne's books also reflect spelling which is different from today. I wish to express my appreciation to the following individuals for reading this paper and making helpful suggestions: Harold Baasch, Wilmore Eva, Karnik Doukmetzian, Ingrid I. Satelmajer, Ruth I. Satelmajer and Joanne Stango.

² Sabbath in this paper, unless otherwise stated, refers to Saturday, the seventh day of the week.

³ See Nikolaus Satelmajer, "Theophilus Brabourne and the Sabbath," *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, 26:1 (Spring, 1988), 43-56. I used this article as a secondary source for the current paper.

⁴ Bryan W. Ball, *The English Connection: The Puritan Roots of Seventh-day Adventist Belief* (Cambridge: [PUBLISHER?], 1981), 139.

⁵ I believe the following to be a complete list of Brabourne's writing on the Sabbath: *A Discourse vpon the Sabbath Day* (n.p., 1628) (hereinafter *Discourse*); *A Defence Of that most Ancient, and Sacred ordinance of GODS, the SABBATH DAY* (Academix Cantabrigiensis Liber, 1632; first published in 1631, I have been able to locate only the 1632 edition) (hereinafter *Defence*); *A Reply to Mr Collings Provocatus: or, To His Answer Made to Mr Boatman, Touching Suspension from the Sacrament* (London, 1654); *A Reply to the Indoctus Doctor Edoctus, or, To Master Collings His Answer Made to Master Brabourn's First Part of the Change of Church-Discipline* (London, 1654) (hereinafter *A Reply to the Indoctus Doctor*); *An Answer to M. Cawdry's Two Books of the Sabbath Lately Come Forth* (n.p. 1654); *The Second Vindication of My First Book of the Change of*

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

sion of his contributions to the Sabbath issue which will be of particular interest to us today. It is my position that Brabourne can be of great value in our understanding of the Sabbath from a biblical, theological, and historical perspective. His writings can also will help us in our understanding of the question of what it means to keep the Sabbath.

Biographical Sketch

Theophilus Brabourne was born in 1590 in Norwich, approximately 120 miles northeast of London. He lived and worked there most of his life until he died in 1662.⁶ In a book published later in his life Brabourne gives an autobiographical sketch (*A Reply to the Indoctus Doctor*, 94). He writes that he was brought up in Norwich and attended the free school until fifteen years of age. At that point he was ready to attend Cambridge, but the religious climate was such that he was not given the opportunity. His father wanted young Theophilus to study for the ministry, but as an alternative sent him to London as a sales representative for the family stocking business. Brabourne married in London and returned to Norwich to live with his father. Upon his return, he began studying for the ministry under the tutorship of three ministers. After completing his studies, he received the M.A. degree. Alexander Gordon states that Thomas Dove, Bishop of Peterborough and previously Dean of Norwich, ordained Brabourne on September 24, 1621, as a priest in the Church of England. On April 18, 1622, he was licensed for the Norwich diocese by Bishop Harsnett. In about 1630 he was appointed to lead a church in Catton (outskirts of Norwich) at a salary of £40 a year (Gordon, 566).

Unfortunately for Brabourne but fortunately for advocates of the biblical Sabbath, Brabourne was not satisfied to only carry out his pastoral responsibilities. In 1628 he published his first book on the Sabbath, *A Discourse vpon the Sabbath Day*, which signalled the beginning of serious problems for Brabourne.

In 1631 he issued another, larger book, which attracted much more attention.⁷ Brabourne had the audacity to dedicate this book to the King, Charles I,⁸

Discipline: Being a Reply to Mr Collings His Second Answer to It (London, 1654); *An Answer to Two Books on the Sabbath* (London, 1659) (hereinafter *Answer to Two Books*); *Of the Sabbath Day, Which Is Now the Highest Controversy in the Church of England* (n.p., 1660); "An Answer to Mr Burt. on Ye L. Day Sabbath . . ." (unpublished book manuscript, Bodleian Library, Oxford Microfilm ms. Bodley 538) [although the date of this manuscript has not been established, we know that Burton's book was published in 1631].

⁶ Most place his death in 1661. Alexander Gordon, "Theophilus Brabourne, M.A.," *The Sabbath Memorial* 13 (January & April 1887): 567, argues convincingly that Brabourne died in 1662. Gordon reaches his conclusion based on an examination of Brabourne's will.

⁷ *Defence*. The title suggests a more aggressive position taken by Brabourne. Although this book was first published in 1631, it does not seem that any copies of that edition have survived. The 1632 edition is used in this article. All secondary sources also refer to the 1632 edition

⁸ *Defence*,(a)2. Richard Müller incorrectly states that it was dedicated to James I: "Dieses Buch, das dem Kōenig Jakob I gewidmet wurde, verursachte grosses Aufsehen." See Müller, *Adventisten—Sabbat—Reformation* (Lund:[PUBLISHER?], 1979), p. 156.

SATELMAJER: THEOPHILUS BRABOURNE AND THE SABBATH

and challenged Charles I to call for a return to the biblical Sabbath (*Defence*, a3). He even reminded the King that Old Testament monarchs such as Hezekiah and Josiah became famous by instituting Sabbath reform (*Defence*, a3v.).

The reaction to Brabourne's book was swift and brutal. Charles I directed Bishop Francis White of Ely to deal with the heretic. White's benign response was a book which appeared several years later.⁹ Meanwhile, Brabourne was required to defend his view and his writings. More than twenty years later he recalled some of these occasions: "Many years since, I held a Conference with that Reverend Bishop, D. White, at Ely House in Holbourn, about the Sabbath, it lasted many dayes, an houre or two in a day; after that, I did the like once before Archbishop of Lambeth" (*Indoctus*, 74).

These meetings, however, did not change Brabourne's position on the Sabbath, and neither did the attitude of his opponents soften toward him. He was forced to appear before the High Commission and defend himself

On the day of my censure in the high Commission Court, which lasted a whole afternoon of a long Summers day, neer an hundred Ministers present as I was told, besides hundred of other people: the Bishop of Ely (after the King's advocate had pleaded a long time against me read a discourse against me, about an houre long, wherein he argued against the Sabbath day; some of his Arguments were new things to me not heard of before which at present I could not answer.) (but since as soon as I got out of prison, I have answered his book, though I have not printed it). (*Indoctus*, 100)

Brabourne's chief accuser, Bishop White, did not have a sympathetic recollection of the hearing. White wrote: "But while he was in this heat . . . crying in all places where he came, *Victoria, victoria*: he fell into an *ambuscado*, and being intercepted, he was convented and called to an account, before *Your Grace, and the Honourable Court of High Commission*" (White, a2).

The High Commission, which possessed both ecclesiastical and judicial authority, saw to it that Brabourne served eighteen months at the Gate-House in Westminster. In addition, he spent nine weeks in the prison while being examined. He describes the prison as "nasty" and "loathe-some,"

and the prisoners as "rogues, and louise fellows, and cheaters" (*Indoctus*, 101). Sir Henry Martin, one of Brabourne's judges, was not satisfied that Brabourne merely serve time in prison. This judge called for the death sentence. Brabourne's wife was even given reports that her husband was to be burned (*Indoctus*, 100).

After a year of prison time, Brabourne appeared before William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury. Six months later Brabourne signed a document and was released from prison (Gordon, 567). The document was misunderstood during Brabourne's lifetime, and even today there is confusion as to how it was obtained and what it really stated.

⁹ Francis White, *A Treatise of the Sabbath-day* (London: [PUBLISHER?], 1635).

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Bishop White, Brabourne's chief accuser, wrote that Brabourne became "an unfained conuert, and in a publike and honourable audience, he made his voluntary and humble submission." (White, 305). White failed to mention that it was the prison experience which pushed Brabourne into considering submission to the authorities. A more recent writer, Winton Solberg, is even less accurate, since he does not even mention the prison experience. Solberg writes that the "High Commission induced him to abandon his Judaical views."¹⁰ This statement is incorrect. It was *because* the High Commission could not induce Brabourne to abandon his view that he was forced to serve prison time.

Brabourne certainly did not acknowledge that the statement was offered voluntarily. Two decades later, he reminds his readers that he "did not easily give away to submission." He signed it only after the terrible prison experience, calling the signing a "recantation of a rash word, not of the matter." He reminds his antagonist, Collings, that "I wrote that I confessed it [Sunday] to be an holy day of the Church; and so much I might have said of Christmas Day also" (*In-doctus*, 101).

My examination of the statement¹¹ leads me to the conclusion that Brabourne's analysis is correct. He submitted himself to the church and acknowledged Sunday to be a day of the church. He did not change his position on the Sabbath, but only admitted that he had written and spoken rashly in articulating his position. Did he, as Solberg maintains, abandon his views on the Sabbath? Not at all! After his release from prison, Brabourne wrote six additional books on the Sabbath and one unpublished manuscript which has survived.¹²

Brabourne on the Sabbath

In this section, I will examine Brabourne's views on the Sabbath. It is not within the scope of this paper to thoroughly examine all of his many writings on the subject. The main emphasis will be his 1628 book (*Discourse*), which is foundational to his theology of the Sabbath. In my 1988 article (*AUSS*) I introduced Brabourne and his writings on the Sabbath. In this paper I am focusing on his 1628 book. Limited references will be made to his other writings on the topic.

Brabourne is an aggressive and able defender of the Sabbath. He approaches the topic by discussing the positions of the critics of the Sabbath, analyzing appropriate biblical passages, reviewing historical developments, and discussing ways that the Sabbath should be kept. I will point out the major themes about the Sabbath that he develops.

¹⁰ Winton U. Solberg, *Redeem the Time: The Puritan Sabbath in Early America* (Cambridge, MA: [PUBLISHER?], 1977), 79.

¹¹ The statement is reproduced in Erick T. Bjorck, *A Little Olive Leaf Put in the Mouth of that (so called) Noah's Dove* (New York: [PUBLISHER?], 1704), 30-31.

¹² See n. 5 for a list of his writings on the Sabbath. He also wrote other books (mostly on church government), but they are not related to the subject of this study.

SATELMAJER: THEOPHILUS BRABOURNE AND THE SABBATH

The Word of God, the Law of God and the Fourth Commandment

According to Brabourne, the Sabbath must be discussed in the context of the authority of the Word of God, the law of God, and the nature of the commandments—and more specifically, the fourth commandment.

The authority of the Word of God is foundational to the Sabbath issue, according to Brabourne. He portrays human reason as feeble and insufficient, at best (*Discourse*, 54). In fact, ministers dare not "trust to their reason vntill they finde God in his word to backe them" (55). As evidenced by his writings, Brabourne is not against human reason, but human reason is for him "subseruient and handmaide to the Holy Scriptures" (56). Because Brabourne takes this position about the role of the Bible, he spends considerable effort dealing with texts used by Sabbath critics and texts which support the Sabbath. Likewise, in his discussion of Sunday he appeals to the authority of the Bible. If God intended that Sunday should become the Sabbath, would Christ not have given a command for Sunday to become the Sabbath? asks Brabourne (57). Human conclusions, no matter how logical they are, do not have equal authority to God's revealed will. "Neuer with me, I trust to God," Brabourne proclaims (144).

Brabourne's view of the Word of God leads him to a detailed discussion of the law of God and specifically the ten commandments. For Brabourne it is clear that God's moral law, or commandments, are still in force. The Sabbath, he writes, is "a partice of the Morall Law which is perpetuall" (80).

Brabourne reminds the reader that Christ himself clarified any questions about the moral law, for "Our Sauour Christ himselfe *ratified* the Morall Law, and eury iote and title of it vnto the vvorlde end, Matt. 5.17.18" (183, *emph. added*). The apostles likewise supported the Sabbath as a part of this moral law (212). This moral law is still in force, and it should trouble the conscience of any person to hear it questioned (179).

While Brabourne emphatically maintains the perpetuity of the moral law, he recognizes that there are ceremonial laws that were limited in duration. This distinction separates Brabourne from other Sabbath advocates, such as John Trask, who did not affirm such a distinction in their writings on the Sabbath.¹³

Brabourne defines the differences between the laws very specifically. Here is how he defines the moral law: "I vnderstand nothting else but such a thing as now pertaineth to maneres and our practise, as doth the Sabbath day: and I call the 7th day Sabbath, the Morall Sabbath, because it is a branch of the Morall Law" (*Discourse*, 63). On the ceremonial law, he writes: "I vnderstand such a thing as whilst it stode had respect vnto Christ to be incarnate, and it is now no parte of maneres or our practise, because abolished" (63). This distinction is consistently followed by Brabourne, and it helps him to keep the Sabbath sepa-

¹³ Bryan W. Ball, *The Seventh-Day Men*, (Oxford: [PUBLISHER?], 1997), 58-59.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

rate from ceremonial laws, which had a valuable but nevertheless time-limited function.

The opponents of the Sabbath maintain that the Sabbath is part of the ceremonial law, while Brabourne insists that it is part of the moral law. In order to prove their point, the critics of the Sabbath refer to certain biblical texts. I will now show how Brabourne responds to these texts:

Numbers 28:9-10: In this passage, worshipers are instructed to bring two lambs as an offering on the Sabbath. Opponents of the Sabbath claim that because the instructions for the offering are different from other days, it proves the Sabbath to be ceremonial. Brabourne points out that in Num 28:4-6 the worshipers were to bring one lamb on other days, but that did not "make the working dayes of the weeke ceremoniall and abolisht." And furthermore, why was it that only the time of the Sabbath and not the rest and holiness were abolished, he asks. He concludes that the "Sabbath was a Sabbath in nature and institution before there was any sacrifices" (115). Once again, Brabourne secures the Sabbath to God's act of creation and God's act of giving or instituting the Sabbath.

Deuteronomy 5:15: Critics of the Sabbath claim it to be ceremonial because of its connection to the Exodus from Egypt. Brabourne responds that there are two aspects to the Sabbath: institution and observation. He points out that it was not instituted because of deliverance from Egypt, "for the Sabbath was before they euer went downe into Egypt" (116). While the Sabbath was not given because of the deliverance from Egypt, the deliverance from Egypt may be a cause for the observation of the Sabbath, Brabourne argues (116-17). Even though Christians have not experienced the deliverance from Egypt, Brabourne asks "haue vve [Christians] no many other blessings and deliuerance to moue vs to obedience?" (117).

Matthew 12:8: Opponents of the Sabbath point out that since Christ is the Lord of the Sabbath, He may change it. Brabourne dismisses that argument by asking, "whats that to our question?" The issue is not what may or may not do, but "what Christ did" (154). And since there is no evidence that Christ abolished it, the Sabbath is still with us.

Romans 14:5: In this text (and also Gal. 4:10), critics of the Sabbath claim we are shown that the Sabbath is not different from the other days. Brabourne responds that Paul is referring to days which "vvere in vse amongst the Gentiles, the Romanes and Galatians, before their conversion to the faith." Gal. 4:8-9, he points out, shows that Paul is referring to a time when they did not know God. On the other hand, Brabourne writes that even if Paul is referring to Sabbath, he is only referring to the ceremonial Sabbath, and that is not cause for the Christian to give up the moral Sabbath (119).

Colossians 2:16-17: Opponents of the Sabbath maintain that this passage shows the Sabbath is not only a shadow of things to come, but that the Christian actually is forbidden to keep the Sabbath (121). Brabourne responds that there are two laws: The moral, written by God, and the ceremonial, written by Moses.

SATELMAJER: THEOPHILUS BRABOURNE AND THE SABBATH

Likewise, he maintains there is the moral Sabbath and there are ceremonial Sabbaths (121). It is his conclusion that this passage refers to the ceremonial Sabbaths and the weekly Sabbath. He claims that four "vvorthy diuines of their owne side [in other words, Sunday proponents] recognize the distinction between the moral Sabbath and the ceremonial Sabbaths in this passage. One reason that Brabourne sees v. 16 as referring to ceremonial Sabbaths is because he maintains that the premise is given in v. 14. If v. 14 is the premise, then for him v. 16 is the conclusion (122). He states that the differences between him and the opponents of the Sabbath are not about the duties of the Sabbath, which are rest and holiness, but about the time and day (128).

His concluding comment on Col 2:15 is "if you by this text of Co. 2.16. Doe abolish the very duties of the Sabbath, Rest, and Holines, as you doe, haue you not made faire worke think you, by abolishing that which you call the morality of the Sabbath, euer Rest, and Holinesse."¹⁴

Hebrews 4:10-11: Critics of the Sabbath claim this passage shows the Sabbath to be in heaven only, the early one having been ceremonial and temporary (111). Brabourne asks if it is a good argument to prove the Sabbath is ceremonial, if it is a type of the heavenly Sabbath. He believes that this actually proves the Sabbath to be "an eternal ceremony." And, he goes on, types are not abolished until "their types antetypes and bodies be comne, but must last and endure till then; so circumcision and the passeouer and other the like, they lasted till Christ came." That brings him to this conclusion about the Sabbath: "So then must the Sabbath if a type of heauen, endnre [sic] vntill Heauen be comne" (111, emph. added). And finally, he reminds the reader that it is God who instituted the Sabbath at creation (112).

Biblical Prophecies Concerning the Change of the Sabbath

Brabourne maintains that the Bible is clear in upholding the Sabbath and does not in any way open the door for a change. He also maintains that the early church kept the Sabbath well past the New Testament era. While some regions may not have kept the Sabbath, he maintains that in general the Sabbath was kept until the Council of Laodicea changed it in AD 364 (217).

Brabourne maintains that the change of the Sabbath was predicted by the prophet Daniel. He disassociates himself from those who speak against the Sabbath and does not want to

partake of that brande of a wicked man prophesied of Daniel 7.25. in changing tymes, and the Law: now since it is a propriety of God to change tymes and seasons Dan 2.21. Had not I need be carefull there be no new day (as is the Lords day) fer vp for a Sabbath, vnles it can be expresly infallibly & demonstratiuely proued to be of Gods owne doing? *least I say be necessary to the sin of changeing Godes tymes,* Dan 7.25. (28, emph. added)

¹⁴ 130 (shown in error as p. 118 in the book).

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Brabourne recognizes the statement as a major prophecy concerning the Sabbath. He discusses the Dan 7:25 prophecy at least six times in his 1628 book (28, 102, 125, 167, 217). This position on Dan 7:25 should be of great interest to students of the biblical Sabbath. His identification of the little horn is not unique, but maintaining that the Sabbath is referred to in Dan 7:25 is a significant contribution by Brabourne, making him one of the earliest, if not the earliest, Christian scholars to interpret it as such. LeRoy E. Froom refers to Tillam (1651), Saller (1657), Chamberlen (1682), and Brampfield (1792), who give a similar interpretation to this prophecy.¹⁵ All of these individuals came on the scene after Brabourne. Froom does not even mention Brabourne's interpretation of Dan 7:25. It is of interest that one of these individuals, Peter Chamberlen, was court physician to Charles I at the time Brabourne found himself in great difficulties with the King. Chamberlen became a Sabbath advocate several decades later, but it is not within the purpose of this paper to ask if the writings of Brabourne influenced him.

Who then is responsible for the change? Brabourne gives two interpretations to this question. First, he writes of "that vvicked man, To change tymes and the Law, Dan 7.25" (*Discourse*, 102). In another place he warns the reader against fighting God and siding with "that branded vvicked one in Dan 7.25 vvho thought he might change tymes, and the law" (125). Who is this who would attempt to change the Sabbath? In his second book, Brabourne gives additional insight into his views. He writes: "Oh, how is this abused Commandement [4th], to be deplored & lamented! & how are the Agents herein, to be loathed and abhorred? for they attempt with that wicked man, prophecied on by *Daniel*, to change times & lawes, Dan 7.25. Gods 7th day, into the 8th day" (*Defence*, 296). In the same paragraph, he places responsibility on the papacy, or Roman Catholic Church, for attempting to make the second commandment ceremonial and claiming it is only applicable to Jews and not Christians (296). It is reasonable to reach the conclusion that Brabourne places responsibility for the attempted change predicted in Dan 7:25 on the papacy or the Roman Catholic Church. The fact that he personalizes the one responsible for the predicted changes gives weight to the interpretation that the papacy had significant responsibility.¹⁶

Protestants should not conclude that Brabourne is blaming only Roman Catholics for the attempted elimination of the Sabbath. The Sabbath commandment, writes Brabourne, "is forgotten at all hands vtterly by both Protestantes and Papistes: and so much of the word Remember" (*Discourse*, 78). He takes a somewhat softer position toward his own church, the Church of England. His church "was couered in the chaffe of popery, much a doe to hould life and soule,

¹⁵ LeRoy E. Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, 4 vols. (Washington: Review & Herald, 1954), 4:919.

¹⁶ See for example *Discourse*, 125, where he uses wicked "one," and "he."

SATELMAJER: THEOPHILUS BRABOURNE AND THE SABBATH

and she hath not had a visible face till now of later yeeres from about Luthers tyme, so that this error is to be imputed to the Romishe Church" (62).

Brabourne also assigns to another group the responsibility for the attempted change predicted in Dan 7:25. He holds the Council of Laodicea (AD 364) as one of the parties responsible for the attempt to get rid of God's Sabbath. That council is "guildty of that sine foretould by Daniel 7.25" (167). Even though this attempt at changing the Sabbath was prophesied by Daniel, Brabourne does not take away from the council the responsibility for the act. He reminds the reader that in the Book of Revelation Laodicea is the "worst of the 7 [churches]" (167, *emph. added*).

Brabourne also warns the reader about participating in this act predicted in Daniel. He exhorts the reader to "Beware ye be not found fighters against God; and to side it vvith that branded vvicked one in Dan 7.25. vvho thought he might change tymes, and the law" (125). The change of the Sabbath was not a random act. God foresaw that "after a longe time, that is about 364. yeeres after Christ, this his Sabbath wold be not in part violated, but vvtterly and altogether blotted out of remembrance in the Church for 1200. yeeres" (77). Students of history and the Sabbath know that the Sabbath did not disappear as much as Brabourne believes, but there is no question that a major blow was given to the Sabbath. This act against the Sabbath, he points out, was foreseen by God and communicated by God's prophet.

Other Aspects of the Sabbath

A prolific writer on the Sabbath, Brabourne deals with various aspects of this topic. I am not able to deal with every aspect he covers, but in this section I will identify some of the other aspects of the Sabbath that Brabourne develops.

Sabbath given at creation. Throughout his writings, Brabourne persistently reminds the reader that the Sabbath is universal and not given to only a particular people for a limited period of time. Brabourne points out that because God gave the Sabbath at creation, if Christ had intended to leave another Sabbath (Lord's day, or Sunday), Christ likewise have left a commandment for it (57).

The Sabbath, thus, is "a signe of the work of creation" (195). The Sabbath is an active sign because it "is a meanes to keepe in memory the miraculouse worke of creation" (191). Brabourne then puts forth an argument for the perpetuity of the Sabbath which is biblically supported, logical, and obvious, except that I have not noticed it advanced by other writers. He states that "there was neuer any helpe or meanes, once appointed to keep memory of the vvordls creation, which was afterwards abolisht, and if none were abolisht, then euery one that once vvas, remaineth still" (192). Indeed, how could a memorial to creation be abolished as long as God's creation exists? The Sabbath, which is a memorial to creation, must then exist along with God's creation.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Uniqueness of the Sabbath. The Sabbath is a specific day because, writes Brabourne, "Seventh it is to be noted, that it is not a Cardinall number, but an Ordinall, notifying which for order" (69). In other words, God did not appoint one day out of seven to be the Sabbath, He appointed the seventh day. To those who claim that it does not matter which day we give to God, Brabourne responds, "vvy then did God take such care to decipher out the very day vvherein he vvold be served?" (71). Further, Brabourne emphasizes the uniqueness by writing that God "culled out the 7th day from the others" (71). The Sabbath thus gives "God the full glory of his worke of creation [more] then can any man" (97, *emph. added*).

Justification, Sanctification and the Sabbath. For Brabourne, the "Sacramentes be signs of justification" (198). For him, justification is an act of God. Sanctification is also an act of God, for it is He "hath freely bestowed vpon vs, euery good and perfect gifte vvhatsoeuer is in vs, Iam. 1.17" (199). The Sabbath, he maintains, is a sign of our sanctification (198), for the Sabbath is a sign between God and His people (130). The weekly Sabbath reminds us that "the Holy God is that fountaine and authour of our sanctification and holinesse" (197). God is our sanctifier, and the Sabbath, which God has appointed to teach us sanctification, cannot be eliminated (196).

Keeping the Sabbath. Brabourne offers a rather lengthy explanation that the Sabbath should be kept only during the daylight hours of the seventh day. It is not, he maintains, a period of twenty-four hours that is to be kept (83). More important, however, are his statements on what it means to keep the Sabbath. While it is true that God forbade "vnnecessary seruile vvork" (107). God does not forbid "works of charity and necessity" (105). After all (107), Christ allowed a healed man to carry his bed on the Sabbath. Brabourne, we may note, places greater emphasis on what can be done on the Sabbath rather than on what cannot be done. He writes that it is acceptable on the Sabbath to lead a beast to water, "pluck and ruble eares of corne," help a beast out of a ditch, and kindle a fire (106). Brabourne concludes that there are broad reasons for keeping the Sabbath: (1) For worship and service, or specifically to honor God with our worship and service. (2) For the good of mankind, benefitting both the soul and the body, and, (3) For the good of the animals (146).

The Sabbath in the early Christian Church. Brabourne is familiar with some of the early references to the conflict between Sabbath and Sunday. For example, he maintains that Ignatius did not speak against the Sabbath, but rather he spoke against the wrong understanding of the Sabbath (161). He argues that the Sabbath was kept for 300-400 years after Christ by the churches "reputed [to be] the most pure Churches" (215, *emph. added*). The Sabbath, he posits, was in use until the Council of Laodicea action in AD 364, at "which they exacted a Lavv against it, [the Sabbath] or else they made a Law against nothing" (217). Indeed, why would the Council of Laodicea address the Sabbath issue if the Sabbath was abandoned by the very early Christians? This obvious, but ignored,

SATELMAJER: THEOPHILUS BRABOURNE AND THE SABBATH

point by Brabourne does show that the Sabbath was alive nearly four hundred years after the start of the Christian church.

Sunday in the Christian Church and Appeal for Patience. This strong proponent of the Sabbath felt that there is a role for Sunday in the Christian church. It does not in any way replace the Sabbath, because there is no biblical support for such a position. Sunday can never become the Sabbath (32, 36, 50, 57, 59). The rightful role of Sunday, or Lord's day, is to remind Christians of the resurrection, for it "was insituted for the memory of the resurrection (193).

Brabourne recognizes that his position on the Sabbath must sound radical to his fellow Christians. The Sabbath has been forgotten because the "Romish Church" blotted out the fourth and second commandments. Since Luther's time, however, "by the mercy of God, the chaffe hath beene fanned away, yet haue we not had a setteled constant shine of the Sune of the Gospell" (225). Because God is a God of mercy, He understands the challenges Christians have, and we need to be tolerant on the Sabbath issue "vntill the tyme of reformation" (235).

Conclusions and Need for Further Research

Theophilus Brabourne is a major contributor to our understanding of the theology of the biblical Sabbath. In this paper I have provided a summary of his position on the Sabbath as he stated it in his first book, with only incidental references to his other writings. Three hundred seventy years after his book was published, what can we learn from Brabourne? What directions does he point to for additional research? I believe the following helps us to focus on these questions:

1. The Sabbath is not an appendix to the biblical message. It is integral part of the Word of God. Brabourne does not see the need to make any apologies for the Sabbath. It is a gift from God.

2. There is no conflict between God's law, the Gospel, and the Sabbath. Brabourne is biblically sound in his explanation of how we receive justification and salvation—it is from God. As part of God's plan for humanity, the Sabbath in no way conflicts with God's plan of salvation.

3. The opponents of the Sabbath demonstrate a dearth of creativity in their efforts to explain away the Sabbath. I make this statement from the perspective of a Sabbath proponent, yet I believe I can be objective enough to observe that while the anti-Jewish arguments have been toned down or eliminated, today's arguments otherwise sound very much the same as the ones used during Brabourne's time.

4. Brabourne is more interested in explaining what it means to keep the Sabbath than in arguing about what cannot be done on the Sabbath. It seems to me that Sabbath proponents today would do well to follow his lead.

5. It is fair to conclude from Brabourne's writings that many others addressed the question of the Sabbath, but that their writings have been ignored. Because the writings of Sabbath proponents were often labeled heretical, a sig-

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

nificant number have been destroyed. On the other hand, Sabbath proponents would do well to research further that which is available. Sabbath proponents must go beyond the question of which day is the Sabbath and what cannot be done on the Sabbath. There is a need to get away from shallow arguments for or against the Sabbath and a need to address the biblical, theological, and historical issues of the Sabbath.

6. Brabourne rightly places the Sabbath question in the context of the total biblical message. The Sabbath, apart from God's act of giving it and the biblical message about it, has no value other than to be a day of physical rest and inactivity.

7. Brabourne ably shows that the Sabbath is a part of the biblical prophecies given by God for His people. Thus, the Sabbath is central to the conflict between God and His adversaries.

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Revisiting the Sabbath in the Book of Revelation

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One of the most widespread teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is that the central issue in the final crisis of earth's history has to do with the Sabbath command of the Decalogue. Adventists believe that the inhabitants of the world will one day have to choose between worship of the true God on His Sabbath day and worship of a false god on another day.

But this teaching is increasingly coming under attack, both inside and outside the church. For one thing, many Adventists have noticed that the term "Sabbath" nowhere occurs in the Book of Revelation. Many have, therefore, come to wonder whether Adventist teaching is based on the Bible or whether it is only sustainable on the basis of assertion and/or the writings of Ellen White. Furthermore, the Sabbath-Sunday issue itself seems to have little relevance to people in today's world. If you ask average people on the street whether Saturday or Sunday is the right day to worship, they are likely to reply, "You Christians fight over nonsense like that? Why should one bother going to church at all?"

In such a negative environment toward an Adventist teaching, it is helpful to revisit the issue of the Sabbath in the Book of Revelation. Is there an exegetical basis for the assertion that the Sabbath is the central issue in the final crisis of earth's history? Does the author of Revelation point us in the direction of the Sabbath in the final crisis or have Adventists read their position, without justification, back into the Biblical text?

The Language of Allusion

In order to answer this question it is necessary to understand a basic characteristic of the Book of Revelation. Revelation is filled with the language, ideas, places, and people of the Old Testament. Although it is a New Testament

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

book, the basic language structure of the Book of Revelation builds on the experiences of God's people as recorded in the Old Testament. Many people, therefore, fail to fully grasp the message of Revelation because they do not take seriously the Old Testament nature of its language.

But those who seek to understand the Old Testament roots of Revelation quickly run into a major problem. The Book of Revelation never *quotes* the Old Testament, it only *alludes* to it with a word here, a phrase there, a name somewhere else. Although it is essential to notice the Old Testament references within the Book of Revelation, it can be quite difficult to know exactly when the author of Revelation intends to allude to the Old Testament. Careful strategies need to be employed to ensure that the interpreter of Revelation draws out the actual meaning of the text rather than imposing some external meaning onto the text.

I wrote my own doctoral dissertation on the seven trumpets of Revelation. Few subjects could possibly be more challenging. I quickly discovered that I would make little headway in the trumpets without a consistent and biblical strategy for determining the Old Testament roots of the passage. Let me share that strategy with you in a nutshell first, and then I will illustrate it at some length.

A Strategy for Evaluating Allusions

First, use Bible margins, commentaries, concordances, and lists of allusions (such as the lists in the back of the standard Greek texts by Nestle-Aland) to develop a list of potential allusions to the Old Testament that these various sources believe occur in a given passage of Revelation. This list is not to be accepted uncritically, but must be carefully evaluated.

Second, place the selected passage of Revelation side-by-side with the various Old Testament passages on your list. Identify verbal, thematic, and structural parallels between Revelation and each of the Old Testament passages you are evaluating.

Third, weigh the verbal, thematic, and structural evidence to determine whether there is an allusion to the Old Testament (an intentional reference by the author to a specific context in earlier literature) or merely an echo (a possibly unintentional reference based upon the author's general knowledge of earlier literature and/or its influence on his environment).

Fourth, apply the appropriate insights to the text of Revelation. If the author is consciously alluding to the Old Testament, he may assume that the reader is familiar with that particular Old Testament text and its larger context. It would, in such a case, be essential for the interpreter to be aware of the allusion and of the impact of its context on the text of Revelation. If the author is merely echoing the Old Testament text without conscious intent, the interpreter must be careful not to import an Old Testament context that the author of Revelation did not have in mind. In other words, you can misread Revelation in two ways: by

PAULIEN: REVISITING THE SABBATH IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION

ignoring the role of the Old Testament in the author's language and by overplaying its impact.

Let me offer an example of how the Old Testament impacts on the interpretation of a text in Revelation. Revelation 13:1-2 contains a fascinating allusion to the Old Testament: "And I saw a beast coming out of the sea. He had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on his horns, and on each head a blasphemous name. The beast I saw resembled a leopard but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion . . ." Most scholars presume that Rev 13 is based on Dan 7, where four beasts come up out of the sea. Let's evaluate that assumption.

Daniel 7 describes four animals that come up out of the sea; a lion, a bear, a leopard, and a bizarre, non-descript monster with iron teeth and ten horns on its head. Since the leopard is depicted with four heads, this gang of four has a total of seven heads between them. They also have a total of ten horns between them. Remember the beast of Rev 13? Like the beasts of Dan 7, it comes up out of the sea. It has characteristics of a lion, a bear, and a leopard. It has seven heads and ten horns, a clear parallel to the total number of heads and horns on the four beasts of Dan 7. It seems clear, then, that Rev 13:1-2 builds on the vision of Dan 7.

Verbal, Thematic and Structural Parallels

But things are rarely this clear in Revelation. How do you make judgments about the Old Testament background of Revelation when the evidence is less clear than it is in Rev 13? You place a text in Revelation side by side with a prospective source text in the Old Testament. Carefully comparing the two, you look for three types of evidence between the two texts: verbal parallels, thematic parallels, and structural parallels.

Verbal parallels occur whenever there are two or more major words in common between a passage in Revelation and the prospective source text in the Old Testament. Minor words such as prepositions, conjunctions, and definite articles do not usually count. The more major words the two passages have in common, the more likely the author intended the reader to see the parallel and apply the significance of the Old Testament text to his or her understanding of Revelation. In our example of Rev 13 and Dan 7 the verbal parallels are sea, lion, bear, leopard, heads and horns; one of the stronger verbal parallels to the Old Testament in the entire book of Revelation.

Thematic parallels can occur between passages even though there is only one word (or even no word) in common between them. Thematic parallels involve a parallel of theme or idea, not necessarily signaled by parallel words. By themselves, thematic parallels are the weakest of the three types of evidence for a direct allusion. In Rev 13 there is a thematic parallel with Dan 7 in terms of animals representing world powers and coming out of the sea.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Structural parallels occur where a number of words and themes are parallel between a portion of Revelation and a particular context in the Old Testament. Structural parallels to the Old Testament on a larger scale in Revelation provide strong evidence for intentional allusions in the smaller details of the text of Revelation. Examples of well-recognized structural parallels in Revelation include the use of Ezekiel in Rev 4, 7, and 17-22; the use of Daniel in Rev 5, 13, and 17; the use of Gen 3 in Rev 12; the plagues of the Exodus in the trumpets and the bowls; and the fall of ancient Babylon in Rev 16-19. In Rev 13 there are numerous and striking parallels to Dan 7, although they do not occur in exactly the same order. In both passages beasts come up out of the sea, seven heads and ten horns are involved, and reference is made to a lion, a bear, and a leopard.

In conclusion, while the author's use of the Old Testament in the Book of Revelation is often more ambiguous than we would like, careful attention to the words, themes, and structures within the Book of Revelation can bring us much closer to the author's intentions in his use of the Old Testament and, therefore, offers a clearer window into his intentions for how the book should be interpreted.

The Context of Revelation 12-14

Let's return to the issue that called forth this paper, the role of the Sabbath in the final crisis of earth's history. The foundation text on the subject of the final crisis in the Book of Revelation is Rev 12:17. There we find described a war between the dragon and the remnant, a war that is fleshed out in more detail in Rev 13 and 14. In a sense, Rev 12:17 is a summary in advance of the whole end-time crisis, and chapters 13 and 14 serve as exegesis and elaboration of the basic statement of 12:17. Revelation 13 fleshes out the dragon's war, while Rev 14 expands on the character and message of the Remnant.

The dragon pursues his war against the Remnant in chapter 13. He calls up two allies for the conflict: one comes up out of the sea, and the other comes up out of the earth. The three characters—dragon, beast from the sea, and beast from the earth—form an unholy trinity which seeks to counterfeit the work of the true trinity. The dragon counterfeits the work of God the Father, the sea beast counterfeits the work of God the Son, and the land beast counterfeits the work of the Holy Spirit. These three together attack the Remnant in the final battle.

What is the basic issue in this attack? Revelation 13 and 14 do not leave us in any doubt. (Rev 13:4, 8, 12, 15; 14:9, 11) On seven different occasions, the text of these chapters talk about worshiping the dragon, worshiping the sea beast, or worshiping the image of the beast. The issue in the final crisis of earth's history is clearly worship. In striking contrast to this seven-fold call to worship the unholy trinity or the image of the beast is the single call to worship God in these chapters (Rev 14:7). The call to "worship Him who made the heaven and the earth, the sea, and the fountains of water" becomes, therefore, the central

PAULIEN: REVISITING THE SABBATH IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION

affirmation of this whole section of Revelation. It is perhaps the central appeal of the entire book. All the material in chapters 12-14 zeros in on this call to worship. Worship is clearly the central issue in the final crisis of earth's history.

The interesting thing is that the language of this central affirmation is based on the fourth commandment expressions in Exod 20:11. There it states, "In six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them . . ." This language is reflected in Rev 14:7: "Worship Him who made the heaven and the earth, the sea, and the fountains of water." At the decisive centerpoint of Revelation's description of the final crisis is a direct allusion to Exod 20. Attention to the Sabbath command is, therefore, the ideal response to God's final call to worship, the ideal response to the beast's seven-fold call to worship the Unholy Trinity.

Revelation 14:7 and the Old Testament

Verbal Parallels. At this point sharp readers may offer an objection. How do we know that the author of Revelation consciously intended the reader to pick up an allusion to the fourth commandment at exactly this point (Rev 14:7) in his narrative? Doesn't Ps 146:6 contain exactly the same language as Exod 20? How do we know that John was quoting Exod 20 and not Ps 146? Could he not be alluding to the psalm instead, in which case no allusion to the fourth commandment would apparently be intended?

The point is well taken. Psalm 146:6 says, "The Maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them. . ." This is very close, verbally, to "Him who made the heaven and the earth, the sea, and the fountains of water" (Rev 14:7). In fact, in the Septuagint version of the Old Testament (a Greek translation from the Hebrew available in New Testament times) the wording of Ps 146 (listed as Ps 145 in the Septuagint) is virtually identical to that of Rev 14:7. So there are strong verbal parallels in Rev 14 to both Exod 20 and Ps 146, with a slight edge, perhaps, going to Ps 146 rather than Exod 20.

Thematic Parallels. But verbal parallels are only one type of evidence for a conscious allusion to the Old Testament in Revelation. Thematic and structural parallels are also significant. Are there thematic parallels between Rev 14:7 and Exod 20? Yes. The first four of the ten commandments (Exod 20:3-11) contain three motivations for obedience. First, there is the motivation of salvation. The preamble to the ten commandments (Exod 20:2-3) says, "I brought you out of the land of Egypt, therefore have no other gods before Me." Our obedience is to be a response to what God has done for us. Second, there is the motivation of judgment. The second commandment talks about "visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation" (Exod 20:5). There are consequences for disobedience. Third, there is the motivation of creation. "Worship Him who made . . ." (Exod 20:11). I have made you, I know what is best for you. So there are three motivations to obedience in the first part of the law: salvation, judgment, and creation.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

The same three motivations occur in the context of Rev 14:7. Rev 14:6 speaks of an angel who proclaims "the everlasting gospel." Here we see the motive of salvation. In Rev 14:7 we see the motive of judgment as well. "Fear God and give Him glory, for the hour of His judgment has come." And we have already seen the motivation of creation in Rev 14:7, "Worship the one who made. . ." So Rev 14:6-7 has the same three motivations for response as the first table of the ten commandments (the godward side of the first four): salvation, judgment, and creation. And they even occur in the same order as they do in Exod 20!

Do any of these themes occur also in Ps 146? Yes. There is the theme of salvation: "Do not put your trust in princes, in mortal men who cannot save. . . Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob" (Ps 146:3,5). There is the theme of creation: "Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord his God, the Maker of heaven and earth . . ." (Ps 146:5-6). There is the theme of judgment: "He upholds the cause of the oppressed" (Ps 146:7). The thematic parallels to Ps 146, therefore, are as strong as those to Exod 20, but not in exactly the same order. So in this case, we can conclude that there is strong evidence pointing to both Old Testament contexts, but there is a slight edge to Exod 20 on the grounds that the themes occur in the same order in both Rev 14 and Exod 20.

Structural Parallels. That brings us to the search for structural parallels. Let's look at the evidence in Rev 12-14. The ten commandments, of which Exod 20:11 is a part, seems to be a major structure underlying this whole section of Revelation. The Remnant are characterized, among other things, as those who "keep the commandments of God" (Rev 12:17; 14:12). But the issue here is not just any commandments of God. The central issue is focused on "worship" (Rev 13:4, 8, 12, 15; Rev 14:7, 9, 11). Worship in particular focuses attention on the first table of the commandments (the first four), those that have to do with our relationship with God.

Given this reality, it is not surprising that in Rev 13 the beasts not only counterfeit the persons of the godhead, but counterfeit each of the first four commandments of the Decalogue, as well. The first commandment says, "You shall have no other gods before me," but the sea beast takes the place of God by receiving worship of itself (Rev 13:4, 8). The second commandment warns against the worship of images, yet the land beast raises up an image to be worshiped (Rev 13:14-15). The third commandment says, "You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God," but the sea beast has the names of blasphemy written all over it (Rev 13:1, 5, 6).

The fourth commandment says, "Remember the Sabbath day." Ancient covenant tablets were stamped in the center with a seal of ownership and authority. Since the ten commandments follow the form of ancient covenant tablets, they too have a seal of ownership and authority in the center: the Sabbath command. "For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the

PAULIEN: REVISITING THE SABBATH IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION

sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy" (Exod 20:11).

The above statement is the only place in the ten commandments where the basis of God's authority over all creation is stated: He is the creator. This concept of a seal is important in Revelation, as well: the 144,000 are sealed on their foreheads (Rev 14:1, cf. Rev 7:3–4; Exod 31:13, 17). The unholy trinity offers a counterfeit to the seal as well: the mark of the beast (Rev 13:16–17). Thus, all four commandments in the first table of the law come under attack by the unholy trinity of Rev 13. The first table of the law is at the center of the battle between the dragon and the remnant.

This series of verbal and thematic connections between the material in this part of Revelation and passages related to the ten commandments indicates that a major structural parallel to this part of Revelation is the ten commandments, particularly the first portion relating to humanity's relationship with God. This structural evidence offers overwhelming support for the likelihood that the significant verbal parallel between Rev 14:7 and Exod 20:11 was intentional on the part of the author of Revelation. There is absolutely no similar relationship between Revelation and Ps 146.

Conclusion. The cumulative evidence is so strong that an interpreter could conclude that there is no direct allusion to the Old Testament in Revelation that is more certain than the allusion to the fourth commandment in Rev 14:7. When the author of Revelation describes God's final appeal to the human race in the context of the end-time deception, he does so in terms of a call to worship the creator in the context of the fourth commandment.

The Issue of Relevance

But even if it is biblical, does it make any sense to see the Sabbath as some kind of defining issue in the final crisis of earth's history? Why would God pick such an issue as the central focus of the end-time crisis?

At the heart of the matter is the fact that the Sabbath is an ideal way to test whether people are truly loyal to God. The Sabbath command is different from the other nine. All the others have a certain basis in reason and self-interest; after all, the principles of the second table of the law (how we are to relate to others) are the foundation of government in most countries. "Thou shalt not kill" is logical to anyone who does not wish to be killed. "Thou shalt not steal" makes sense to anyone who wants to protect his or her hard-earned possessions. Commands like this are reasonable and even appeal to a certain amount of self-interest. The same goes for the first three commandments concerning our relationship with God. If God is who He claims to be, it makes no sense to worship someone else.

The one part of the Ten Commandments that is not logical is the command to worship on Saturday rather than on some other day. Such a command is so lacking in logic and self-interest that secular people find it hard to take seriously.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

After all, no one has been able to demonstrate any logical or scientific basis for seeing any one day as more special to God than any other. The sun shines and the rain falls in the usual amounts on both Saturday and Sunday. To keep the Sabbath is to take God at His word in spite of the fact that the five senses can perceive no evidence that to do so is reasonable. The Sabbath at the end is like the tree at the beginning. The fruit of the tree of knowledge was probably both tasty and nutritious. The only reason not to eat was because God said so.

So it is with the Sabbath. The only reason to prefer Saturday over Sunday is because God said so; there is no other reason. We accept the Sabbath purely on the basis of God's Word. It is, therefore, a good test of our trust in God and His Word. We accept the Sabbath on the basis of the Word of God. We believe that the Scriptures give a reliable account of the mind and will of God. They are a trustworthy record of God's dealings in the past, and they are a reliable account of the true realities of the end-time. Because we believe the Scriptures, we trust the account of the end-time that we find there.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Book of Revelation portrays the end of the world as a time of great, worldwide deception which will overwhelm the five senses, even in the people of God. However, those who believe, accept, and obey the Word of God will not lose their way in the end-time deception.

A Holocaust of Deception: Lying to Save Life and Biblical Morality

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Imagine yourself a Christian in Nazi Germany in the 1940s. Against the law, you've decided to give asylum in your home to an innocent Jewish family fleeing death. Without warning gestapo agents arrive at your door and confront you with a direct question: "Are there any Jews on your premises?" What would you say? What would you do?¹

Thus begins a captivating but controversial article in a recent Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) magazine. "In Defense of Rahab" stirred up a passionate debate on the virtues and vices of lying to save life. While there were some letters expressing concern,² others showed strong support.³ As a now retired professor of religion stated: "In one brief article [the author] laid out the big picture of Rahab's 'lie'—not only with common sense but with a biblical setting that should put to rest the porcelain argument that no one should lie under any condition."⁴

Though some may feel that these issues have no relevance for life in the "real world," our magazine author rightly reminds us that "the issue is far from theoretical."⁵ Exploring the story of Rahab in Joshua 2, he comes to the following conclusions:

1. Morality can be learned from Scripture stories where the Bible does not directly condemn the activities engaged in in the actual narrative.⁶

¹"In Defense of Rahab," *Adventist Review*, December 1997, 24.

²See, for example, "Letters," *Adventist Review*, February 1998, 2-3.

³See, for example, "Letters," *Adventist Review*, February 1998, 2; "Letters," *Adventist Review*, May 1998, 2.

⁴"Letters," *Adventist Review*, February 1998, 2.

⁵"In Defense of Rahab," 24.

⁶After briefly introducing the topic of lying to save life, the author states: "In what follows, I want to explore what we might learn from an Old Testament incident, the story of Rahab"; "In Defense of Rahab," 24. In the retelling of this narrative, he queries, "How would Rahab respond? How should she respond?" *Ibid.*, 25. After reminding us of her misleading response, he notes: "We

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

2. Motives are vital for determining an action's moral validity. In other words, misleading a potential murderer is in "perfect conformity" to the "spirit" of God's law.⁷

3. "Christians (and everyone else, for that matter) are sometimes forced to choose between two or more evils. In those cases [just as in Rahab's], we are not condemned by God for choosing the best of the bad options."⁸

4. Potential consequences of any action must be carefully considered, and rigorously avoided if life-threatening.⁹ Since human life is considered most important, it needs to be protected even at the cost of truth.¹⁰

In a subsequent article, "Rahab Revisited," the author attempted to clarify some theories promulgated in the first document. Since these articles on Rahab

find an almost exact parallel to this story in 2 Samuel 17:15-22, in which the wife of an Israelite farmer saved the lives of David's spies during Absalom's attempted coup, a critical decision that saved the day for David and his regime"; *ibid.*, 26. Then, the writer says that this Israelite woman was "not culpable" of any wrongdoing; nor were "Pharaoh's midwives," "even though their report to the monarch was not in keeping with the facts of the case; nor was Rahab"; *ibid.* Toward the end of this article, the author declares: "The tacit condemnation of this great woman (as she turned out to be) is unwarranted. The Bible does not condemn her"; *ibid.*

⁷In order to demonstrate the importance of incorporating motive when discussing truth and falsehood, the author observes: "If a lie is the simple utterance of an untruth, then the student who writes on a test paper that London in the capital of Japan is lying"; "In Defense of Rahab," 26. Then, he declares that "Common sense would dictate that intent and motive must come into the equation"; *ibid.* Finally, he proposes the following: "To lie, as I see it, is to make a false statement, with wicked or malicious or selfish intent to [impress,] deceive or mislead"; *ibid.* (The word "impress" was added in a subsequent article: "Rahab Revisited," *Adventist Review*, March 1998, 5). Thus, deceptive "undercover activities in the accomplishment of the divine purpose" are considered morally right; "In Defense of Rahab," 25. The writer contends that only a "wooden interpretation of the [ninth] commandment" would call for telling the truth even when someone's life is at stake; *ibid.*, 26. He concludes this article maintaining that those who saved lives by misleading their pursuers, "broke no valid law—human or divine. Indeed, so far as divine law was concerned, they acted in perfect conformity to its spirit"; *ibid.*

⁸"In Defense of Rahab," 26. The subtitle of the article reads: "Sometimes we're confronted with two or more bad options. When that happens, what should we do?" *Ibid.*, 24. Finally, in connection with Rahab, he notes: "Rahab chose what she considered the best of the bad options facing her"; *ibid.*, 26.

⁹In setting the framework for the story of Rahab, the author reminds us of the strategic importance of Jericho, the first challenge the Israelites faced as they prepared to enter Canaan. He insists that "a failure here would spell psychological disaster for the invading forces. But a decisive victory would send shock waves throughout the entire area, unnerving less-protected leaders"; "In Defense of Rahab," 24. Later, he argues that had Rahab remained silent when asked about the spies, such refusal to speak "would have been fatal to the spies, for it would have triggered an exhaustive search of the premises. On the other hand, to have disclosed the whereabouts of her visitors would have led to their certain imprisonment or death at an exceedingly critical time in Israel's history"; *ibid.*, 26.

¹⁰Personal interview with the author of "In Defense of Rahab," 25 November 1998. The author asks: "What should the Christian do, when telling the naked truth can result in the direct loss of innocent human life?" "In Defense of Rahab," 26. After creatively reconstructing the definition of a "lie," he says that Rahab was not guilty of telling a lie, and should not be condemned, since the Bible purportedly does not do so; *ibid.*

DU PREEZ: A HOLOCAUST OF DECEPTION

have so well articulated the major concepts in this debate on lying to save life, they will become the main springboard for discussion in this study, though other works will be utilized and examined as needed.

But wait! Before going further, note this urgent caution:

Without the guidance of the Holy Spirit we shall be continually liable to wrest the Scriptures or to misinterpret them.¹¹

Never should the Bible be studied without prayer. Before opening its pages we should ask for the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, and it will be given.¹²

In addition to the vital necessity of prayer (see Matt 7:7; John 16:13; James 1:5), one other warning needs to be contemplated: Articulate writers who are committed to bringing conviction to their readers, may be easily tempted to employ strongly emotive expressions which tend to manipulate the mind. However, in order to consider this contentious issue of lying to save life as open-mindedly and dispassionately as possible, a concerted effort will be made in this article to conscientiously avoid all forms of sarcasm,¹³ any crafty caricatures,¹⁴ blunt language,¹⁵ harsh rhetoric,¹⁶ or unkind remarks. Since God's word summons all believers to meditate on only that which is pure, true, lovely, and worthy of praise (Phil 4:8), and since we are called to faithfully "speak the truth with love" (Eph 4:15 ERV), it is vital that the "conversation" concerning truth and falsehood be done in a compassionate and Christlike manner.

Critical Biblical Principles

In 1997 one third of all adults in the United States of America believed that in our contemporary society "lying is sometimes necessary."¹⁷ Just the year

¹¹Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1908), 110.

¹²*Ibid.*, 91.

¹³Unfortunately, rather sharp sarcasm appears in "In Defense of Rahab," 25: "What would you have done were you in Rahab's place? Would you have said to the agents: 'I'm devastated you asked, but as a Christian I have to tell the truth. They're on the rooftop. Look under the flax; you'll find them there.'"

¹⁴A typical example of this type of caricature appears in "In Defense of Rahab," 26: "If a lie is the simple utterance of an untruth, then the student who writes on a test paper that London is the capital of Japan is lying."

¹⁵Those who hold a view opposing the author's are said to "go berserk over [Rahab's] misdirection of the Jericho police"; "In Defense of Rahab," 25. They are accused of offering "simplistic solutions to complex issues," and of having "a wooden interpretation of the [ninth] commandment"; *ibid.*, 26.

¹⁶Those who disagree with the author's view are charged with "irrational overenthusiasm," and "extreme positions"; "In Defense of Rahab," 25. In a follow-up article, he named someone who pointed out the "dire eschatological consequences" of what he'd written, and then added: "Such incredible leaps of logic always take me by surprise"; "Rahab Revisited," 5. He continued: "Let's do a little thinking for a change"; *ibid.*, implying that those who disagree with his view do not think.

¹⁷See a report of some of the findings of the Barna Research Group in "Awash in a Sea of Relativism," *Adventist Review*, August 1997, 5.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

before it was reported that "ninety-one percent confess that they regularly don't tell the truth."¹⁸ As a result of a nationwide survey, a well-respected researcher concluded that, "America appears to be drowning in a sea of relativistic, non-biblical theology. We are living amid the dilution of traditional, Bible-based Christian faith."¹⁹ It is against this backdrop of living in a non-absolutistic culture, that the Scriptures portray a community of believers "who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" (Rev 14:12).²⁰

Therefore, if we are to accurately ascertain whether or not it is ever appropriate to lie to save life, it is absolutely imperative that a hermeneutically reliable investigation be done of this issue in the Bible. The Psalmist says that, as a "lamp on my path" (Ps 119:105 CJB), God's Word provides guidance for making correct ethical decisions. In parallel fashion, the well-known passage in 2 Timothy 3:16, 17 indicates that "all Scripture is given by God and is useful" for "showing people what is wrong in their lives," and "for teaching how to live right" (NCV).²¹ As Ellen White observed: "God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms."²²

Furthermore, while all doctrinal truths are to be found in Scripture, its central focus is Jesus Christ; for as He Himself noted, the "Scriptures tell about me!" (John 5:39 ERV). Indeed, John the Beloved reminds us that the very reason he recorded the story of Jesus was so that "you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31). This is ultimately the central purpose of all of the Bible, including the narrative portions—to point to Jesus Christ, who is the Savior of the world, as well as the Lord of all life; One who not only reclaims and redeems from sin (John 1:29), but One who also reforms and transforms the sinner (2 Cor 5:17). Thus, only when all of Scripture is seen as focusing on the Savior can it be appropriately understood and correctly applied.

In almost every discussion of ethical issues the question of "legalism" is raised. Thus, we must briefly consider the matter of obedience here. In his theological treatise to the Christians in Rome, Paul categorically declares that human beings are "justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law" (Rom 3:28). Then, he asks: "Does this mean that we do away with the Law when we put our trust in Christ?" (Rom 3:31a NLV). Compellingly Paul states: "Not at

¹⁸Laura Schlessinger, *The Ten Commandments: The Significance of God's Laws in Everyday Life* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1998), 268, quoting a June 7, 1996, *New York Times* article.

¹⁹"Awash in a Sea of Relativism," 5.

²⁰See *ibid.* All Scripture references in this study are from the New King James Version (NKJV), unless otherwise indicated.

²¹When Paul uses the term "Scripture" we know that he includes both Old and New Testament material, since this is the way he uses the term in his earlier letter to Timothy; see 1 Timothy 5:18, where he quotes from both Deuteronomy 25:4 (the Old Testament), as well as Luke 10:7 (the New Testament).

²²Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1939), 595.

DU PREEZ: A HOLOCAUST OF DECEPTION

all! Rather, we uphold the law" (Rom 3:31b NIV). This identical concept can be recognized from the manner in which the Ten Commandments are articulated in the book of Exodus. First, and foremost, God reminded His people: "I am the Lord your God. I led you out of the land of Egypt where you were slaves" (Exod 20:2 ERV). Only then, after God had established that it was He who had freed them from bondage, did He lay down His ethical expectations. Thus, God first redeems, then He requires; He saves people, then tells them how to serve Him and others. Clearly, this is not legalism! The one who has been delivered from sin will live in conformity to God's moral mandates. As Jesus noted in John 14:15 (NIV): "If you love me, you will obey what I command." This precise sequence of "love" preceding obedience is already evident in the Decalogue itself, where God promises to show mercy to those "who love Me and keep My commandments" (Exod 20:6). Ellen White concurs, saying:

We do not earn salvation by our obedience, for salvation is the free gift of God, to be received by faith. But obedience is the fruit of faith. . . . If we abide in Christ, if the love of God dwells in us, our feelings, our thoughts, our purposes, our actions, will be in harmony with the will of God as expressed in the precepts of His holy law.²³

Before addressing the specific concern of truth-telling in exceptional situations, one other vital element needs to be highlighted, and that is the issue of Scripture stories. Even a casual review of the Old and New Testaments reveals irrefutably that "biblical narrative is replete with realistic figures seen in all their human frailty."²⁴ For example:

Literary scholars have long noted the amazing transparency of biblical portraits. Samson's carnality, David's lust, Solomon's political and religious compromise or Elijah's cowardice in running from Jezebel are all presented with remarkable forthrightness. . . . There was no attempt to hide the human frailty of biblical heroes.²⁵

While it is true that characters such as Elisha and Daniel model perseverance and faithfulness in the face of tremendous pressure,²⁶ "God, not the biblical heroes, is magnified throughout."²⁷ This adoration is nowhere better exhibited than in the book of Judges, where "every victory wrought is a triumph of God and of the faith of those who place their trust in Him."²⁸ Thus, rightly understood, Bible stories are to bring praise and honor to the God of the universe. In brief then, special care needs to be taken in the reading and interpretation of the

²³White, *Steps to Christ*, 61.

²⁴Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1991), 159.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, Robert L. Hubbard, Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Dallas, TX: Word, 1993), 267.

²⁷*The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 160.

²⁸Ibid.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

chronicles of the Word of God so that God is glorified, rather than frail and often faulty human beings.

Having thus established that all deliberations on moral matters must be thoroughly Christ-centered, solidly Bible-based, and appropriately applied, we will now proceed to examine the question of using deception in order to avert death.

An Analysis of Truth: The Spirit and the Specifics

While others have dealt in greater depth with the broad principles of honesty, integrity, and veracity,²⁹ this article will briefly reiterate the essential features of this issue. "What is truth?" asked Pilate (John 18:38).³⁰ The tragic irony of this question was that Jesus Christ, "the truth" according to John 14:6, stood right in front of him, and yet Pilate failed to recognize that. Moreover, the Holy Spirit, "the Spirit of truth" (John 14:17), was sent to this world to bear witness about Jesus Christ, the essence of all truth (John 16:12-14; cf. Acts 2:1-4). Summarizing the biblical data on this subject, one scholar says:

The Old Testament characterizes Yahweh as a God of truth (Ps 31:6) or faithfulness (Deut 32:4), who is just and right (Deut 32:4; Ps 92:16; 119:137; 145:17), and without iniquity (Deut 32:4; Ps 92:16). His word and judgements are straight (Ps 33:4) and true (Ps 19:10; 119:137, 151-160) and altogether righteous (Ps 19:10). He does not lie, because He is not a man that He should lie or change His mind (Num 23:19; 1 Sam 15:29); what He says He will do, and what He promises He will bring to pass (Num 23:19). The New Testament also characterizes God's word as truth (John 17:17), denies that there is any unrighteousness in Him (Rom 9:14), and speaks of Him as *ho apseudeis Theos*, 'God who does not' or 'cannot lie' (Titus 1:2). Finally, the author of Hebrews claims that when the divine promise is confirmed by the divine oath, these two things make it impossible for God to prove false (Heb 6:18).³¹

In brief, "God does not lie; it is against his very nature."³² Therefore, to speak of the sanctity of truth means to recognize the sanctity of the being of the Creator of the universe. "He is the God of all truth and all truth derives its sanctity from him."³³ This then is how the Scriptures describe the God of the uni-

²⁹See, for example, J. Daniel Hess, *Integrity: Let Your Yea Be Yea* (Scotdale, PA: Herald Press, 1978); Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward Old Testament Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1983); John Murray, *Principles of Conduct: Aspects of Biblical Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1957).

³⁰See *Principles of Conduct: Aspects of Biblical Ethics*, 123-125.

³¹J. J. M. Roberts, "Does God Lie? Divine Deceit as a Theological Problem in Israelite Prophetic Literature," *Congress Volume: Jerusalem 1986*, Supplements to *Vetus Testamentum* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1988), 211. Note: In this quotation, the punctuation has been modified for clarity and consistency with the rest of this article.

³²*Ibid.*

³³*Principles of Conduct: Aspects of Biblical Ethics*, 125.

DU PREEZ: A HOLOCAUST OF DECEPTION

verse—as absolutely honest, totally trustworthy, and One in whom His created beings can have complete confidence! But the Bible goes beyond that, teaching that God made mankind in His own image (Gen 1:26-28), in order to reflect His character of truth and integrity (Matt 5:16; cf. John 17:10; 2 Cor 3:2, 18; 2 Pet 3:18). Making this summons to veracity more specific, the Old Testament dogmatically declares: "You must not lie to each other" (Lev 19:11 ERV), and "You must not tell lies about other people" (Exod 20:16 ERV), for "the Lord hates lying lips, but those who speak the truth are His joy" (Prov 12:22 NLV). Correspondingly, the New Testament charges: "So you must stop telling lies. You must always speak the truth to each other" (Eph 4:25 ERV), "speaking the truth in love" (Eph 4:15). Furthermore, it unequivocally proclaims: "Never lie to one another; because you have stripped away the old self, with its ways, and you have put on a new self which will progress toward true knowledge the more it is renewed in the image of its Creator" (Col 3:9 [CJV], 10 [NJB]). Plainly, this is the pivotal point—that becoming a trustworthy and truthful person is only possible as we become more and more like Jesus Christ, One in whom there was no "deceit" (1 Pet 2:22), One who is classified as "the Truth" (John 14:6 NLV) in verity.

As we move from the broad principle of trustworthiness and integrity to the specific application of truth-telling, a significant point needs to be made. Based on Romans 7:6, "that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter," some have suggested that at times the literal interpretation of the ninth commandment contradicts the broad principle of honesty, at which point the letter should be ignored while the spirit is to be kept.³⁴ Careful study of this text indicates that it has been taken out of context, as the immediately following passage reveals: "What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, 'Do not covet'" (Rom 7:7 NIV). The broader context shows that while Paul is rejecting a merely external obedience, he is calling for a genuine spirit-empowered allegiance to God's eternal law. It is similar to Jesus' condemnation of the proud religious leaders of His day: "These people honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me" (Mark 7:6 NLV). Rather than nullifying obedience to God's specific moral requirements, Paul affirms that "the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good" (Rom 7:12). Evidently then, Scripture does not pose an either/or choice between the principle and the particular; instead, it calls for "faith working through love" (Gal 5:6 NLV), "for the love of Christ puts us into action" (2 Cor 5:14 NLV). Or, as John put it: "Let us not love with words or in talk only. Let us love by what we do and in truth" (1 John 3:18

³⁴See, for example, "In Defense of Rahab," 26; *Inspiration: Hard Questions, Honest Answers* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1991), 117-118.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

NLV). Disclosing precisely such a fitting blend of letter and spirit in relation to the issue of "truth," Ellen White says:

Everything that Christians do should be as transparent as the sunlight. Truth is of God; deception, in every one of its myriad forms, is of Satan; and whoever in any way departs from the straight line of truth is betraying himself into the power of the wicked one. Yet it is not a light or an easy thing to speak the exact truth. We cannot speak the truth unless we know the truth; . . . We cannot speak the truth unless our minds are continually guided by Him who is truth.³⁵

This perspective of Ellen White's, that truth derives from the Divine, while all deception is from the Devil, conspicuously conflicts with the assertion made at the start of this study that it is a "porcelain argument that no one should lie under any condition."³⁶

A diligent investigation of the above Scripture passages on lying and truth-telling demonstrates that God has not made this matter merely optional; on the contrary, He has made this issue of truthful communication a binding moral obligation. So much so, that "people who tell lies" (Rev 21:8 ERV), and thus disregard this law, will go to hell (Rev 21:27)! This is not simply an arbitrary decision of the God of truth and verity, but is the only reasonable solution, since "everyone who loves and practices falsehood" (Rev 22:15 CJB) is in reality choosing to emulate Satan, "the father of lies" (John 8:44 ICB), while those who elect to follow Jesus, "the Truth," will inherit eternal life (John 3:16). Nevertheless, even though these basic biblical principles of honesty and the sanctity of truth are precise and plain, some have insisted that the central question must still be answered: What is the morally right thing to do, according to the Bible, when it seems that only falsehood will avert a fatality?

Deception or Death: A Challenging Choice

In order to adequately address this question, all the major points made above about Rahab's daring duplicity will now be painstakingly appraised.

Scripture Stories and Ethical Standards. To recap, the first point made was that, "Morality can be learned from Scripture stories where the Bible does not directly condemn the activities engaged in in the actual narrative." The same basic idea has been made in connection with 1 Corinthians 10:11, the first part of which reads: "Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition." Based on this passage, some have claimed that the manner in which Old Testament people lived provides us with "God-approved examples of how He wants us to behave in similar moral conflicts."³⁷

³⁵Ellen G. White, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1956), 68.

³⁶"Letters," *Adventist Review*, February 1998, 2.

³⁷Norman L. Geisler & Paul D. Feinberg, *Introduction to Philosophy: A Christian Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1980), 417.

DU PREEZ: A HOLOCAUST OF DECEPTION

Thus, it is concluded that stories such as those of Rahab, and of the Hebrew midwives, Shiphrah and Puah, have been included in the Bible so that believers will know what to do under comparable circumstances. In brief, it is specifically argued that these stories demonstrate that lying to save life is perfectly legitimate, and actually the morally right thing to do, without any need for repentance or forgiveness, since this kind of lying is supposedly not considered a sin by God.³⁸

This reasoning is similar to that of a high school teacher who produced a sizable document dealing with Christian marital relationships. Part of his research addressed plural marriage, especially as practiced in Bible times. He reasoned as follows:

Premise One: God never changes His moral standards;
Premise Two: David, a man that pleased God, had many wives;
Conclusion: It is right for a Christian to be a polygamist!

Of course, this "logical" deduction raises some significant questions, such as: Are all the actions of Bible characters to be emulated? If not all, then should some actions be imitated? If so, which actions should be considered as models of morality? And, more importantly, how is a student of the Bible to know which actions to emulate and which to avoid? In other words, are there any clear scriptural guidelines for rightly interpreting and understanding the narrative portions of the Bible that will assist in the development of a sound strategy for proper ethical decision-making?

Hence, what does the Bible really mean in 1 Corinthians 10:11 about Scripture stories being "examples" for believers? This verse is in effect a summary of the preceding passage, in which Paul reminds the Corinthian Christians, "Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted" (1 Cor 10:6). Then Paul enumerates some of these evils, such as idolatry and sexual immorality (1 Cor 10:7, 8), together with some of the judgments meted out by God (1 Cor 10:8-10). Thus, rather than merely blindly following Scripture stories, the immediate and broader contexts need to be taken into account in order to distinguish between what the Bible actually teaches and what it simply reports so as to portray how far God's people drifted from Him and His holy law.³⁹ In other words, there are examples in Scripture that we should not follow. Therefore, far from suggesting that the actions of Bible characters should be uncritically emulated, 1 Corinthians 10:11 is

³⁸See *Introduction to Philosophy: A Christian Perspective*, 425; Norman L. Geisler, *The Christian Ethic of Love* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1973), 75; Norman L. Geisler, *Ethics: Alternatives and Issues* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1971), 136; "In Defense of Hierarchical Ethics," *Trinity Journal* 4 (September 1975): 87. For a comprehensive response to these theories see Ronald A. G. du Preez, "A Critical Study of Norman L. Geisler's Ethical Hierarchicalism" (Th.D. dissertation, University of South Africa, 1997), available at the James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

³⁹Kaiser, *Toward Old Testament Ethics*, 283.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

a summons to all believers to "avoid the evils recorded and imitate only the righteousness of those who served the Lord."⁴⁰

Recognizing the dangers of simplistically imitating Bible stories, these two biblically sound cautions have been suggested:

- (a) Commendation of a person or notable action need not imply commendation of every element of the men and women cited.⁴¹
- (b) Reporting or narrating an event in Scripture is not to be equated with approving, recommending, or making that action or characteristic normative for emulation by all subsequent readers.⁴²

Each narrative needs to be analyzed with regard to literary progression, dramatic structure, and stylistic features. "Though their communication is indirect, narratives nevertheless speak God's truth powerfully *when they are properly interpreted*."⁴³

That is the fundamental issue: Stories need to be "properly interpreted." Unfortunately, it appears that a variety of problematic strategies have recently been utilized, resulting in some dubious ethical theories.⁴⁴

One of these methods is to twist the scriptural record so that a completely contradictory reinterpretation emerges. As a case in point, consider the ingenious (or is it disingenuous?) argument used in an attempt to strengthen the case on behalf of Rahab. Seeking to prove that "the Old Testament is saturated with examples of [allegedly appropriate deceptive] undercover activities in the accomplishment of the divine purpose,"⁴⁵ the writer states:

Jochebed's strategy to protect the baby Moses might be cited as a case in point. One can argue that every day the lad was kept concealed, Jochebed lived a lie as she went about her regular duties in the community. For, in effect, she was representing herself as standing in compliance with the Egyptian edict when, in fact, she was not.⁴⁶

A simple reading of the Bible narrative quickly dispels the unsubstantiated assumptions advanced above. Exodus 1:22 notes that, after the failure of his

⁴⁰Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9 vols. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), 4:12.

⁴¹Kaiser, *Toward Old Testament Ethics*, 283.

⁴²*Ibid.*

⁴³Klein, et al, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 261 (emphasis added). These authors state that narratives are the most common type of literature in the Bible, the most familiar forms being: reports (anecdotes, battle reports, construction reports, dream reports, epiphany reports, historical stories, and memoirs); heroic narratives (cosmic epics, and ancestral epics); prophet stories; comedies; and farewell speeches; *ibid.*, 261-271.

⁴⁴For a more thorough study of this issue, see my "Epics & Ethics: Vital Biblical Principles for Interpreting Scripture Stories," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* (forthcoming in the 1999 issue).

⁴⁵"In Defense of Rahab," 25.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*

DU PREEZ: A HOLOCAUST OF DECEPTION

plans to exterminate the Israelites through brutal taskmasters and God-fearing midwives, "Pharaoh commanded all his people," i.e., "the whole nation"⁴⁷ of Egyptians,⁴⁸ to drown every newborn Israelite boy in the Nile river. Thus, when it is correctly comprehended that the command was given specifically to the Egyptians and not to any Israelites, it becomes obvious that the characterization of Jochebed as one who "lived a lie"⁴⁹ clearly contradicts the Word of God, which indicates that she was not violating any command at all. Incidentally, there is nothing innately immoral in the simple act of hiding. This can be observed from a consideration of the various times when Jesus Christ, our sinless Savior, and one in whom there is no "deceit" (1 Peter 2:22), concealed Himself (Mark 6:30-7:24; John 8:59).⁵⁰ Since there is no evidence that Jochebed was involved in any deceptive activity in protecting Moses' life, it would be unfair and illogical to suggest that this case study supports the hypothesis that it is justifiable to utilize deception "in the accomplishment of the divine purpose,"⁵¹ and that therefore Rahab's lies were similarly vindicated. This is especially true in light of Jeremiah's statement: "Cursed is he who does the work of the Lord deceitfully" (Jer 48:10a).⁵² Thus, while the imaginative, but erroneous, reinterpretation emerges as contradictory to the inspired record, the facts that are consistent with the biblical narrative exonerate Jochebed and show how God worked through her to attain His divine plan.⁵³ This narrative, rather than offering an excuse to deceive when under distress, inspires us to discover discrete, yet ethically appropriate ways of obeying God's absolute moral norms even while living in a hostile environment.⁵⁴

Another strategy utilized by some is that of conjectural interpretation. This appears to be one of the more perilous approaches employed in the retelling of Bible stories, especially of brief narratives that seem to omit some details.⁵⁵ One

⁴⁷Ellen G. White, *The Story of Patriarchs and Prophets* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1958), 242.

⁴⁸J. Cheryl Exum, "'You Shall Let Every Daughter Live': A Study of Exodus 1:8-2:10," *Se-meia* 28 (1983): 75, concurs, noting that "'all his people,' v 22, appears to mean only the Egyptians."

⁴⁹"In Defense of Rahab," 25.

⁵⁰See Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1898), 399.

⁵¹"In Defense of Rahab," 25.

⁵²The second part of this verse must be understood in light of the fact that at that time Israel was a theocracy, under the command of God, the Creator of all life.

⁵³This is the kind of thing that happened in the early Christian church: "God used Paul to do powerful special works" (Acts 19:11 NLV).

⁵⁴Commenting on the parables told by Jesus, it has been observed that "He told true-to-life stories to make clear to His hearers the true meaning of life," with the primary purpose of getting "a commitment from His hearers to a new life experience"; "Interpretation of Symbols, Types, Allegories, and Parables," in *A Symposium on Biblical Hermeneutics* (Washington, DC: Biblical Research Committee, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1974), 219.

⁵⁵It has been noted that in all narratives there "are the gaps, the things left unsaid," for "one never receives a step by step, sequential presentation of everything"; Terence J. Keegan, *Interpreting*

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

of the most common assumptions about the Rahab incident is that she "lied to preserve the lives of Joshua's spies,"⁵⁶ and that her action, supposedly motivated by a magnanimous concern for others, is an excellent model of proper Christian compassion.⁵⁷

Frankly, there is nothing in the biblical account that definitively states or even necessarily implies the above idea as the reason for her deception. The text merely reports that Rahab hid the men, and then, when asked, lied about the fact that they were on her premises (Josh 2:4-6). A correct contextual explication of Scripture necessitates an understanding of how exposed spies were treated in biblical times. An apparently classic case, occurring during the reign of David, details the manner in which the Ammonites treated some Israelite men whom they believed had come "to search the city, to spy it out, and to overthrow it" (2 Sam 10:3). Since they believed these Israelites were spies, they "shaved off half of their beards, cut off their garments in the middle, at their buttocks, and sent them away" (2 Sam 10:4). Thus, they deliberately disgraced the Israelites, but did not put them to death! Concurring, one scholar noted that these emissaries "were assumed to be spies by the Ammonites and were treated accordingly"⁵⁸—not with execution, but with acute embarrassment.

Though the Pentateuch contains many regulations, there is no statute regarding what to do to a spy that has been discovered.⁵⁹ Perhaps a clue comes from the kind and compassionate manner in which even the animals belonging to an enemy are to be treated (Exod 23:5, 6). A similar lesson emerges in the story where Elisha calls for a banquet for, instead of bloodshed against the Syrian army he had captured (2 Kgs 6:8-23).⁶⁰

the Bible: A Popular Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics (New York, NY: Paulist, 1985), 102-103.

⁵⁶Toni Craven, "Women Who Lied for the Faith," in *Justice and the Holy: Essays in Honor of Walter Harrelson* (USA: Scholar's, 1989), 41. See also "In Defense of Rahab," 24-26; "Rahab Revisited," 5; "It's a Sin to Tell a Lie," *Insight*, 24 November 1981, 6; Richard Higginson, *Dilemmas: A Christian Approach to Moral Decision Making*, (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1988), 64.

⁵⁷See "In Defense of Rahab," 26; "Rahab Revisited."

⁵⁸*Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1975), 502.

⁵⁹The Genesis 42 story of Joseph knowingly falsely accusing his own brothers of spying could give some insight into what the Egyptian practice may have been, approximately three centuries before the Israelite nation entered Canaan. Joseph imprisoned them for three days, and then warned them that if they could prove that they were not spies, "you shall not die" (Gen 42:20). Thus, it appears that Egyptian practice at this time was to execute captured spies.

⁶⁰Unfortunately, this episode has also become the object of conjectural interpretation, from which the conclusion has been drawn that lying to save life is ethically permissible. But, a careful reading of the entire story reveals a rather different situation. The text records that the Syrians were trying to capture the king of Israel; but they repeatedly failed because God informed Elisha, who then told the king, who took evasive action. Then, the Syrians changed their plans and decided to get Elisha out of the way. Though the reader is aware of this new strategy, there is no evidence that Elisha knew this; in fact, it is implied that he did not know (because he failed to take any evasive

DU PREEZ: A HOLOCAUST OF DECEPTION

Ancient historical evidence sheds further light on this subject. The Babylonian Laws, as recorded in the famous Code of Hammurabi, include this legislation: "If conspirators assemble in the house of a tavern-keeper, who are not captured and delivered to the court, that tavern-keeper shall be put to death."⁶¹ This regulation, promulgated shortly before the Israelite entrance into Canaan, has been recognized by some scholars as having a bearing on the Rahab incident: "She knew that anyone suspected of collaborating with the spies would be put to death."⁶² Various thinkers have likewise concluded that, by keeping the Israelites hidden, Rahab incurred "a grave personal risk,"⁶³ and "endangered her own life."⁶⁴ In basic harmony with these views, Ellen White observes that Rahab preserved the two men "at the peril of her own life."⁶⁵

The weight of evidence, based upon contextual implications, thus indicates that Rahab lied to save her own life. True, she did welcome the spies, hide them, and later help them to escape safely from Jericho. However, biblical, contemporaneous, and current information shows that her deception was essentially an act of self-preservation, not the highly-touted purportedly selfless, altruistic, and "exemplary" deception.⁶⁶

action, and only found out the next morning that the army was surrounding the city). So, fearless of the foe, confident of his Creator's protection, and evidently still convinced that they were after the Israelite king, he asked God to temporarily blind them, so he could take them to the capital, present them to the king, and treat them with incredible hospitality. If the account is interpreted on the weight of internal contextual implications, Elisha stands out as a man of truthfulness, as one who operated non-deceptively within the limits and boundaries of the information at his disposal. There is no proof that Elisha deceived the Syrians in order to save his own life.

⁶¹W. W. Davies, *The Codes of Hammurabi and Moses* (Cincinnati, OH: Jennings and Graham, 1905), 54 (quoting law #109). See also, G. R. Driver & John C. Miles, *The Babylonian Laws*, vol. II (Oxford, England: Clarendon, 1955), 45.

⁶²*Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 260. See also, *The Codes of Hammurabi and Moses*, 54.

⁶³Athalya Brenner, *The Israelite Woman: Social Role and Literary Type in Biblical Literature* (Sheffield, England: JSOT, 1985), 79.

⁶⁴*Bible Student's Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1986), 44. See also, Richard S. Hess, *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, Joshua: An Introduction and Commentary* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity, 1996), 86; *Expositor's Bible, Book of Joshua* (New York, NY: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1908), 89-90.

⁶⁵White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 483.

⁶⁶Incidentally, in none of the Bible stories regarding "lying to save life" is there any clear example of someone who lied solely to save some other person's life. Every case can be shown to be about someone who lied simply for self-preservation. Incidentally, some have suggested that God personally endorses deception in 1 Samuel 16:1-4. See "Rahab Revisited," 5; *Samuel: From the Danger of Chaos to the Danger of Power*, The Abundant Life Bible Amplifier (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1995), 159. Painstaking analysis of this chronicle has revealed a rather unusual and satisfactory solution to this perplexing passage. Is it possible that the first part of verse 2, which reads: "But Samuel said, 'How can I go? When Saul hears of it, he will kill me'" (NASB), is actually an interruption by Samuel in the middle of God's instructions? When one recognizes that Samuel was not averse to interrupting someone (see 1 Sam 15:15-17), and when one removes this apparent interjection, the entire set of divine directions forms a cohesive unit. This is precisely what Ellen White,

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

To capture the essence of this section dealing with the relationship between Scripture stories and ethical standards, let's briefly review the tale of Tamar. Here is a woman, widowed due to a wicked husband (Gen 38:7), abused by her second spouse (Gen 38:8-10), and hoodwinked by her father-in-law Judah out of marrying his third son (Gen 38:11-14). So, taking matters into her own hands, she dresses like a prostitute to lure Judah into sex, without him knowing who it is. She becomes pregnant. When it is revealed that the pregnancy was due to "prostitution," Judah summarily sentences her: "Let her be burned" (Gen 38:24). But just before the execution she proves convincingly that the father-to-be is Judah. Chagrined, Judah responds: "She has been more righteous than I, because I did not give her to Shelah my son" (Gen 38:26). One of the twins born is named Perez, who becomes a direct ancestor of the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ.

What ethical imperatives are to be gleaned from this story, especially when it is recognized that not a single word of direct condemnation against Tamar can be found throughout the entire Bible? Does this narrative teach that incestuous sex with one's father-in-law is morally acceptable, since through this kind of action Tamar became one of Jesus' ancestors? Or does the record indicate that "prostitution" is permissible at times, when done to bring about justice, as Tamar succeeded in doing? Or does this narrative promote deceiving those who mistreat us, as Tamar did, with the result that she was classified "more righteous" than Judah?

Obviously, other than the gospel story of Jesus, who is our only true ethical example (1 Pet 2:21), no Bible narrative should be uncritically followed. The actions of these characters must be checked against the prescriptive propositional statements made in other parts of Scripture. Only if and when their actions coincide with God's clearly revealed moral requirements, as in the Ten Commandments (Exod 20:2-17), and as exemplified in the life and teachings of Jesus, should they be emulated. Which is why Paul could say: "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ" (1 Cor 11:1 ICB). Put plainly, Tamar's actions are explicitly condemned in Scripture because they violate specific divine moral laws which prohibit incest (Lev 18:6-17; 20:11-21), prostitution (Lev

under divine inspiration, has done: "And the Lord said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite: for I have provided Me a king among his sons. . . . Take an heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice to the Lord. And call Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show thee what thou shalt do: and thou shalt anoint unto Me him whom I name unto thee. And Samuel did that which the Lord spake;" (White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 637. The ellipsis noted above ". . ." is just as recorded, which is the only place Ellen White deals in depth with this story). When the narrative is thus understood, after the removal of Samuel's interruption, the list of instructions from God can be seen to naturally flow quite smoothly from one point to the next. In summary, when character themes, such as the veracity and trustworthiness of God, are appropriately considered, the conspiracy theory that God fosters falsehood is shown to be both unbiblical and even blasphemous.

DU PREEZ: A HOLOCAUST OF DECEPTION

19:29; 21:7; Deut 23:17, 18), and deception (Exod 20:16; Lev 19:11).⁶⁷ The fact that Tamar is mentioned in the genealogical record of Jesus (Matt 1:1-3), does not justify her immoral actions any more than does the listing of Judah promote deceit, prostitution, and a self-righteous judgmental attitude. Just as in the tale of Tamar, so in the record of Rahab, the conclusion is straightforward: She deliberately used deception. But Rahab's action should not be imitated since it is a violation of God's law (Exod 20:16; Lev 19:11) and contrary to His character (Num 23:19; 1 Sam 15:29; Titus 1:2), as epitomized by Jesus our example, who never practiced deceit (1 Pet 2:21, 22).

Magnanimous Motives and Moral Action

To review, the second point "In Defense of Rahab" was that, "Motives are vital for determining an action's moral validity. In other words, misleading a potential murderer is in 'perfect conformity' to the 'spirit' of God's law." To analyze this statement two questions will be considered: What does the law of God really say? And, what part do motives play in obedience?

A new trend seems to be emerging in the interpretation of Scripture stories, and that is, the construction of novel meanings for well-known terms.⁶⁸ Consider for a few moments the following rationalistic reasoning in response to the question, "What should the Christian do, when telling the naked truth can result in the direct loss of innocent human life?"⁶⁹ First, the following subtly sarcastic statement is made: "If a lie is the simple utterance of an untruth, then the student who writes on a test paper that London is the capital of Japan is lying."⁷⁰ Quickly crushing this creative caricature, the writer then alternatively proposes that, "Common sense would dictate that intent and motive must come into the equation."⁷¹ Finally, in place of the fraudulent formulation of a "lie" given above, he then asserts: "To lie, as I see it, is to make a false statement, with wicked or malicious or selfish intent to [impress,] deceive or mislead."⁷²

⁶⁷Admittedly, all of these laws are contained in biblical materials that came many years after the time of Tamar and Jacob. However, the fact that God's moral expectations were already known from earliest times is evident from the entire book of Genesis; see *Toward Old Testament Ethics*. Ellen White observes that, "God has ever preserved a remnant to serve Him. Adam, Seth, Enoch, Methuselah, Noah, Shem, in unbroken line, had preserved from age to age the precious revelations of His will. The son of Terah [i.e., Abraham] became the inheritor of this holy trust. . . . [God] communicated His will to Abraham, and gave him a distinct knowledge of the requirements of His law and of the salvation that would be accomplished through Christ"; White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 125.

⁶⁸With some revision, this section is borrowed from "Epics & Ethics: Vital Biblical Principles for Interpreting Scripture Stories," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, (forthcoming 1999).

⁶⁹"In Defense of Rahab," 26.

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Ibid. The word "impress" was added in a subsequent article, in which an attempt was made to clarify the position taken in the earlier article. See "Rahab Revisited," 5. A similar emphasis on "motives" is seen in *Inspiration: Hard Questions, Honest Answers*, 130; and *Samuel: From the Danger of Chaos to the Danger of Power*, 200, 255 (in this latter passage the writer claims that

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

On the surface, this description might appear appropriate and even accurate. But, careful consideration reveals at least the following three serious problems:

I. Contrary to the Biblical Definition: To begin with, let's consider the Bible's own definition of deception. There has been some debate as to the actual meaning of the ninth commandment: "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor" (Exod 20:16). It has been stated that the language of this law "is clearly legal, forbidding malicious perjury."⁷³ Consequently, it is concluded that "this commandment by itself, strictly interpreted, hardly constitutes a prohibition of any and every kind of deception."⁷⁴ Accordingly, at times any type of deception has been promoted in order to preserve human life.⁷⁵ While some modern linguists may endorse and promote this restricted view of the so-called literal meaning of the ninth commandment,⁷⁶ it is profoundly more significant to determine how the divinely inspired Bible writers themselves understood and interpreted this moral requirement.

While a superficial reading of Exodus 20:16 may admittedly appear to prohibit only lying in court, Leviticus 19 paints a much broader picture. Even a casual look at this levitical legislation reveals that virtually every one of the Ten Commandments is reiterated here, though in a different format.⁷⁷ Verse 11, which contains both the eighth and the ninth commandments, states: "You shall not steal, nor deal falsely, nor lie to one another." The Hebrew term used here,

"intention becomes crucial for a correct understanding and application of the command against bearing false testimony [Exod. 20:16; Deut. 5:20]".

⁷³"The Ten Commandments and Ethical Dilemmas," in *To Understand the Scriptures: Essays in Honor of William H. Shea* (Berrien Springs, MI: Institute of Archaeology/Horn Archaeological Museum, 1997), 269. That this is not necessarily so is evident from the way in which the term is used in various passages to prohibit deception in general and not merely in court (see, for example, 2 Kgs 9:12; Isa 9:15; Jer 14:14). The Hebrew lexicon confirms that this word means "deception" in a more general sense; see *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon: With an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 1055.

⁷⁴"The Ten Commandments and Ethical Dilemmas," 269. In basic agreement with the above concept, it has been stated: "The command against bearing false witness, when we 'narrow the letter' [i.e., 'look rigorously at the letter of the law in its original context'], clearly refers to the telling of falsehoods with the intent to injure innocent people"; *Inspiration: Hard Questions, Honest Answers*, 117. After "broadening the spirit" to include the "heart," the writer concludes that "circumstances may arise when telling the truth . . . could mean disobeying the letter of God's law"; *ibid.*, 118. This reasoning is understood as follows, in a supportive way: "Depending on the context, he [i.e., the author of *Inspiration: Hard Questions, Honest Answers*] considers that circumstances might arise where lying or killing would constitute obedience to God"; "A Practical Theological Perspective on Adventist Theology and Contextualisation," *Journal of Adventist Thought in Africa* 1 (November 1995): 142.

⁷⁵See "The Ten Commandments and Ethical Dilemmas," 271.

⁷⁶Not all agree with this restricted view; see, for example, *Die Lüge nach dem Alten Testament* (Zurich & Frankfurt: Gotthelf-Verlag, 1964), 17, quoted in "The Phenomenology of the Lie in Biblical Narrative" (Ph.D. dissertation, Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1991), 24.

⁷⁷In brief, here is how nine of the ten commandments are outlined: The first, in vs. 2, 14; the second, in v. 4; the third, in v. 12; the fourth, in vs. 3, 30; the fifth, in v. 3; the sixth, in v. 16; the seventh, in vs. 20, 29; the eighth, in vs. 11, 13, 35; and the ninth, in v. 11.

DU PREEZ: A HOLOCAUST OF DECEPTION

kāzāb, is an expression found throughout Old Testament writings that encompasses and prohibits different types of deception and is not simply restricted to legal issues.⁷⁸ Indeed, it has been recognized that "this text in Leviticus does prohibit 'any form of lying or deception.'"⁷⁹ This is the identical word found in the charges of law-breaking brought against the people of Israel by Hosea, the mid-eighth century B.C. prophet. Hosea 4:2 notes that the Israelites were "lying (*kāzāb*), killing and stealing and committing adultery." The Hebrew terms employed here for "killing," "stealing," and "committing adultery," are identical to the ones in the Ten Commandments. However, in connection with the ninth commandment, instead of using the supposedly limited expression found in the Decalogue, Hosea selected the word *kāzāb*, which includes deception in general.⁸⁰ Thus, it becomes evident that the divinely-inspired Old Testament writers understood the ninth commandment as prohibiting perjury as well as all other kinds of deceit.

An analogous situation emerges from an overview of the manner in which New Testament writers perceived the meaning of this law. Perhaps best known of these references to the Decalogue are the statements made by Jesus. In his response to the rich young ruler's question as to which commandments he needed to observe, Jesus said in part: "'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness'" (Matt 19:18; cf. Mark 10:17-31; Luke 18:18-30). The Greek expression, *pseudomartureō*, which the lexicon defines as to "bear false witness," or to "give false testimony,"⁸¹ is the term used for the ninth commandment, and it appears to approximate the same sense of the original Hebrew expression. This is the identical word used in Matthew 15:19, where Jesus comments: "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." Interestingly, when Mark records the same story in his gospel account, he utilizes a different Greek expression, *dolos*, one which includes deception of every shape and form.⁸² A comparable example of the interchangeability of these two terms is seen in Paul's writings. While he uses *pseudomartureō* in Romans 13:9, where he enumerates several of the commandments, in Romans 1:28-32 he uses *dolos* in a long catalog of vices. It is also this expression which is employed in 1 Peter 2:22 to describe an evil trait of which our "example," Jesus Christ, was exempt: "Nor was deceit [*dolos*] found in His

⁷⁸See, for example, its use when people lie to other people: 1 Kings 13:18; Jeremiah 5:12; and when people try to deceive God: Genesis 18:15; Joshua 7:11.

⁷⁹"Women Who Lied for the Faith," 35.

⁸⁰Interestingly, when Jeremiah, the late seventh century B.C. prophet of Judah, similarly castigates God's people for violating His laws, he uses all four of the same terms as found in the Decalogue, including *šeqer*, the word for bearing false witness: "Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely?" (Jer 7:9).

⁸¹William Arndt, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 4th ed. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1952), 900.

⁸²*Ibid.*, 202. Note the use of this term in this manner in Acts 13:10.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

mouth."⁸³ Thus, similar to their Old Testament counterparts, New Testament writers viewed the ninth commandment as including more than merely a prohibition against perjury in a legal setting.

Furthermore, examination of the ninth commandment, in its original setting in Exodus as well as in its multiple occurrences throughout Scripture,⁸⁴ reveals that this ethical obligation is always stated in a categorical manner, without any exceptions, exemptions, or reservations: "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor" (Exod 20:16); "And do not lie to each other" (Col 3:9 NJB). None of the texts forbidding falsehood suggests that lying is justifiable or at least excusable depending on the predicament one might be in, or the motive, intention or purpose for which the lie is told. All of these passages simply prohibit deception without any qualification whatsoever! As succinctly summarized in a doctoral dissertation on deceivers in Scripture: "The motivation of the liar, positive or negative, is not relevant."⁸⁵

What, then, is the role of motives, especially when Scripture pronounces a divine blessing on "the pure in heart" (Matt 5:8) and states that "the Lord looks at the heart" (1 Sam 16:7; cf. Ps 139:23)? A study of the Decalogue shows that while commandments one and ten address essentially internal matters, numbers two through nine deal directly with clearly quantifiable action: for example, idolatry, adultery, stealing, etc. However, evidence from both Old and New Testaments indicates that these laws were never limited to merely external actions. Consider, for instance, Exodus 20:14: "You shall not commit adultery." When Jesus explained that to lust after someone was to commit adultery in the "heart" (Matt 5:28), He was merely reminding the people of a moral concept already recognized and recorded in the oldest book of the Bible (see Job 31:1, 9). In other words, true obedience includes both an appropriate attitude as well as correct action; a "pure heart" (Matt 5:8 NLV) that produces "good works" (Matt 5:16); a transformed mind with a godly lifestyle (Rom 12:1, 2); a faith that works (Jas 2:14-26); for this is what it means to truly worship God "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24 NLV). In other words, "Those who have the mind of Christ will keep all of God's commandments, irrespective of circumstances."⁸⁶ Just as "breath" plus "body" are the basic elements of a "living being" (Gen 2:7), so these two factors are absolutely essential and form the indispensable parts of genuine biblical morality, for, right action with wrong motive can result in any-

⁸³Since "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (Matt 12:34), it is clear that not only did Jesus never speak a deceptive word, but He also never acted deceitfully, either. Interestingly, this identical term, *dolos* (deceit), is used in Revelation 14:5 to describe an evil trait completely absent from the redeemed ones who "follow the Lamb wherever He goes."

⁸⁴See Exod 20:16; Deut 5:20; Matt 19:18; Mark 10:19; Luke 18:20; Rom 13:9; cf. Matt 15:19.

⁸⁵"The Phenomenology of the Lie in Biblical Narrative," 19.

⁸⁶Ellen G. White, *The Sanctified Life* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1937), 67.

DU PREEZ: A HOLOCAUST OF DECEPTION

thing from a grudging submission to legalistic conformity.⁸⁷ A so-called "right" motive with wrong action, on the other hand, leads to things such as rationalism, relativism, humanism, situationism, and eventually blatant antinomianism—an overt rejection of God's eternal and immutable moral standards.⁸⁸

By way of recapitulation, it seems quite significant, then, that under divine inspiration, Bible writers of both Testaments understood the ninth commandment as forbidding all forms of falsehood, under all possible conditions, irrespective of projected consequences, and regardless of purportedly pure motives. Ellen White's extensive explication of this ethical norm comports favorably with the scriptural definition delineated above. She comments:

False speaking in any matter, every attempt or purpose to deceive our neighbor, is here included. An intention to deceive is what constitutes falsehood. By a glance of the eye, a motion of the hand, an expression of the countenance, a falsehood may be told as effectually as by words. All intentional overstatement, every hint or insinuation, even the statement of facts in such a manner so as to mislead, is falsehood.⁸⁹ This precept forbids every effort to injure our neighbor's reputation by misrepresentation or evil surmising, by slander or tale-bearing. Even the intentional suppression of truth, by which injury may result to others, is a violation of the ninth commandment.⁹⁰

As already noted above, Ellen White astutely declares that while "Truth is of God; deception in every one of its myriad forms, is of Satan."⁹¹ And, according to Ellen White, this includes lying to save life: "Even life itself should not be purchased with the price of falsehood."⁹² Hence, instead of adopting a fallacious, humanly formulated view of falsehood,⁹³ it would be prudent and the

⁸⁷Biblical examples of people who had right actions but wrong motives include: the Pharisee at the temple (Luke 18:10-14); some active churchgoers at the time of the end (Matt 7:21-27); and Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11).

⁸⁸Biblical examples of people who had so-called "right" motives but wrong actions, include: Uzzah trying to stop the ark of the covenant from falling (2 Sam 6:3-7); Saul performing a sacrifice to keep the army together (1 Sam 13:5-14); and Jehu using deception to destroy idolators (2 Kgs 10:18-28).

⁸⁹Consider, for example, the old anecdote—possibly apocryphal—of an automobile race held in the former Soviet Union. Only two cars participated—one made in the USA, the other in the USSR. The American car won. The next day the official press briefly reported: "Yesterday, there was a car race, in which the Russian car came in second, and the American car second to last." Now, while the facts were technically correct, they were told in such a way as to deceive.

⁹⁰White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 309 (emphasis added).

⁹¹White, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, 68 (emphasis added). Ellen White also holds to the biblical view of obedience regardless of circumstances, reasons, or results: "We should not follow impulse, nor rely on the judgment of men; we should look to the revealed will of God, and walk according to His definite commandment, no matter what circumstances surround us. God will take care of the results"; White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 622.

⁹²White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 4:336 (emphasis added).

⁹³See, for example, "In Defense of Rahab," 24-26; "Rahab Revisited," 5; "When the Truth Is a Lie," in *Lyrics of Love: God's Top Ten* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1988), 79-86; *Inspiration: Hard*

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

only safe course for the committed Christian to embrace the divinely designed definition of deception, for only in so doing will there be opportunity for an accurate understanding and an appropriate application of God's royal law of liberty (Jas 2:8-12).

II. Conflict with the Dictionary Definition. The novel concept that a "lie" is "a false statement, with wicked or malicious or selfish intent to [impress,] deceive or mislead,"⁹⁴ does not correspond with the conventional, standard understanding of the word. A painstaking investigation of three major English dictionaries covering the last century, from 1897 through 1997,⁹⁵ reveals an amazing unanimity regarding the essence of words which address the issue of misleading someone. Whether it be "deceit," "deceive," "falsehood," "lie," or "prevaricate," the same basic idea emerges: It is a deliberate distortion of the truth, by word or deed, with the objective of misleading. Thus, there are two, and only two, essential elements in this dictionary definition relating to any kind of deception: (1) an action perverting the truth; and (2) an aim to purposely misinform. Significantly, for at least the past one hundred years, there has never been even the remotest hint that the only time that intentionally misleading someone is a "lie" or a "deception" is if it is done "with wicked or malicious or selfish intent." Concurring, it has quite correctly been recognized that, from a human perspective, Christian behavior cannot really be judged "by motive (which is truly known only to God) or by end result (which can humanly never be foreseen with complete accuracy and completeness), but [only] by conformity to precepts that Christians believe came from God."⁹⁶

Thus, rather than accepting the above convoluted description of a "lie," which was apparently devised to justify some form of deception, it is best and most honest to utilize the conventional definition, which accords well with the true biblical meaning of these terms.

III. Confusion of Other Moral Regulations. The above phrase, "with wicked or malicious or selfish intent," implies, by contrast, that a false statement told with benevolent, altruistic, or compassionate motives is not a lie, even though its purpose is to deceive or mislead. If any of the other Ten Command-

Questions, Honest Answers, 116-118; *Samuel: From the Danger of Chaos to the Danger of Power*, 127-128, 148, 254-255. Several books containing 20th-century stories that unfortunately implicitly promote the use of deception when under distress have been published: *The Man Who Lived Twice* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1997); *The Man Who Couldn't Be Killed* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1995); *Shadow of Terror* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1990); and, *Flee the Captor* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1966). I recognize that these latter books may be true stories about people who suffered for and served God, but just as with the story of Rahab, this does not mean that we should present their lies as God's ideal for His people.

⁹⁴"In Defense of Rahab," 26.

⁹⁵See the *New Revised Encyclopaedic Dictionary*, 1897; the *Random House Dictionary of the English Language, Unabridged Edition*, 1966; and the *Random House Webster's Unabridged Dictionary*, 2d ed., 1997.

⁹⁶"The Ten Commandments and Ethical Dilemmas," 266.

DU PREEZ: A HOLOCAUST OF DECEPTION

ments are modified in this manner, the results would be ludicrous and morally catastrophic. For example, the eighth commandment would then read: "Stealing is to take another person's possessions with wicked or malicious or selfish intent, without their permission"; meaning, by contrast, that you may swipe someone's goods as long as it is done with noble motives! Or consider a similarly revised seventh commandment: "Adultery is when one is motivated by wicked or malicious or selfish desires to have sex outside of marriage"; meaning that extra-marital sex is justifiable, if done "lovingly," "kindly," or "magnanimously." Obviously, since the Decalogue simply calls for loving, loyal obedience to its absolute imperatives, irrespective of so-called virtuous motives, we need to observe them faithfully "even unto death" (Rev 2:10b KJV).

There are several other illustrations of convoluted descriptions being used to dazzle and disorient people. For instance, apparently uncomfortable with using straightforward language to describe deception, various individuals have begun to employ subtly ambiguous, "user-friendly" phrases such as "a diversionary tactic,"⁹⁷ an "imaginative strategy,"⁹⁸ a "playful trick,"⁹⁹ or "a very practical solution."¹⁰⁰ Whatever happened to the challenge to "call a spade a spade"? Ellen White charges us: "Call sin by its right name. Declare what God has said in regard to lying, Sabbathbreaking, stealing, idolatry, and every other evil."¹⁰¹ Indeed, while there might be a tendency by some to euphemize expressions as a way of excusing actions, "this is a time for Christians to stand tall for truth—in the midst of a forest of lies."¹⁰²

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."¹⁰³ That's the choice: "Human tradition" or "Christ." In fact, in this same book, Paul stresses the vital necessity of a dynamic relationship with our Creator, Jesus Christ, as the key to the issue of truth-telling in any Christian's life (see Col 3:9, 10).¹⁰⁴ Similarly, recognizing that "it is not a light or an easy thing to speak the exact truth," Ellen White says that "we cannot speak the truth unless our minds are continually guided by Him who is truth."¹⁰⁵ All of us must make a pivotal deci-

⁹⁷"Letters," *Adventist Review*, May 1998, 3.

⁹⁸"Rahab Revisited," 5.

⁹⁹"When the Truth Is a Lie," 84.

¹⁰⁰"Letters," *Adventist Review*, 11 September 1997, 3.

¹⁰¹White, *The Desire of Ages*, 806 (emphasis added); see also Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1903), 57.

¹⁰²"A Forest of Lies," *Adventist Review*, 16 April 1998, 20.

¹⁰³Peter also sounds a caution about those who "will exploit you with deceptive words" (2 Pet 2:3).

¹⁰⁴"And do not lie to each other. You have stripped off your old behaviour with your old self, and you have put on a new self which will progress toward true knowledge the more it is renewed in the image of its Creator" (Col 3:9, 10 NJB).

¹⁰⁵White, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, 68.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

sion: Either we will choose to follow Satan, "the father of lies" (John 8:44 ICB), or we will elect to emulate Jesus Christ who declares of Himself: "I am the truth" (John 14:6 ICB)!

Opposing Obligations or Compatible Commandments?

By way of reminder, the third point made in defense of Rahab's deception was that "Christians (and everyone else, for that matter) are sometimes forced to choose between two or more evils. In those cases [just as in Rahab's], we are not condemned by God for choosing the best of the bad options."¹⁰⁶

One scholar has aptly observed that "the problem of moral exceptions or necessary compromises with evil has apparently occupied Christians from the very beginning."¹⁰⁷ From a study of available historical evidence, it appears that, up to the time of the Protestant Reformation, major Roman Catholic thought-leaders held that absolute moral commands sometimes come into unavoidable conflict. If there were no opportunity for avoiding one of two sins, the lesser evil should always be chosen.¹⁰⁸ Other than two notable exceptions,¹⁰⁹ it appears that up until the beginning of the twentieth century, most well-known Christian thinkers, in basic accord with the early Catholic perspective, believed that tragic circumstances in life at times force one into the position of having to choose between two moral evils.¹¹⁰

Disagreeing with most other thinkers, a late eighteenth century ethicist held that the possibility of genuine moral conflicts must be ruled out on logical grounds:¹¹¹ "A conflict of duties and obligations is inconceivable (*obligationes non colliduntur*). For . . . two conflicting rules cannot both be necessary at the same time."¹¹² In other words, "if it is a duty, and hence a moral necessity, that a person do A, then it cannot also be a duty, and hence a moral necessity, that the person do something incompatible with A."¹¹³ Specifically, this scholar held

¹⁰⁶"In Defense of Rahab," 26.

¹⁰⁷J. Philip Wogaman, *Christian Moral Judgment* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1989), 106.

¹⁰⁸See, for example, Augustine, *The City of God*, I, 21; Anthony J. Blasi, *Moral Conflict and Christian Religion*, American University Studies Series VII, Theology and Religion, vol. 35 (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 1988), 2 (footnote #1); Norman L. Geisler, *Thomas Aquinas: An Evangelical Appraisal* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1991), 168.

¹⁰⁹See, for example, John Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, reprint 1979), Gen 27:1ff; "Moral Duties," in *Moral Dilemmas*, ed. Christopher W. Gowans (New York, NY: Oxford UP, 1987), 39.

¹¹⁰For an extensive survey of this data, see chapter two of my "A Critical Study of Norman L. Geisler's Ethical Hierarchicalism," as noted above.

¹¹¹See Michael James Almeida, "The Impossibility of Moral Conflicts" (Ph.D. dissertation, Ohio State University, 1988), 2.

¹¹²"Moral Duties," in *Moral Dilemmas*, 39.

¹¹³"The Debate on Moral Dilemmas," in *Moral Dilemmas* (New York, NY: Oxford UP, 1987), 6. The author was here commenting on the statement made by the ethicist that a conflict of duties is inconceivable.

DU PREEZ: A HOLOCAUST OF DECEPTION

that, even in the face of death, deception should never be practiced, because "a lie always harms another; if not some other particular man, still it harms mankind generally, for it vitiates [i.e., invalidates] the source of law itself."¹¹⁴

Some have felt that this focus on ethical conflicts is a misplaced emphasis.¹¹⁵ Yet, they too must deal with the less than desirable borderline situations. Other thinkers have concluded that, in connection with conflicting moral norms, "the reasonable conclusion is that they are impossible."¹¹⁶ Still others are firmly convinced of the reality of these situations of clashing ethical responsibilities.¹¹⁷ Over the years, this issue of the apparently inescapable choice between two or more moral evils has given rise to various methodologies for decision making.

Essentially four different approaches to this problem have been developed by professing Christians. Perhaps the most controversial of these, Situationism, claims that conflicts between "law" and "love" can arise. Because it teaches that, in these cases, one is obligated to do "the most loving thing," irrespective of any God-given moral absolutes,¹¹⁸ it must be rejected by committed Christians who believe that the Bible does completely prohibit actions such as adultery, theft, murder, etc. A relatively recent strategy, called Hierarchicalism or Graded Absolutism, claims to promote biblical morality.¹¹⁹ However, since it holds that,

¹¹⁴Immanuel Kant, "On the Supposed Right to Lie from Altruistic Motives," in Sisela Bok, *Lying: Moral Choice in Public and Private Life* (New York, NY: Random House, 1978), 286.

¹¹⁵See, for example, Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame P, 1983), 4, 128; Richard J. Mouw, *The God Who Commands* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame P, 1990), 116-120, 128.

¹¹⁶See, for example, "Against Moral Dilemmas," in *Moral Dilemmas* (New York, NY: Oxford UP, 1987), 247; "Ethical Consistency," in *Moral Dilemmas* (New York, NY: Oxford UP, 1987), 115-137; "Moral Dilemmas and Consistency in Ethics," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 8 (June 1978): 269-287.

¹¹⁷See, for example, Edward John Carnell, *Christian Commitment: An Apologetic* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1957), 223-229; "Moral Conflicts," in *Morals and Values: Readings in Theoretical and Practical Ethics*, ed. Marcus G. Singer (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1977), 303-312; Joseph L. Allen, *Love & Conflict: A Covenantal Model of Christian Ethics* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1984), 86-87; *Moral Dilemmas* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), 97-107; Charles Augustus Baylis, *Ethics: The Principles of Wise Choice* (New York, NY: Henry Holt, 1958), 130-133; "Moral Dilemmas," in *Christian Ethics and Contemporary Philosophy*, The Library of Philosophy and Theology Series, ed. Ian T. Ramsey (London: SCM Press, 1966), 262-279; "Remarks on the Conflict of Obligations," *Journal of Philosophy* 55 (11 September 1958): 811-819; Richard H. Bube, "Of Dominoes, Slippery Slopes, Thin Edges of Wedges, and Camels' Noses in Tents: Pitfalls in Christian Ethical Consistency," *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 42 (September 1990): 162-172; "Der Kompromiss in der Moral: Zu seiner theologischen Bestimmung und Bewertung," *Trierer Theologische Zeitschrift* 86 (1977): 99-118.

¹¹⁸See, for example, Joseph Fletcher, *Situation Ethics: The New Morality* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1966); Harvey Cox, "Reflection and Reply," in *The Situation Ethics Debate* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1968).

¹¹⁹See, for example, Norman L. Geisler, *Ethics: Alternatives and Issues* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1971); Norman L. Geisler, *The Christian Ethic of Love* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1973); Norman L. Geisler, *Options in Contemporary Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1981); and *Christian Ethics: Options and Issues* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1981).

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

other than God Himself, there are really no substantive absolute moral laws at all,¹²⁰ in the final analysis it turns out to be essentially the same as Situationism and must therefore also be repudiated.¹²¹ A third scheme, Conflicting Absolutism, contends that in this fallen world moral absolutes do conflict, at which point one is morally obligated to do the immoral!¹²² Since it, in essence, champions the blasphemous view that God's law at times compels one to commit sin, it too needs to be set aside as unacceptable for faithful Bible-believing Christians.¹²³ Lastly, there is a system called Non-Conflicting Absolutism, which holds that when correctly defined and rightly understood, universal scriptural moral absolutes do not and cannot ever conflict. God requires loyal obedience under all circumstances, and guarantees to take care of the results.¹²⁴

It is only this ethical procedure, that totally rejects the possibility of the conflict of absolute moral obligations, that needs further attention, in view of the allegation above that "Christians (and everyone else, for that matter) are sometimes forced to choose between two or more evils."¹²⁵ Since the Bible does not have any explicit statements directly addressing this matter, the basic principles and relevant passages need to be carefully considered. Notice the following lines of evidence:

A. To begin with, a comparison of the Decalogue with the Divine Lawgiver reveals that "the law of God, being a revelation of His will, [is] a transcript of His character."¹²⁶ For example, just as God is described as "holy" (Lev 19:2; Josh 24:19; Ps 99:9), so the law is "holy" (Rom 7:12); in the same way that His character is "perfect" (Deut 32:4), so is His moral law (Ps 19:7); just as He is "good" (Ps 25:8), so are His commandments (see Rom 7:12). Those who believe that divine moral absolutes conflict would in reality be pitting "part of God's nature against other parts of his nature."¹²⁷ And, "if God has given numerous moral absolutes, some of which genuinely conflict at times, it appears that there is conflict within the mind and moral will of God."¹²⁸ However, since Scripture declares that God's character is perfect and flawless, the expression of these at-

¹²⁰See Norman L. Geisler, *Ethics: Alternatives and Issues*, 132.

¹²¹For a comprehensive elaboration of hierarchicalism, see chapter five of my doctoral dissertation, "A Critical Study of Norman L. Geisler's Ethical Hierarchicalism," as noted above.

¹²²See, for example, *Theological Ethics*, vol. 1, *Foundations*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1966); Joseph Fletcher & John Warwick Montgomery, *Situation Ethics: True or False?* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship, 1972).

¹²³For excellent critiques of this system, see *Ethics: Alternatives and Issues; Christian Ethics: Options and Issues*.

¹²⁴See, for example, Gordon Kainer, *Faith, Hope and Clarity: A Look at Situation Ethics and Biblical Ethics* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1977); *Toward Old Testament Ethics*.

¹²⁵"In Defense of Rahab," 26.

¹²⁶White, *The Great Controversy*, 634.

¹²⁷Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Hard Sayings of the Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988), 97.

¹²⁸Robert V. Rakestraw, "Ethical Choices: A Case for Non-Conflicting Absolutism," *Criswell Theological Review* 2 (Spring 1988): 255.

DU PREEZ: A HOLOCAUST OF DECEPTION

tributes in His moral laws will of necessity contain no conflicts or contradictions.

B. If genuine ethical conflicts exist, in which one must choose a so-called "lesser" moral evil, and if "Christ was tempted in every way we are tempted" (Heb 4:15 NLV), then of necessity, He had to have sinned! However, the rest of the passage just quoted, categorically states, "but He did not sin." The fact of the sinlessness of Jesus is repeatedly noted in the New Testament (1 Pet 2:22; cf. John 15:10), together with a summons to follow His example (1 Pet 2:21)—a command that would be pointless and preposterous, if people were forced to encounter real moral dilemmas in life in which they have to commit moral evil. Ellen White pointedly declares: "He [i.e., Christ] came to demonstrate that humanity, allied by living faith to divinity, can keep all of the commandments of God."¹²⁹ Since Jesus was "in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin" (Heb 4:15), then we can be absolutely assured that no human being will ever be faced with conflicting moral obligations, in which a sin must be committed.

C. When God created humans in the beginning of this earth's history, He made them free moral beings (see Gen 2:15-17). Thus, one is never forced either to obey or disobey God or His moral law. Scripture teaches that individuals are always afforded a genuinely free choice—between good and evil, right and wrong, faithfulness and disloyalty, allegiance and treachery, obedience and disobedience (see Deut 30:19; Josh 24:15; cf. Matt 11:28-30; 2 Cor 6:2). In a chapter fittingly titled, "Satan's Enmity Against God's Law," Ellen White notes that "man was created a free moral agent. . . . He must be subjected to the test of obedience; but he is never brought into such a position that yielding to evil becomes a matter of necessity."¹³⁰ Furthermore, she reminds us that, "everyone may place his will on the side of the will of God, may choose to obey Him, and by thus linking himself with divine agencies, he may stand where nothing can force him to do evil."¹³¹ Therefore, the notion that occasions arise in which the choices are only between one moral evil and another moral evil flatly contradicts Scripture and supports Satan in his enmity against God's law.

D. A constant refrain found throughout the Scriptures is the reality that God is both able as well as willing to protect and provide for those who face tests, trials, and temptations (see, for example, Ps 46:1; 91:1-8; Dan 3:16-18; Rom 7:24, 25; Jude 24). In 1 Corinthians 10:13, the apostle Paul tells us that "God is faithful," and He "will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it." Concurring that "He lays on them no burden greater than they are able to bear,"¹³² Ellen White says: "God has made ample provision for His people; and if they rely upon His strength, they will never become the sport of cir-

¹²⁹Ellen G. White, *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 15 November 1898, 730.

¹³⁰White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 331-332.

¹³¹White, *Education*, 289 (emphasis added).

¹³²White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 7:274.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

cumstances";¹³³ for no temptation or trial is permitted to come to His people which they are unable to resist.¹³⁴ Moreover, Scripture says: "God helps you want to do the things that please him. And he gives you the power to do these things" (Phil 2:13 ERV). In other words: "Whatever is to be done at His command may be accomplished in His strength. All His biddings are enablings."¹³⁵ The biblical reality is that believers "can do all things through Christ" (Phil 4:13), because the "God whom we serve is able to deliver us" (Dan 3:16) from any temptation. However, "even if He does not" (Dan 3:18 NIV), loyal followers are challenged to "be faithful even to death" (Rev 2:10 NLV). The fact that a trustworthy God has promised to keep His followers from falling and to provide a morally right way of escape when trials come confirms that one will never be forced to choose between two evils.

E. The final judgment which takes place before Christ's second coming is frequently mentioned in the New Testament (see Matt 12:36, 37; Acts 24:25; cf. John 5:22; Rom 14:10; Heb 9:27). Accentuating the importance of God's moral norms, the writer of Ecclesiastes concludes his exhortation, saying: "Honor God and obey His Laws. This is all that every person must do. For God will bring to judgment everything we do, including every secret, whether good or bad" (Eccl 12:13 NLV, 14 CJB). Analogously, after enumerating specific commandments from the Decalogue, so that no one can mistake what "law" he is referring to, James says: "So speak and do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty" (Jas 2:12). As Ellen White pertinently observes: "In order to be prepared for the judgment, it is necessary that men should keep the law of God. The law will be the standard of character in the judgment."¹³⁶ Obviously then, there can only be a fair final judgment if there is a clear moral standard that can always be obeyed by human beings, through the power of God. This fact also challenges the notion that moral conflicts occur in which people are forced to violate the law of God.

F. The wholistic nature of the divine moral law is emphasized in the Epistle of James, as follows: "For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it" (Jas 2:10 NIV). Therefore, from God's perspective, there is no such thing as a "lesser moral evil" that He will merely disregard or overlook, for the transgression of any of His commandments is sin (see 1 John 3:4 KJV). In Ellen White's words: "In order to be a commandment breaker it is not necessary that we should trample upon the whole moral code. If one precept is disregarded, we are transgressors of the sacred law."¹³⁷ But, Scripture records that, "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). This offer

¹³³White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 421.

¹³⁴*Ibid.*, 332.

¹³⁵Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1923), 333.

¹³⁶White, *The Great Controversy*, 436.

¹³⁷White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 4:253.

DU PREEZ: A HOLOCAUST OF DECEPTION

of forgiveness, however, does not negate the truth that such action is classified as "sin." On the contrary, the fact that it must be confessed proves that it is a moral evil. Thus, when one recognizes that the Bible discounts the concept of a so-called permissible lesser evil, it will become clear that "God requires of all His subjects obedience, *entire* obedience to *all* His commandments."¹³⁸

G. Lastly, yet most critically, the overall theme of the cosmic controversy between good and evil needs to be thoughtfully considered. The first three chapters of Genesis indicate that the Tempter set out to lure Eve into doubting, questioning, and eventually challenging the veracity of God's word, as well as the validity, justice, and fairness of His moral requirements (see Gen 3:1-6). Indeed, "from the first, the great controversy had been upon the law of God. Satan had sought to prove that God was unjust, and that his law was faulty, and that the good of the universe required it to be changed."¹³⁹ Further light on this cosmic battle emerges from the first two chapters of the book of Job. One of the things Satan set out to prove was that, if God removed His protective care from Job, it would be impossible for Job to be loyal to God and obedient to His law (see Job 1:7-12). Ellen White observes: "Satan had claimed that it was impossible for man 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."¹⁴⁰ This statement corresponds well with God's injunction regarding the Decalogue: "Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments" (Deut 5:29). Since God requires people to always obey all His moral laws, and since "God has given no commandments which cannot be obeyed by all,"¹⁴¹ it can once again be seen that there is never a time when one will be compelled to choose between two moral evils. In the final analysis, a study of the great controversy theme indicates that it is Satan who claims that on occasion God's moral law "cannot be obeyed."¹⁴²

This concise overview of biblical data concerning the essence of the moral law, the example of Jesus Christ, the fact of human freedom, the promise and power of God's protection, the nature of the final judgment, the wholistic character of the divine law, and the reality of the cosmic controversy between Christ and Satan, all demonstrate irrefutably that it is utterly impossible for genuine conflicts of absolute scriptural moral obligations to exist in God's universe!

¹³⁸Ellen G. White, in *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, rev. ed., 7 vols. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1976-1980), 6:1072.

¹³⁹White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 69.

¹⁴⁰White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, 314.

¹⁴¹White, *The Desire of Ages*, 204.

¹⁴²*Ibid.*, 309.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Why then, do some insist that all human beings "are sometimes forced to choose between two or more evils"¹⁴³?

Admittedly, there are people who have assembled all civil, ceremonial, and moral laws into one large collection of rules. As a result, they often end up with various conflicts, such as Nebuchadnezzar's decree to worship the golden image (Dan 3:1-6), versus the second commandment of the Decalogue (Exod 20:4-6).¹⁴⁴ However, more careful scholarship has demonstrated that "the notion that there is some type of division within the law is not a concept that has been imposed on it from the outside."¹⁴⁵ That this categorization is fair to the biblical text is shown by the fact that the civil statutes in the Covenant Code of Exodus 21-23 had a heading that referred to its laws as "judgments" to be used as precedents.¹⁴⁶ Furthermore, while "the Decalogue carried no socially recognizable setting with its laws,"¹⁴⁷ thus implying its permanency, the ceremonial rules, from Exodus 25 through at least Leviticus 7, "had an expressed word of built-in obsolescence when it noted several times over that what was to be built was only a model."¹⁴⁸ Thus, it is aptly concluded that "the law can and must be viewed as being divided into various components."¹⁴⁹ When this is done, the limited civil rules and terminated ceremonial rites will be properly understood. Then, when the Decalogue is rightly perceived as God's eternal moral law, the conflicts previously seen will simply vanish.

Moreover, there are some who maintain a belief in the conflict of moral obligations because of the way in which they choose to interpret and apply certain of the Ten Commandments. For instance, one writer says that telling the truth under threat to potential killers "makes one a participant in the shedding of their blood."¹⁵⁰ In other words, "to permit a murder when one could have prevented it is morally wrong."¹⁵¹ It seems that this belief is constructed on the sixth commandment, for it is suggested that "the command 'You shall not murder' (Exod. 20:13) implies that we should help prevent the unnatural death of innocent people as well."¹⁵² Moreover, it is argued that "human life made in God's image has the same intrinsic value no matter which way one contributes to its demise."¹⁵³ Thus, since it is held that "it is morally unjustifiable not to resist

¹⁴³"In Defense of Rahab," 26.

¹⁴⁴See, for example, *Christian Ethics: Options and Issues*, 119.

¹⁴⁵Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., "God's Promise Plan and His Gracious Law," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 33 (September 1990): 291.

¹⁴⁶Kaiser, *Toward Old Testament Ethics*, 46.

¹⁴⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹"God's Promise Plan and His Gracious Law," 300.

¹⁵⁰"The Ten Commandments and Ethical Dilemmas," 265.

¹⁵¹*Christian Ethics: Options and Issues*, 232. See also, *Ethics: Alternatives and Issues*, 174.

¹⁵²*Christian Ethics: Options and Issues*, 183.

¹⁵³Norman L. Geisler, "A Response to Olson's Critique of Ethical Hierarchicalism," *Evangelical Journal* 4 (Fall 1986): 83.

DU PREEZ: A HOLOCAUST OF DECEPTION

evil,¹⁵⁴ "failing to prevent such a death is as culpable as actually causing it."¹⁵⁵ The pivotal issue here has to do with appropriate responsibility and culpability. Nowhere in the Ten Commandments is it either directly stated or implied that these absolute moral laws may or should be inverted from negative prohibitions ("You shall not kill")¹⁵⁶ to positive limitless obligations ("You must prevent innocent people from being killed"). Logically, if "failing to prevent such a death is as culpable as actually causing it,"¹⁵⁷ then not deterring those who, for example, choose to commit adultery, steal, or covet, would of necessity make one guilty of violating those commandments as well. Clearly, the moral law must be read as given by God, and not presumptuously transmuted into propositions that place falsely-assumed or counterfeit responsibilities on people. Properly read as they are recorded in the Bible, these moral laws of God cannot and do not ever conflict.

Finally, one other basis for a belief in these moral dilemmas is due to what some allege is the evidence from "the brute realities of life,"¹⁵⁸ "reason, and human experience."¹⁵⁹ Clearly, for these individuals the facts or occurrences of life, as they personally perceive them, provide the supposed proof that moral obligations conflict. Instead of diligently undertaking a hermeneutically sound and exegetically reliable analysis of what the Bible itself shows to be God's immutable and eternal absolute moral laws, they often operate on unexpressed assumptions and unexamined societal standards as to what these universal ethical norms presumably are. Then, based on these unproven theories, the conclusion is drawn that these duties conflict in the real world and in the Bible.¹⁶⁰ By way of illustration, consider the precise problem of lying to save life being investigated in this study. As noted above, some have considered it an absolute moral duty to prevent innocent human life from being taken. However, according to the biblical data, "it is an absolute not to commit murder; but it is not an absolute to save a life."¹⁶¹ In other words, the reason for this dilemma is the "imposition of worldly definitions of truth on the Bible."¹⁶² While it is no doubt a culturally-conditioned mandate to preserve innocent human life at all costs, this convention

¹⁵⁴*Ethics: Alternatives and Issues*, 174.

¹⁵⁵*Christian Ethics: Options and Issues*, 183.

¹⁵⁶Exod 20:13 (NJB).

¹⁵⁷*Christian Ethics: Options and Issues*, 183.

¹⁵⁸*Ethics: Alternatives and Issues*, 94.

¹⁵⁹"Rahab Revisited," 5. In the original statement the word "Scripture" was also included, a point to be considered next.

¹⁶⁰In view of this type of phenomenological approach to ethics, one writer has noted that, "many theological ethicists allow the development of their work to be controlled, not by theological enquiry, but by the law of that phenomenology of life"; *Theological Ethics*, vol. 1, *Foundations*, 461.

¹⁶¹C. Gordon Olson, "Norman Geisler's Hierarchical Ethics Revisited," *Evangelical Journal* 4 (Spring 1986): 12.

¹⁶²Review of *Options in Contemporary Christian Ethics*, in *Transformation* 1 (October/December 1984): 28.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

does not correspond with Scripture. Considering loyal obedience more important than life itself, Jesus said: "Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Rev 2:10). Just as Jesus Christ "obeyed [God] even when that caused him to die" (Phil 2:8 ERV), in the same way Christians are called to "follow His steps" (1 Pet 2:21), and be "willing to die" (Rev 12:11 NLV) for Him. In brief, "Death before dishonor or the transgression of God's law should be the motto of every Christian."¹⁶³

Thus, when all the relevant biblical principles impacting on the conflict of genuine absolute moral obligations are taken into consideration, when God's immutable Ten Commandments are properly separated from other restricted regulations, when these ethical requirements are correctly interpreted, and when all unscriptural societal expectations are eliminated, it becomes incontrovertibly evident that it is utterly impossible for the divinely-designed moral absolutes to ever come into unavoidable contradiction!

Fear of the Future or Faith in the Father?

By way of review, the fourth and final point made above in defending Rahab's deception was that, "Potential consequences of any action must be carefully considered, and rigorously avoided if life-threatening. Since human life is considered most important, it needs to be protected even at the cost of truth." In view of the fact that it has just been demonstrated that loving loyalty to God's law of absolute truthfulness invalidates the humanistic belief of lying to save life, only the matter of "potential consequences" will be discussed in this section.

In setting the stage for retelling the story of Joshua 2, the writer of "In Defense of Rahab" made note of the strategic importance of the fortified city of Jericho, the first challenge the Israelites faced as they prepared to enter Canaan. The author alleged that "a failure here would spell psychological disaster for the invading forces. But a decisive victory would send shock waves throughout the entire area, unnerving less-protected leaders."¹⁶⁴ Later, expressing a similar concern for avoiding undesirable results, he argued that had Rahab remained silent when asked about the spies, such refusal to speak "would have been fatal to the spies, for it would have triggered an exhaustive search of the premises."¹⁶⁵ Then he contended: "On the other hand, to have disclosed the whereabouts of her visitors would have led to their certain imprisonment or death at an exceedingly critical time in Israel's history."¹⁶⁶ Accordingly, reasoning that these consequences had to be rigorously avoided, the writer applauded Rahab for her daring deception.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶³White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:147.

¹⁶⁴"In Defense of Rahab," 24.

¹⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 26.

¹⁶⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷*Ibid.*

DU PREEZ: A HOLOCAUST OF DECEPTION

In a nutshell, the argument used above says that Rahab's use of deception was justifiable, for without it the spies would certainly have been captured or killed, resulting in disaster for the Israelites. This type of logic contradicts Romans 3:8, which "warns us not to say 'Let us do evil that good may result.'"¹⁶⁸ Incredibly, the article on Rahab never once mentioned that it was at God's direct command that the Israelites were to cross the Jordan River, "to the land which I am giving to them—the children of Israel" (Josh 1:2).¹⁶⁹ Thus, adopting an atheistic approach of totally ignoring God's pivotal role in the lives of His people, the Rahab incident has been approached from a thoroughly humanistic perspective.

When it is seen that all "ethical systems can be broadly divided into two categories, deontological (duty-centered) and teleological (end-centered),"¹⁷⁰ which are "mutually exclusive,"¹⁷¹ it becomes clear that the writer's stress on results makes this a teleological approach. This scheme stands in stark contrast to the deontological "ethic of principle,"¹⁷² which holds that actions are "intrinsically right or wrong regardless of their consequences."¹⁷³ In essence then, since teleology is dependent on the often changing circumstances of life, it amounts to an inconsistent, relativistic tactic; while deontology proves to be a trustworthy, principle-based method for making moral decisions.

It seems that the natural human reaction, when confronted with perplexing ethical difficulties or life-or-death dilemmas, is to attempt to project the future, and then to make decisions based on these consequential speculations. However, the person who has become "a new creation" in Jesus Christ (2 Cor 5:17), is called upon to no longer be "conformed to this world" but to have a "transformed" way of thinking (Rom 12:2), and to "walk in the newness of life" (Rom 6:4), "according to the Spirit" (Rom 8:4). What this means in concrete situations is spelled out explicitly in instructions given by Jesus Christ: "Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. . . . But be faithful, even if you have to die, and I will give you the crown of life" (Rev 2:10 NCV). In brief, the challenge is: Do not operate out of fear of the future, but by faith in the Father!

This conspicuous contrast between "fear" and "faith" surfaces in the account of the storm on the Sea of Galilee. After Jesus had miraculously silenced the turbulent ocean, He asked His disciples: "Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?" (Mark 4:40). The reaction of Shadrach, Meshach, and

¹⁶⁸Kaiser, *Hard Sayings of the Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988), 96.

¹⁶⁹See, for example, the following passages that talk about the "promised" land: Exodus 12:25; Deuteronomy 6:3; 9:28; 27:3.

¹⁷⁰*Christian Ethics: Options and Issues*, 24.

¹⁷¹William K. Frankena, *Ethics*, 2d ed., Foundations of Philosophy Series (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1973), 15.

¹⁷²*Ethics: Alternatives and Issues*, 20.

¹⁷³"Deontological Ethics," in *Ethics*, vol. 1 (Pasadena, CA: Salem P, 1994), 219. See also, *What Are They Saying about Moral Norms?* (New York, NY: Paulist, 1981), 87; "Teleology or Deontology?" *Irish Theological Quarterly* 53 (1987): 36.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Abednego, when faced with either the fiery furnace or forsaking their heavenly Father, exhibits precisely the opposite reaction. Though they believed that God was able to deliver them from death, they said to Nebuchadnezzar: "But even if He does not, . . . we are not going to serve your gods" (Dan 3:18 NIV). Commenting on such unswerving allegiance, Ellen White observes: "True Christian principle will not stop to weigh consequences."¹⁷⁴ For, "Christ's ambassadors have nothing to do with consequences. They must perform their duty and leave results with God."¹⁷⁵ How then should moral decisions be made? Essentially echoing Revelation 2:10, Ellen White declares: "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."¹⁷⁶

Admittedly, statements such as these run counter to a culturally-conditioned, results-oriented, rationalistic mind. As one scholar astutely noted: "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."¹⁷⁷ When the biblical truth is acknowledged that only the Creator can "tell from the beginning what will happen in the end" (Isa 46:10 NLV), people will begin to spurn speculating about possible consequences and embrace the challenge of living for God's glory (Matt 5:16), in complete conformity to His commandments.

Thus, the prescriptive teachings of Scripture, together with its exemplary testimonies, establishes the deontological approach as the authentic biblical method for making moral decisions. Since consequential reasoning proves to be a "hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ" (Col 2:8 NIV), it needs to be roundly rejected. Instead, just as Jesus was "obedient to the point of death" (Phil 2:8), regardless of consequences, the dedicated believer is challenged to "think and act like Christ Jesus" (Phil 2:5 NCV), fearless of the future, but "faithful, even to the point of death" (Rev 2:10 CJB).¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁴White, *The Sanctified Life*, 39.

¹⁷⁵White, *The Great Controversy*, 609-610.

¹⁷⁶White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 634.

¹⁷⁷Erwin W. Lutzer, *The Necessity of Ethical Absolutes*, Christian Free University Curriculum Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 75.

¹⁷⁸In addition to the exemplary life of Jesus, and the faith-building account of the three Hebrews, there are several other biblical narratives which provide worthy models of faithful actions in life or death emergencies. There is the record of Daniel and his friends who were loyal to God, even at the risk of the life of the friendly heathen overseer, Ashpenaz (Dan 1:3-13). Then, there is the story of Peter, who followed God's directions in escaping from prison, even though he knew that the sixteen non-Christian guards would be executed for his jailbreak (Acts 12:1-19). Also, there was Mordecai, who remained faithful to God, refusing to worshipfully bow before Haman, even when a death decree was made against the entire nation of the Jews (Est 3).

Besides these Scripture chronicles there are several 20th century stories of Christians who acted out of faith in the Father, not fear of the future, when faced with life-threatening circumstances. For example, an Adventist family, living in Austria during the Nazi occupation, took in a

DU PREEZ: A HOLOCAUST OF DECEPTION

Conclusions and Implications of this Investigation

This article set out to make a Christ-centered, Bible-based, appropriately-applied examination of the issue of lying to save life. Utilizing published articles on the biblical narrative of Rahab as a springboard for discussion, an analysis was first made of the scriptural perspective of truth. It was concluded that the God of truth and verity has made it an absolute binding moral obligation that people must communicate truthfully; so much so, that those who choose to copy Satan, "the father of lies," will perish, while the redeemed who emulate Jesus,

12-year-old Jewish boy who was fleeing for his life. One day the Gestapo showed up at their door. When the soldier asked by name whether the boy was in their house, the wife looked the soldier straight in the eye and, trusting in God, said: "As an officer of the German army you know what your responsibility is, and you are welcome to carry it out." With the culpability of the evil of his action now fully on his shoulders, where it rightly belonged, the Nazi turned on his heel and left that home undisturbed.

A second account comes from Poland, also during World War II. A Christian mother and her daughter were living in a room in a two-story apartment when a Jewish girl being chased by German soldiers ran into their place and hid under the bed. Now, they were well aware of how dangerous this could be, for in the adjacent house a bakery owner and his daughter had been arrested and taken to a concentration camp simply because he had sold bread to a Jew. Since things had happened so fast, the mother had no time to figure out what to do. But, being a woman of great faith, she sat down at the table, opened her Bible, and started to pray and read. When a German soldier entered their room, he immediately recognized what she was reading. He uttered only two words—"good woman"—and promptly left the room.

A third incident happened in Romania during Communist rule. A first-grade Seventh-day Adventist boy faced a wrenching decision the first week he attended school. As he came home on Friday, he found an armed soldier and another man in his home talking to his mother. These men had come to ensure that he would attend school the next day. Turning to the first-grader they tried to persuade him to give up the "superstitious" belief in God. Then, they threatened to kill his mother, unless he agreed to attend school on Sabbath. The mother, encouraging her child to make his own decision, told him not to worry about her. He appeared torn between love for his earthly mother and loyalty to his heavenly Father. He did not want to go to school on Sabbath. But, should he lie, saying he would go, in order to save his mother's life? Would he be responsible if the soldier killed his mother? No; daring to stand faithful unto death, he refused to compromise his loyalty to God! Incredibly, God intervened and honored his integrity, for he was able to complete his education without ever attending school on Sabbath.

A more recent incident occurred in China, where the church works under the watchful eye of the government. When a large number of people were ready for baptism into the Adventist faith, they hired two trucks as transportation. Since they had never been to the lake before, they stopped for directions at an intersection. Too late they realized that they had actually walked into the state security offices. Before they could leave, the officer in charge asked: "What are you going to do at the lake?" Now, what were they to say, since conducting a baptismal service was strictly illegal? Because they trusted in God, and did not want to use deception, they honestly replied that they were on their way to have a baptism. As soon as they left, three police motorcycles swung in after them to make arrests when the time came. But as soon as they started out, a sudden rainstorm erupted. Miraculously, the rain fell only behind the trucks, soaking the motorcyclists, and making the road muddy and impassable for the police. The result? The people got to the lake unmolested, were baptized without further incident, and went home safely. Yes, indeed, we still serve a miracle working God!

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

"the Truth," will have eternal life. After having laid this basic groundwork, the specific issue concerning lying to save life was then considered at length. First, the concern regarding what ethical standards may be deduced from Scripture stories was addressed. It was shown that, only when the characters acted in harmony with God's plainly revealed will in the Decalogue, and as exemplified in the life of Jesus, should they be imitated. Second, the matter of motives was examined. An exegetical inquiry into the biblical expressions, together with an overview of the standard dictionary meaning of deceit and related terms, revealed that irrespective of motives, to intentionally mislead someone is a violation of the ninth commandment. Third, the question of the existence of genuine conflicting moral obligations was investigated. After a brief historical survey, and an enumeration of the four major methods used by Christians to address ethical dilemmas, seven biblical principles were adduced. Based on a study of the essence and unity of the law, the example of Jesus, the fact of human freedom, God's protection, the standard in the judgment, the great controversy, a proper isolation of the moral law, a trustworthy interpretation of the meaning of these commandments, and a repudiation of unbiblical societal expectations, it was concluded that it is totally impossible for real conflicts of absolute scriptural moral obligations to exist in God's universe. Finally, the issue of the role of consequences in decision making was appraised. While those who have argued in favor of lying to save life have opted for a speculative relativistic approach, it was demonstrated that the Bible's principled position is a call to uncompromising faithful obedience, even in the face of death.

As has doubtless been observed, this research on the extent and application of truth-telling has important implications for several other vital theological concepts. It impacts the nature of the character of the Father—a God of integrity whose word can be trusted. It affects the perception of Jesus Christ, the essence of truth and the believer's example for moral living. It has a bearing on one's view of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, One who has been sent to empower believers to successfully overcome any temptation. It has tremendous significance for the doctrine of revelation and inspiration, especially as it relates to the unity of Scripture and the need for a biblically sound hermeneutical procedure to interpret its many intriguing stories.

In the final analysis, it appears there is no middle ground, no third alternative. On this issue of lying to save life, the choice is either to be conformed to the world or transformed by the Word; societal conventions versus scriptural commandments; to live in fear of the future or by faith in the Father! As Jesus put it: "Whoever is not with Me is against Me" (Matt 12:30 NLV).

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Divine Accommodation in Revelation and Scripture

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The concept of accommodation is important for hermeneutics as well as for all other theological disciplines. Though the word is Latin in origin, the concept is deeply rooted in the sacred Scriptures. The ancient Romans used the word accommodation, for instance, in rhetoric to express the idea that an orator would adapt himself to his audience in his choice of words, gestures, and emotions, so that he could move their hearts and persuade their minds in whatever direction he wanted. In a much more exalted sense God in His self-revelation to humanity accommodates or adapts Himself to the mental and spiritual capacity of human beings so that they can come to know Him, learn to trust Him, and ultimately love Him.

In the history of Christian thought the idea of accommodation has played a significant role, even though the word is a theological rather than a biblical term. It has been used in a variety of ways. It must be stated from the outset that the concept of divine accommodation has frequently been applied in a way that did not do justice to the biblical data. This may well be an important reason why the concept has been ignored or avoided by Christian scholars who wanted to remain faithful to Holy Scripture. This, however, is not the right thing to do, as has been well stated by Sweet and Bromiley at the beginning of their article on accommodation in the revised edition of *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. They write:

The subject of accommodation is important because it involves the whole problem of a correct hermeneutics or mode of interpreting Scripture, because it introduces the problem of a correct balancing of the divine and human elements in Scripture, and because it involves the doctrine of the Incarnation and its purpose and nature. In all these spheres there can be a false as well as a true doctrine of accommoda-

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

tion, though the true doctrine is certainly not to be abandoned or neglected because of the possibility of the false.¹

The Concept of Accommodation in the History of the Church

Justin Martyr. With this warning in mind let us look at a few examples of how the concept of accommodation has been applied by Christian thinkers in different periods of the history of the church. Justin Martyr, a philosopher in the second century A.D. who was converted to Christianity, used the concept of accommodation to explain that God through Moses had given to the Jews laws on circumcision, Sabbaths, sacrifices, and many other laws because of the hardness of their hearts.

He wrote that God, “accommodating Himself to that nation, enjoined them also to offer sacrifices, as if to His name, in order that you might not serve idols.”² According to Justin Martyr God did not want the Jews to offer sacrifices, but because of their tendency to idolatry, He accommodated Himself to them by commanding them to bring sacrifices, but only to Him and not to the idol gods. He applies the same argument to God’s command to build a temple for His name in Jerusalem.³ A similar line of argumentation can be found in the writings of other early Christian writers.

Origen. Origen (c.185-c.254) finds divine accommodation in Scripture and in the incarnation of Christ. Because of human weakness, Scripture comes to us in a poor and humble style. But such accommodation is even more true in regard to the incarnation. For Origen, “The incarnate Lord, like the written revelation in inspired scripture, is a veil that must be penetrated. It is an accommodation to our present capacities in this life.”⁴ Several times throughout his writings Origen describes divine accommodation by picturing God as speaking “baby-talk” to us like a father to his little child or like a schoolmaster uses “little language” to his pupils. In his comments on Jer 18:6-10, where it seems that God changes his mind and “repents” of a certain contemplated action, Origen assures us that “when divine providence [*oikonomia*] is involved in human affairs, God assumes human intelligence, manners and language.”⁵

Chrysostom. It seems that of all the church fathers none made so much use of the idea of accommodation or condescension as Chrysostom (c.347-407). Like Origen and others he stressed the fact that God in the plan of redemption accommodated Himself to human weakness. “That he who is God was willing to become man, that he mightily suffered to accommodate himself [*katabnai*] is too

¹L. N. Sweet and G. W. Bromiley, “Accommodation,” *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, rev. ed. (1979), 1:24.

² Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 19 (ANF, 1:204).

³ *Ibid.* 22 (ANF, 1:206).

⁴ Henry Chadwick, *Early Christian Thought and the Classical Tradition: Studies in Justin, Clement, and Origen* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1966), 92.

⁵ Origen, Homily 18.6. In Stephen D. Benin, *The Footprints of God: Divine Accommodation in Jewish and Christian Thought* (Albany, NY: State U of New York P, 1993), 13.

VAN BEMMELIN: DIVINE ACCOMMODATION

great to comprehend.”⁶ Chrysostom highlighted accommodation or condescension in many aspects of Christ’s life and ministry. Other church fathers did so too, but Chrysostom apparently more than anyone else. It must be said that sometimes his application of the concept of accommodation seemed to go beyond or against the clear meaning of the Scriptures.⁷

Calvin. Among the Protestant Reformers John Calvin (1509-1564) stands out for his use of accommodation as a hermeneutical principle and a theological expedient. Like Chrysostom more than a thousand years earlier, Calvin is deeply impressed with the divine accommodation to human capacity and to human lowliness. He sees evidence of this accommodation throughout Scripture. Moses in his record of creation in Genesis made use of accommodation. Observing that Moses does not mention the creation of angels in Genesis chapter one, Calvin explains that “Moses, accommodating himself to the rudeness of the common folk, mentions in the history of the Creation no other works of God than those which show themselves to our own eyes.”⁸

Calvin states here an aspect of accommodation with important implications for biblical hermeneutics, namely that the word of God is often accommodated to the ordinary perception of common people. He sees another example of this in the words of Gen 1:16 that “God made two great lights: the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night.” These words obviously refer to the sun and the moon as the two great lights made by God. However, the astronomers of Calvin’s time (long before the discovery of the telescope) had by observation and calculation figured out that the planet Saturn was greater than the moon. Someone could conclude that Moses was mistaken in speaking of only two great luminaries. Calvin explains this as an accommodation on the part of the Spirit of God to common perception. Calvin argues that

. . . since the Spirit of God here opens a common school for all, it is not surprising that he should chiefly choose those subjects which would be intelligible to all. If the astronomer inquires respecting the actual dimensions of the stars, he will find the moon to be less than Saturn; but this is something abstruse, for to the sight it appears differently. Moses, therefore, rather adapts his discourse to common usage There is therefore no reason why janglers should deride the unskillfulness of Moses in making the moon the second luminary; for he does not call us up into heaven, he only proposes things which lie open before our eyes.⁹

⁶ John Chrysostom, *On the Incomprehensible Nature of God* 6.3. In Benin, 69.

⁷ Chrysostom argues, for instance, that God intended for Adam and Eve a state of virginity, that marriage is a divine concession or accommodation to their changed condition after they had sinned. See Benin, 60-62.

⁸ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* 1:14:3 (LCC, 20:162).

⁹ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, trans. John King, Reprint ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. 1:87.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Lessing. With the rise of rationalism and biblical criticism the concept of accommodation was applied in a way somewhat similar to the way it had been used by some of the church fathers. It was claimed that God had accommodated His revelation to the erroneous ideas and beliefs of more primitive times, but that with the progress of the human race to higher morality and greater scientific knowledge such ideas and beliefs should be abandoned. Gotthold Lessing (1729-1781) in his book *The Education of the Human Race*, published in 1780, sees God's revelation through Moses to the Israelites as a moral education "adapted to the age of children, an education by rewards and punishments addressed to the senses."¹⁰ The so-called accommodation theory set forth by higher critics in the late nineteenth century asserted that Jesus Christ in His incarnation accommodated Himself to the erroneous beliefs and misconceptions of His time.¹¹ Such applications of the principle of accommodation had the tendency to discredit this principle in the eyes of Christians who saw it as contradicting the truthfulness of Scripture and consequently the truthfulness of the incarnate Lord. However, it would be a serious mistake to discard a valid principle of biblical interpretation because of its abuse on the part of those who perceive the Bible as full of historical errors and primitive concepts of God and morality. Rather, we should try to ascertain how to distinguish valid from invalid applications. The second part of this paper is an attempt in that direction.

Accommodation: True and False

With some awareness of how the concept of accommodation was applied by Christian scholars throughout the centuries, we now want to look at some specific applications of accommodation. Scripture, we believe, not only is full of such examples but also enables us to distinguish between true and false applications of this principle. It is generally recognized that the Bible often speaks about God in very human terms. Many interesting examples of this can be found in the book of Genesis. In Gen 18:20 the Lord speaks with Abraham about the outcry concerning the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah, and He announces his intention in v. 21: "I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry against it that has come to Me; and if not, I will know."

These words seem strange in view of the teaching of Scripture that the Lord is omniscient. Was it necessary for the Lord to go down to Sodom and Gomorrah to find out what was happening there; and was it possible that the situation would be different from what He had heard? Or is this an example of divine accommodation, of the Lord acting and speaking at the level of human acting and speaking? If we would conclude from this verse that the Lord was accom-

¹⁰ Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *The Education of the Human Race*, trans. F. W. Robertson (London, 1927), 197-198. Quoted in Benin, 203.

¹¹ For examples of this use of accommodation see Peter Maarten van Bemmelen, *Issues in Biblical Inspiration: Sanday and Warfield* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews UP, 1988), 140-141, 235-236.

VAN BEMMELIN: DIVINE ACCOMMODATION

modating Himself by deliberately giving a false impression of His knowledge about Sodom and Gomorrah, would we not make God a liar? This certainly would be in conflict with the fact that Scripture teaches God is truthful and cannot lie (Numbers 23:19). The rest of Genesis chapter 18 is an amazing record of divine accommodation, the Lord opening Himself up to being questioned by a human being. Abraham was well aware of this condescension on God's part, for he said, "I who am but dust and ashes have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord," and he addressed God as "the Judge of all the earth" (Gen 18:17, 25). This, therefore, is not an accommodation to a primitive understanding of God, but a confirmation that God is indeed a fair judge—as shown again in Revelation and many other places—who does not act on the basis of hearsay. God knew the true condition of Sodom before He visited Abraham, but as in the last judgment to come, He came to pass judgment in person, thus revealing to Abraham the true source of Sodom's destruction.

Another example of anthropomorphic language in Genesis is found in Gen 9:16, where God speaks about the rainbow as the sign of His covenant. He said to Noah and his sons: "The rainbow shall be in the cloud, and I will look on it to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on earth." Did God need to look on the rainbow in order to remember His covenant? Obviously not! God couches His promise in very human terms. Ellen White recognizes the divine accommodation in the words of this promise: "The Lord declares that when He looks upon the bow, He will remember His covenant. This does not imply that He would ever forget; but He speaks to us in our own language, that we may better understand Him."¹²

From our brief historical survey it could be seen that the command of God to the Israelites to sacrifice animals was perceived by a number of church fathers as an accommodation to their weakness. Because, in their view, the Israelites were a rude, childlike people, with a strong inclination to idolatry which they had taken over from the Egyptians, God commanded His people to make sacrifice to Him alone, the true God, rather than to the idol gods. Although it is true that the people of Israel were influenced by Egyptian idolatry, it is not in harmony with Scripture to describe the divine laws on sacrifices as an accommodation to the idolatrous tendencies of the Israelites.¹³ Animal sacrifices were of divine institution, given to Adam and his descendants as a means to acknowledge their sin and to express their faith in the Redeemer to come.¹⁴ Genesis

¹² Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1958), 106.

¹³ By contrast, in Ezek 20:23–26 (NASB) God reveals that when the Israelites refused to follow His statutes and ordinances—notice they are His own—He "gave them" statutes and ordinances that were "not good" and human sacrifice: clearly the observances of idolatry, distinct from the Hebrew cultus and a perversion of God's original intent. This is the equivalent of Rom 1:18–32, which reveals of the sufferings of sinners that "God gave them up" to the effects of their sins.

¹⁴ Though to be accurate we must admit that while the Israelite sacrifices pointed typologically to the Redeemer to come and prepared the Israelites for the idea of Christ's death as substitutionary atonement for sin, there is no explicit evidence in the Torah that the Israelites saw or were meant to

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

contains clear evidence that the sacrifice of animals was a common practice in the time of the patriarchs and did not start only at the time of the Exodus. The New Testament clearly explains the typological significance of the sacrificial system as pointing to the sacrifice of Christ. We certainly can see in that system evidence of divine condescension and accommodation, but not merely to the idolatrous tendencies of the Jews, but to the darkened comprehension of the entire human race, separated from God through sin. Some church fathers did set forth the typological significance of the sacrificial system, but quite a number stressed the accommodationist view. Although a number of biblical texts were quoted in support of this use of the accommodation principle, it did not do justice to the totality of the biblical data. In order to prevent faulty or biased applications of accommodation we must bring the fullness of Scripture to bear upon each use of this concept.

Another manifestation of divine accommodation is found in the law of God, the Ten Commandments. It is obvious that the language of His law is accommodated to the sinful condition of humanity. Both in its specifications and in its negative formulas the Ten Commandments are addressed to fallen human beings. Ellen White, in an article entitled "The Law of God," draws attention to this fact. Speaking of the two great principles of the law of Jehovah, namely to love God supremely and to love our neighbor as ourselves, she explains that these principles "were more explicitly stated to man after the fall, and worded to meet the case of fallen intelligences. This was necessary in consequence of the minds of men being blinded by transgression."¹⁵ Again she wrote, "The law of God existed before the creation of man or else Adam could not have sinned. After the transgression of Adam the principles of the law were not changed, but were definitely arranged and expressed to meet man in his fallen condition."¹⁶

It would be a serious mistake, however, to say that the Ten Commandments were especially accommodated to the people of Israel and not to humanity as a whole. Yet, already in the writings of the church fathers we can find indications of such a mistaken use of the concept of accommodation. Justin Martyr, for instance, not only interpreted God's commands to Israel to bring sacrifices to Him and to build a temple for His worship as an accommodation to their tendency to idolatry (as has been quoted earlier), but also argued, "that God enjoined you to keep the Sabbath, and impose [*sic!*] on you other precepts for a sign, . . . on account of your unrighteousness, and that of your fathers, . . ."¹⁷ As proof to sub-

see their sacrifices as pointing to a future event. We find hints of this typological foreshadowing, however, in such texts as Hos 6:6 and Isa 1:10–17. In His death, the Messiah would "bring an end to sacrifice and offering" (Dan 9:27 NKJV).

¹⁵ Ellen G. White, "The Law of God," *Review and Herald*, May 6, 1875. In *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington: Review & Herald, 1953), 1:1104.

¹⁶ Ellen G. White, "The Law and the Gospel," *Signs of the Times*, March 14, 1878. In *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 1:1104.

¹⁷ Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 21 (ANF, 1:204).

VAN BEMMELIN: DIVINE ACCOMMODATION

stantiate this argument Justin then quotes God's words in Ezek 20:19-26. Clearly, for Justin Martyr the commandment to keep the Sabbath holy was not a commandment with binding force for all humanity, but merely a commandment accommodated to the Jews because they were prone to forget the Lord.¹⁸ This use of accommodation is not in harmony with the teaching of Scripture. While circumcision and the ceremonial or cultic laws were specifically given to the Jews, the moral law as expressed in the Ten Commandments is binding upon every human being. Jesus Christ consistently confirmed these commandments in all His teaching, and so did the apostles. According to Ellen White, God honored the Hebrews at Sinai "by making them the guardians and keepers of His law, but it was to be held as a sacred trust for the whole world. The precepts of the Decalogue are adapted to all mankind, and they were given for the instruction and government of all." In the same context she reiterates the fact that the two great principles of love for God and love for our neighbor in the Ten Commandments "are carried out in detail, and made applicable to the condition and circumstances of man."¹⁹ In other words the law of God was expressed in language peculiarly accommodated to the condition and circumstances of fallen humanity. While the underlying principles of God's law are binding upon all beings created in the image of God, the specific form in which those principles are expressed in the Ten Commandments is adapted not to the holy angels in heaven but to human beings upon this earth.

The climax of divine accommodation to humanity occurred when "the Word became flesh" (John 1:14). The apostle Paul refers to the incarnation as the mystery of godliness (Tim 3:16). The entire life and death of Christ was one uninterrupted accommodation to the need and capacity of every member of the human family. If the apostle Paul could say of himself, "I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some" (1 Cor 9:22), how infinitely more do such words apply to the incarnate Lord. Christ freely became all things to all men. This wonderful accommodation finds powerful expression in the following words of Ellen White:

As our Example, we have One who is all and in all, the chiefest among ten thousand, One whose excellency is beyond comparison. He graciously adapted His life for universal imitation. United in Christ were wealth and poverty, majesty and abasement, unlimited power and meekness and lowliness which in every soul who receives Him will be reflected. In Him, through the qualities and powers of the human mind, the wisdom of the greatest Teacher the world has ever known was revealed.²⁰

Christ accommodated His teaching to the comprehension of His audience, both in public discourses and in private interviews. With what tact, for instance,

¹⁸ Ibid. 19 (ANF, 1:204).

¹⁹ Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 305.

²⁰ Ellen G. White, "Let This Mind Be in You," *Signs of the Times*, September 3, 1902.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

did He adapt His teaching to such different people as Nicodemus, the learned and respected Pharisee, and the Samaritan woman, who seemed to be an outcast even in the opinion of her own people. Christ's lessons, according to Ellen White, "are for all, and adapted to the needs of all," and while they "are clothed in language so simple that a child might understand them, the truth is so deep that the most learned may well be charmed, and worship the Author of matchless wisdom."²¹

Just as with other forms of divine accommodation, it is important that in regards to the incarnation of our Lord we distinguish truth from error. The idea has been set forth that Christ, in becoming a man, accommodated Himself to the limitations of the knowledge of the people of His time. In the oft-quoted words of bishop Charles Gore, Christ "willed so to retain the beams of Deity as to observe the limits of the science of His age, and He puts Himself in the same relation to its historical knowledge."²² Consequently, Christ's statements in regards to science and history might be true in the context of the knowledge of His own time, but could prove to be erroneous in the light of the advanced knowledge of a later age. While Gore stressed the limits of Christ's knowledge in reference to science and history, others see the accommodation of Christ as going much farther than that. It is true that Scripture tells us that "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men" (Luke 2:52), yet there is not the slightest indication in Scripture that He limited Himself to the knowledge of His age. The evidence of Scripture points in a different direction. Christ in every respect, in power, in wisdom, in knowledge, was not only beyond the age in which He lived on earth, but also beyond any age since that time. But He restrained Himself, not sharing more than was essential for the purpose for which He had come, namely, "to save His people from their sins" (Matt 1:21).

To assume that Christ accommodated Himself to the ignorance of His contemporaries or, worse, to their pride and prejudices is in direct contradiction to the testimony of Scripture. He always spoke the truth, because He could say of Himself, "I am the truth" (John 14:6). It is true that He often kept silent when He could have spoken. Even in teaching His disciples He restrained Himself.²³ On the last evening before His death He told them, "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now." John 16:12. Christ's self-restraint was an important aspect of His accommodation to the weak and limited capacity of fallen human beings.

²¹ Ellen G. White, "Christ's Use of Parables," *Signs of the Times*, November 7, 1892.

²² Charles Gore, "The Holy Spirit and Inspiration," in *Lux Mundi: A Series of Studies in the Religion of the Incarnation*, ed. Charles Gore (New York: John W. Lovell, n.d.), 301.

²³ See Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press [1900], 1941), 22-23.

VAN BEMMELIN: DIVINE ACCOMMODATION

Conclusion

This paper is not meant as a thorough study of divine accommodation, but as an introduction to an important concept. For a correct understanding of divine revelation and a sound interpretation of the Scriptures, which are the inspired record of that revelation, it is important that we study the concept of divine accommodation. Failure to grasp this concept has often led to wrong interpretations of Scripture and a narrow understanding of the incarnation of our Lord. At the same time we must guard against false applications of this concept which would undermine or distort the truthfulness of God's Word. However, a firm grasp of divine accommodation in the true biblical sense will lead to a correct interpretation of Scripture and a deeper reverence in beholding "the Word made flesh."

The Relationship Between Archaeology and the Bible

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Not long ago, a colleague asked me to provide some evidences from archaeology that he could use to support the authenticity of the Bible. Our conversation stimulated some thought on my part and this paper.

For us to begin to understand the relationship between archaeology and the Bible, we first need to define the nature of each entity. Thus, this essay will first address two questions: “What is the Bible?” and “What is archaeology?” Then we will discuss the relationship between archaeology and the Bible.

What Is the Bible?

This question is not seeking a description of the Bible but, rather, is asking what, in essence, is the Bible? For example, if I were to ask, “What is the Gettysburg Address?” one could answer, “A speech made by Abraham Lincoln to commemorate a Civil War battle at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.” That answer is a statement about what the Gettysburg Address is, not a description of what Mr. Lincoln said during that address.

When it comes to the Bible, however, the answer is more obscure. Actually, it is impossible to answer “What is the Bible?” in a universal sense. What makes answering impossible has nothing to do with the Bible and everything to do with the one answering the question.¹ Were I to ask the combined membership of the Society of Biblical Literature (an American scholarly organization) this question, the answers would range across a wide spectrum. At one end would be those who believe the Bible is a humanly-collated work, crafted in the Persian or Hellenistic periods. According to this perspective, it contains myths, stories, and

¹J. Maxwell Miller, “Approaches to the Bible through History and Archaeology: Biblical History as a Discipline.” *Biblical Archaeologist*, Fall, 1982, 211.

fiction, with no central purposes or themes. The Bible was created by politically motivated people who never saw, heard, or even necessarily believed in the same God, or so this scenario dictates.

At the other end of the spectrum would be those who believe the Bible was solely the work of God. He spoke and King James wrote it down. To those who hold this view, there is no possibility for errors on any level. Even punctuation was inspired, because who could know more about punctuation than God?

In attitude, these two extremes are much alike. Neither view has a need for archaeology, history, or even biblical languages. Both groups suppose that their theories are so exact that they already know what they need to know about the Bible. Any new piece of data is either ignored or forced within the parameters of these opposing theories. Information from any quarter may be unsettling, so data outside the control of the theories is under suspicion.

The interest of this paper is removed from the similarities between these extremes. I would, however, like to point out the initial problem we confront by the use of an illustration. Suppose I placed a Bible on a table. On one side sits the most radical proponent of the historical-critical method. On the other side sits the most extreme fundamentalist. If both persons sitting at the table were invited to give a lecture entitled "What is the Bible?" the only similarities between their presentations would be their opening remarks. Everything that followed, including the biblical references or examples they used, their points of reference, the sources quoted, their manner of dating the biblical books and stories, and their conclusions would be decidedly antagonistic to each other's presentations. Yet, the Bible used would be the same.

The dilemma is plain to see. If views about the Bible differ so widely, it is clear that the perceived relationship between archaeology and the Bible will also be affected. Those who believe the Bible is the verbally-dictated Word of God will place the reliability of the Bible so high above archaeology that archaeology is utterly useless. If God communicated directly, what else is there to learn? On the other hand, those who see the Bible as a late, fictitious, human work will tend to ignore any archaeological connections to the Bible. What connections they do make will be made to literature and material culture concurrent to the time they place the creation of the Bible. Their theories have already placed the Bible outside of the Bible's own historical settings.

There has been, however, among the broad middle ground of Bible students and scholars (conservative and liberal) a tacit acceptance of the idea that somehow archaeology provides a neutral setting from which the Bible can be evaluated. Within conservative circles, archaeology has been seen as the champion of the Bible. While in recent decades most conservative scholars have become too sophisticated as to say archaeology "proves" the truthfulness of the Bible, their use of archaeology has shown that conclusion to be inherent in their beliefs. Liberals, likewise, have subscribed to the same conclusion, although within a different paradigm.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Conservative and liberal alike would suggest that the one objective way by which the reliability of the Bible can be tested (and thereby answer the question, “What is the Bible?”) is via some objective source, like archaeology. Such a conclusion suggests that archaeology can somehow help us evaluate the Bible. To test that thesis we need first to answer the question, “What is archaeology?”

What Is Archaeology?

Here is my own definition of archaeology:

Archaeology is an intentional scholarly discipline of uncovering the story of the human past. It largely depends on ancient texts, excavations, and archaeological surveys, but can also gather data from geology, palaeobotany, linguistics, and any discipline that provides information about the past.

Archaeology appears to be the perfect medium for recovering biblical history. For over 100 years archaeologists have been digging in the land where the Bible stories took place. The Bible itself has a broad spectrum of interpretations, but archaeology has controls. W. F. Albright (widely viewed as the father of biblical archaeology) set forth the idea that ancient literary documents need some type of “external evidence” for evaluating their “ultimate historicity.”² By “external evidence” he meant archaeology. Explicit in his thesis was the idea that ancient documents were not objective because they had to conform to ancient writing patterns and other societal pressures. But archaeology provides a means for reliably evaluating ancient texts. His idea that archaeology is the reality check of ancient documents has become the norm among archaeologists. It seems to make logical sense.

Ancient literary sources, like modern literature, were diverse. For example, one cannot possibly accept the Enuma Elish and other ancient myths on the same level of truthfulness as the book of Jeremiah, so having an independent (i.e., objective) source for evaluating ancient literary sources could be seen as a god-send for historians. This view of archaeology as a check on literary sources has been assumed by all spectrums of scholarship (and laity), except for the two extremes of scholarship (as described above).

There is a problem, however. Some professionally conducted archaeological work seems to repudiate the biblical stories. For example, the site of et-Tell, assumed by many to be biblical Ai, when excavated, produced no evidence of the Israelites. Max Miller wrote about the situation this way:

That biblical Ai is to be equated with present-day et-Tell is an obvious conclusion, therefore, and one which scholars were agreed upon before any excavations were undertaken at the site. According to Josh. 7-8, Ai was a fortified city at the time of the Israelite invasion (this is implied by the description of Joshua’s military tactics and confirmed by the reference to the city gate in 7.5); it was conquered

²“The Israelite Conquest of Canaan in the Light of Archaeology.” BASOR 74, 1939, 12.

and burned by Joshua; and it remained “forever a heap of ruins” (*tēl ’olām*; 8:28) from that day onward. However, archaeological excavations at et-Tell have indicated rather conclusively that the site was virtually unoccupied following c. 2000 B.C.E. except for a small unfortified village which stood on the old ruins c. 1200-1050 B.C.E.³

When the excavators of et-Tell began their project they expected to find evidence of biblical Ai: some stratigraphic assemblage belonging to the Late Bronze Age. If the excavators found what they had expected, they would have found evidence of a fortified settlement which ended in a layer of ash. Remember, according to Josh 8:28 the Israelites destroyed and burned Ai. When archaeologists excavated the site supposed to be biblical Ai, they found nothing from the period they expected—nothing, that is, from the time of Joshua (the Late Bronze Age)—no city, no destruction, and no ash layer. Because archaeologists found nothing, the assumption is that “nothing” is *evidence* against the reliability of the biblical text. This “nothing” evidence has a number of different names. Amihai Mazar calls it “silent” evidence,⁴ while Miller calls it “negative archaeological evidence.”⁵

The dilemma is clear: the Bible said one thing, but archaeology did not find what the Bible said. Miller concludes,

The fact is that the available archaeological evidence simply does not square very well with the biblical account of the conquest regardless of what one proposes as a date. If the Bible and archaeology are to be correlated *vis-à-vis* the conquest, the claims of the biblical account will have to be modified in some fashion and/or some of the archaeological evidence will have to be explained away.⁶

A similar dilemma is present at other sites mentioned in the Bible (e.g., Gibeon, Jericho).

It should surprise no reader that some have decided that archaeology is the more reliable of the two, suggesting that the Bible is, thus, an unreliable historical document. In fact, archaeology has been widely used by critics as evidence against the Bible. So, rather than concluding that archaeology proves the reliability of the Bible, it has been seen to disprove the reliability of the Bible.

On the other hand, not one sherd of evidence has been found that disagrees with any biblical statement or story. As Larry Herr has written, “I cannot think of a single instance where archaeological finds have leveled a broadside against any central Biblical [*sic*] truths as we interpret them.”⁷ It is not that archaeolo-

³J. M. Miller, “Archaeology and the Israelite Conquest of Canaan: Some Methodological Observations,” *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 109 (1977): 88.

⁴Amihai Mazar, “The Iron Age I,” in *The Archaeology of Ancient Israel*, edited by Amnon Ben-Tor (New Haven: Yale UP, 1992), 281.

⁵J. M. Miller, “Site Identification: A Problem Area in Contemporary Biblical Scholarship,” *Zeitschrift Des Deutschen Palaestina-Vereins* 99 (1983): 121.

⁶J. M. Miller, 1977, 88.

⁷“What Archaeology Can and Cannot Do.” *Ministry*, February, 1983, 29.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

gists have found evidence conflicting with the Bible stories that bothers them, but that in some cases they have found nothing that confirms those stories.

Archaeology has twice the data of other disciplines. The data are what we have found and what we have not found. Remember the quotation read earlier from Max Miller? What he wrote was, "Archaeological excavations at et-Tell have indicated rather conclusively that the site was virtually unoccupied following c. 2000 B.C.E."⁸ What he meant was, "We did not find anything from the Late Bronze Age. Since we did not find anything, it means the Israelites could not have conquered Ai, because it did not exist; therefore the Bible story is more of a myth than a reality."

What has confused Miller is his belief that his *interpretation* and the evidence are one and the same. Nothing was found at et-Tell that confirmed previous assumptions about the Joshua 5 story about Ai. Nothing was found, but his interpretation tries to make something of it. In archaeology, making something out of nothing is poor methodology. Finding nothing is nothing, not something.⁹

It is true that in most disciplines what you do not find tells you about the properties of what you are examining. In the case of archaeology, however, where all finds are accidental, where testing cannot be repeated, where the literary sources which some assume they are testing had an agenda far removed from the testing ability of archaeology, finding nothing is nothing. Making non-evidence into evidence only assures the results will be skewed.

Long ago David Hackett Fischer collated a list of the false assumptions used by historians. One of those false assumptions was what he called the "Fallacy of the negative proof." Wrote Fischer, "The fallacy of the negative proof is an attempt to sustain a factual proposition merely by negative evidence. It occurs whenever a historian declares that 'there is no evidence that X is the case,' and then proceeds to affirm or assume that not-X is the case."¹⁰

There is a fundamental difference between what is found and what is not found. One may argue about the purpose or meaning of an object found, and over time interpretations may change, but what is found never loses the reality of its existence. Non-evidence, on the other hand, has no reality outside of the interpreters. It exists only in their minds.

In the last century a common criticism of the Bible was its mention of the Hittites. The critics knew they had never existed because they had evidence that they did not exist. Their evidence was that no other documentary evidence men-

⁸Miller, op. cit.

⁹When I was a child, I collected coins. From the way some archaeologists interpret their data, my boyhood collection was the best coin collection in the world. I did not have the double-struck 1955 penny for which I used to look. I did not have a lot of coins. All those are now in my collection because I now know, as an archeologist, that not having something is the same as having something. In other words, not having coins and having coins is the same thing! When I combine what I did not have and what I did have, my collection becomes the greatest in the world. A little illogical, is it not?

¹⁰David Hackett Fischer, *Historians' Fallacies: Toward a Logic of Historical Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 47.

tioned the Hittites, nor had they been discovered at that time by archaeology. We know what happened: the Hittite capital and other major sites were discovered. If non-evidence is truly evidence, where is the evidence now that the Hittites did not exist? It does not now exist and it never did exist, except in the minds of the interpreters. Ignorance is not a valid basis of evidence. Kenneth Kitchen said it best when he wrote,

Absence of evidence is not, and should not be confused with, evidence of absence. The same criticism is to be leveled at the abuse of this concept in archaeology: the syndrome: “we did not find it, so it never existed!” instead of the more proper formulation: “evidence is currently lacking; we may have missed it or it may have left no trace”; particularly when 5 percent or less of a mound is dug, leaving 95 percent or more untouched, unknown, and so not in evidence.¹¹

What others have called “silent evidence” or “negative archaeology evidence” is really “nonevidence.”¹² Such “evidence” does not exist, making Miller’s conclusions about et-Tell/Ai dubious at best.

Another reason some have been misled in their conclusions is that archaeology is less than it is generally acknowledged to be. For example, archaeology is not a science, despite the idea of the “science” of archaeology. Science implies the ability to repeat an experiment and to predict the outcome of an experiment. Archaeologists destroy the evidence as they find it. Soil layers and other loci, once excavated, can never be examined by others no matter how carefully we record the data. Rocks, walls, and objects removed cannot be replaced. Archaeologists also cannot predict, except in the broadest outlines, what they will find. If they could, there would be no reason to continually begin new projects. To discover what we do not know is part of the mystique of archaeology.

In addition, archaeology is neither objective nor is it a reliable means for evaluating ancient literary sources. Albright and those who have accepted his premise have confused “objective” with “accidental.” Albright assumed that since archaeologists have little control over what they find, it means that what they have found is objective. It is not. What archaeologists uncover are accidental finds. William Dever has also labeled archaeological finds as “pure luck,”¹³ which is another way of labeling them as accidental finds.

¹¹Kenneth A. Kitchen, “New Directions in Biblical Archaeology: Historical and Biblical Aspects,” in *Biblical Archaeology Today: 1990* (Jerusalem, Israel: Israel Exploration Society, 1993), 48.

¹²In an article to be published in *Andrews University Seminary Studies* titled, “The Book of Joshua and Its Evaluation by Non-Evidence,” I detail the current negative archaeological assessment of the Book of Joshua, due to evidence not-found at certain archaeological sites. In that article I conclude that the use of nonevidence is illogical and a distraction from reaching more reliable conclusions.

¹³William G. Dever, *Archaeology and Biblical Studies: Retrospects and Prospects*, the William C. Winslow Lectures, 1972 (Evanston, Illinois: Seabury-Western Theological Seminary, 1974), pp. 41, 46.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

An objective measuring method assumes a measured control of questions whereby what is measured can be evaluated. Assuming archaeological finds to be an objective test of ancient literary sources is like assuming that an examination on American history created by randomly selecting questions from books in a city library is objective, since none of the students knew from which books the questions were taken. Is it an “objective” evaluation of their knowledge of American history if some of the questions chosen came from books about Greek literature, geology, and animal husbandry? Obviously not.

Neither the Bible writers nor the other ancient literary writers were given a list of questions that modern archaeologists were going to ask. It is just *assumed* that archaeology can find examples or evidence of what we think the ancient writers meant. What better example of the post-modern self-absorption can be given than to assume that ancient writers would or could leave the evidences for which we seek or that we are justified in concluding that those stories are fiction. I do not have in mind only the Bible, because there are other examples in ancient Near Eastern literature where historical sources recount events at sites that, when excavated, have yielded no evidence of those events (e.g., Thutmose III’s destruction of Megiddo [he even names the wall he built around Megiddo],¹⁴ the new settlers of Samaria after the Assyrian conquest,¹⁵ etc.).

It is unfortunate that so little interest has been taken in testing the reliability of archaeology for predicting the reliability of *any* ancient literary work, much less the Bible. When, and if, those studies are done, I believe they will show that archaeological excavations are not able to reliably determine which events depicted in ancient sources are true or not. The one study I have found, published in 1983 and written by B. S. Isserlin, shows that archaeology has not produced evidence of the more recent conquests and destructions of the Norman and Anglo-Saxon invasions of England or the intrusion of the Muslims into North Africa or Palestine.¹⁶ If archaeology cannot find evidence of the destructions produced in these much more recent invasions, how much less likely is archaeology to find evidences for destructions thousands of years previous to those events?¹⁷

¹⁴James Henry Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt* (London: Histories & Mysteries of Man, 1988), Part 2, par. 429-433.

¹⁵Gabriel Barkay, “The Iron Age II-III” in *The Archaeology of Ancient Israel*, ed. Amnon Ben-Tor (New Haven: Yale UP), 328, writes, “The exiles must have brought with them elements of religion and culture that have yet to be identified in the archaeological record, though some attempts have been made in recent years to ascribe pottery types and personal names in inscriptions to these populations.”

¹⁶B. S. J. Isserlin, “The Israelite Conquest of Canaan: A Comparative Review of the Arguments Applicable,” *Palestine Exploration Quarterly (Quarterly Statement)* 115 (1983): 85-94.

¹⁷In reviewing a recent book about *The Building Program of Herod the Great*, by Duane W. Roller, I was struck by how little we know of Herod’s building program. Were it not for the writings of Josephus, little could be said of Herod or his reign. Much less sure is the evidence from the Late Bronze Age.

There is a difference between archaeology and the archaeologist. Archaeology is the data that are discovered. Archaeologists are the ones who craft the theories from that data. Archaeologists only rarely argue about the data that are discovered, but we are forever arguing over the theories based on that data. It is true that no data were collected that helps us with the story of Joshua's conquest of Ai, but it is equally clear we do not know why no data was found. To suggest that we do know why is theory, not fact.

Back to the Bible

What is often overlooked in the discussions about the relationship between archaeology and the Bible is the purposes of the biblical writers. The biblical writers were writing what they saw as redemptive history. I believe what they wrote was true, but what they wrote was not complete, nor was it intended to be. For example, the stories about Abraham are contained in Genesis 12–25. These chapters can be read in an hour or so. A few things must have been left out of the Genesis account if Abraham's life, said to be 175 years long (Gen 25:7), can be summarized in an hour. In actuality, Genesis 12–25 is not a biography of Abraham, but rather a collection of inspired stories that detail YHWH's interaction with Abraham. Each of these stories has spiritual value and truly happened in history, but none of them is complete, meaning they give us only the barest of details, as all stories must do. They recount the events, not the moment by moment details.

This basic incompleteness is also true of the stories of the Book of Joshua, including the story of Ai (Josh 8). Despite the many assumptions about that story, we know very little about the account. First, we are not positive that Ai is et-Tell. Many of my archaeological colleagues would disagree with me on this point, but et-Tell can in no way be classified as easily conquered and, even with only a "few" people, its defensive setting is formidable.¹⁸ Compared to Jericho, et-Tell is much larger, more imposing, and a more easily defended site, with every advantage over any force with evil intent. On the other hand, nothing in the biblical story tells us what the city of Ai looked like. The Joshua story implies that it must have been small and appeared to be easily overrun. It is most often just called "the ruin" (which is the meaning of Ai). For all we know, the few people living there may have been living among and in the ruins of previous cities, or with tents interspersed among the ruins. Their tent city may have been only near et-Tell or on et-Tell. The biblical writers just do not provide us those details. They recorded only what they needed to convey their message, not what we need to "prove" their point.

In the article quoted above (1977), Miller assumes that Ai had to be a substantially fortified city because it is said to have a gate.¹⁹ On the other hand,

¹⁸No one who has ever visited et-Tell would assume it was an easily conquered place.

¹⁹Josh 8:29; "Archaeology and the Israelite Conquest of Canaan: Some Methodological Observations," 88.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

everything about the conquest of Ai implies that its settlement looked easily conquerable (Josh 7:3). While Jericho endured a seven-day siege, the Israelites evidently thought they were going to conquer the inhabitants of Ai without a siege or major effort.

Additionally, at Megiddo (Stratum IX) a free-standing gate of Late Bronze Age construction was found with no corresponding wall.²⁰ Writes Gonen, “Free-standing gates, though not a common phenomenon, are not inconceivable, for gates served more than a defensive function. The gate was the ceremonial entrance, the town showpiece, and the focus of trade, public gatherings, litigation, news reports, and even cult.”²¹ In other words, even though a gate is mentioned by the biblical writers, they still provide virtually no information about the physical properties of Ai. Even my grandfather’s house had a fenced-in yard and a gate, which I could have jumped over as a teenager, but his house was not a heavily fortified city.

Consider also that the text tells us that Joshua burned Ai and left it in ruins (Josh 8:28). Is it possible that the people of Ai lived among the ruins of a “city,” with tents making up some of their homes, and the burning of that city left nothing for archaeologists to find? The biblical story is a condensed version of some of the facts.

The Bible’s history stretches over virtually the entire spectrum of the historic period, yet is encapsulated in one relatively thin volume. The odds of finding a table or an inscription mentioning a biblical person, much less an event, must be astronomical. Thousands of events were happening every day. The Canaanites and others settled in the land of Canaan had their own perspective on life and events. Their notations are unlikely to interact with the Bible writers. The pagans of the biblical period had their own agendas far removed from the agenda of the biblical writers. With agendas at distant poles, subject matters, including people and events, are not likely to overlap.

Remember, the events mentioned in the Bible, no matter how spectacular, most often occurred in one day. If the days of the events specifically mentioned in the Bible were counted they would surely add up to less than 500, compared to the million or so days of the Old Testament period.²² The Israelites were not the only peoples who migrated anew into Canaan or occupied cities they had not built.²³ The cross-ethnic tensions expressed in the biblical stories have always been part of human history.

²⁰Rivka Gonen, “The Late Bronze Age,” in *The Archaeology of Ancient Israel*, edited by Amnon Ben-Tor (New Haven: Yale UP, 1992), 219.

²¹*Ibid.*; consider the Arc de Triomphe in Paris.

²²This is a guess, with no way of knowing the total number of days for the Old Testament period, but whatever the number of days involved in the biblical events, they are few when compared to the number of days in the historic period.

²³Both the Philistines and the Amorites are examples of other peoples not indigenous to Canaan, but who migrated and settled in the land of Canaan.

Think about it: archaeologists assume they will readily recover evidence of the burning of Ai, which lasted only a few hours at most, which occurred over 3,000 years ago, for which we have few concrete details. Even the details we have are within the most summary of stories. At the same time, archaeologists show little concern to differentiate ethnic-based conflicts outside of the Late Bronze-Iron Age transition period. The reason for this contrast is the dependence of archaeology on the biblical story line, while depreciating these same stories. It surprises me that more archaeologists are not suspicious about the assumed ability of archaeology to predict and interpret biblical stories when they ignore the same questions in earlier periods.

Archaeology and the Bible are headed in the same direction, but on different planes.²⁴ The number of events mentioned in the Bible, compared to all historical events, is too few in number and too poorly quantified to be found dependable. The biblical writers were not expansive enough with the details. They chose their words carefully, leaving us the message that mattered most to them: a picture of the power and presence of YHWH.

I am not trying to depreciate the biblical story or the value of archaeology. I am only trying to point out that most of what we think we know about the conquest of Ai (and other cities mentioned in ancient literature) has come from Bible story books, our cultural understanding of words like “city,” and other pre-suppositions we bring to the biblical stories, not the Bible. Past expectations and assumptions about archaeology place a weight of possibilities upon it that do not exist.

I have no doubt that the Bible stories are true and happened in time and history, but the biblical writers were unconcerned with the details that would have helped archaeologists the most. I do not believe that the biblical writers’ “knowledge was too limited” or that their “observations were too imperfect to enable them to record history with unimpeachable accuracy.”²⁵ I believe they were writing about God and his amazing power of redemption, not providing detailed military descriptions of battles or the size of walls or directions to specific locations for people living 3,000 years later. I believe what they did provide was accurate, but not complete.

At the same time some archaeologists have been very unimaginative about the many possibilities of what the lack of data at a site may mean. Writes Brandon,

It is just as likely that a sequence of events, such as the invasion of Canaan first by Israelites and then by Philistines, would leave many different traces in the stratigraphic record all over the country. It is also possible that a sequence of historical events may leave no traces

²⁴Larry Herr describes the difference between archaeology and the Bible as archaeology being “object oriented,” while the Bible is “personality-oriented.” op. cit.

²⁵Lawrence T. Geraty, “Can Archaeology Really Prove the Bible?” *Ministry*, November (1983): 29.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

in the stratigraphic record at all. Or it may be the case that the stratigraphic traces which were originally left behind by events have been eroded by natural forces or destroyed by later stratigraphic processes. It seems most likely that, in excavating strata of the land of Israel at the time of the Conquest or settlement, all of these possibilities will be found as each site yields its own stratigraphic sequence. The archaeologists must therefore contend with the fact that the inference of historical events—the invasion of Canaan first by Israelites, then by Philistines, for example—is far from self-evident or self-explanatory from a stratigraphic standpoint. Again, the archaeological evidence does not *dictate* the historical “story” that can be told from it.²⁶

The problem is that both the biblical and archaeological communities of scholars have shared a too simplistic view of archaeology and Scripture. It is time to reconsider those ideals.

Relationship between Archaeology and the Bible

What then is the relationship between archaeology and the Bible? Archaeology is not the test of the Bible. What archaeologists find does not even confirm the Bible.²⁷ To acknowledge archaeology as the “test” or even to imagine that it “confirms” the Bible assumes archaeology is somehow superior to the Bible. It suggests that archaeology has solid reliability, while the Bible needs to be tested. But archaeology has *not* proven itself to be reliable. How can it assume a position as a judge of literary works when it has no direct means of testing those literary texts?

Words like “confirm” imply “prove,” which is beyond the reach of archaeology. If the Bible’s message is spiritual, how can archaeology test that aspect? Yes, the biblical writers wrote of events based in time and place, but there is nothing intrinsically available within archaeology that admits to being able to test literary accounts. Almost everyone who has written about the relationship between archaeology and the Bible says that archaeology cannot prove the Bible, but the way many use archaeology demonstrates that their words and belief do not match. To suggest that archaeology has “disproved” the Bible is to imply that it could “prove” the Bible, something few would acknowledge. Should we conclude that while the Bible can be “disproved,” it cannot be proved? Critical scholars are, at present, the most visible adherents to a prove-the-Bible mental-

²⁶Fredric Brandfon, “The Limits of Evidence: Archaeology and Objectivity,” *MAARAV: A Journal for the Study of the Northwest Semitic Languages and Literatures*, 4, no. 1 (1987): 27, emphasis in the original.

²⁷Anyone who knows me knows with what respect (i.e., awe) I hold the memory of Siegfried Horn. As curator of the museum named in his honor, I highly respect Dr. Horn’s scholarship and influence on the Seventh-day Adventist church. I was even co-editor of a festschrift in his honor. Titles like *The Spade Confirms the Book*, however, give a false impression of the relationship between archaeology and the Bible.

ity. Otherwise, how could they believe that archaeology has disproved the Bible? The views that it can prove or disprove the Bible are equally false.

Archaeology can help us understand the Bible by providing cultural settings for the biblical stories, supplying additional examples of rarely used words from related languages, giving us an idea of material cultures of the biblical world, and occasionally yielding the specific names of people mentioned in the Bible.²⁸ Where archaeology is especially not very helpful is with details of events. Events were short-lived and poorly described in Scripture. Even if events mentioned in literary sources could easily be detected and correctly identified by archaeology, the multiple millions of events not mentioned in the Bible would more likely be found—due to their sheer numerical superiority—than the few mentioned in the Bible (and other ancient literary documents).

On the other hand, the Bible is helpful to the archaeologist. We would hardly know who the Ammonites were if the Bible did not provide for us their geographical and historical settings. Archaeology has done much to enlighten our understanding of the Ammonites, but we would not be asking certain questions without the Bible.²⁹ While Egyptian sources provide a detailed picture of the Egyptian incursion of the Sea Peoples, we would have little idea of the dynamics of their settlement on the Canaanite coast without the Bible. The Bible presents the resulting Canaanite inter-tribal conflicts in a way Egyptian literature does not approach. It is even doubtful whether the Israelites themselves would be of any significant interest if the Bible had not introduced them to us.

The biblical literature stands on its own. It does not need archaeology to confirm it any more than archaeology needs the Bible to confirm its existence or truthfulness or anything else. The Bible has its own identity and usefulness apart from archaeology. Archaeology is separate, not senior to the Bible. And, in a secular sense, the Bible is separate, not senior to archaeology.

The biblical and archaeological stories, while they complement each other, are not very similar stories. It is the complementary association of archaeology and the Bible that is valuable. Blending those few places where they intersect helps both the archaeologist and the biblical student. Archaeology (i.e., the data) and the Bible are related to each other in the sense that they are both records of the past. The Bible provides a redemptive history of that past, while archaeology uncovers the material culture of that past. In specific areas, they rarely interact, with a few amazing connections. Neither can “confirm” the other, because they are telling different stories, providing unique messages.

Archaeology and the Bible are more like parallel lines. Both are sources of information with two different views. The Bible provides us with a religious

²⁸Geraty provides a good, expanded summary of what biblical studies have gained from archaeology, 1983, 29-30.

²⁹Cf. Randall Wayne Younker, *The Emergence of the Ammonites: Sociocultural Transformation on the Transjordan Plateau during the Late Bronze/Iron Age Transition*, unpublished dissertation, University of Arizona, 1997.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

story. Archaeology provides data by accidental finds. They both tell us about the past. Archaeology speaks to the material culture of the past, with an occasional find of a written source which most often tells us nothing about a biblical event (e.g., the Mesha Stele and House of David Stele). Why should we expect otherwise? These parallel lines are not very close, but when used together, we gain a better understanding of the broad outline of the biblical and historical past. They are both sources of information about the past: one a religious history and the other an accidentally-found, material culture based artifact.

People have banned the Bible and been burned for believing the Bible. The Bible and its stories have remained the same. Those who read its pages must decide for themselves its value and how, or if, that value will be applied to their lives, but nothing in their evaluation changes the intrinsic worth of the Bible. The Bible is the Word of God. It stands the test of its own validity, which is far beyond the reach of archaeology.

The Sanctuary and the Mission of the Church

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The purpose of this study is to see if New Testament allusions to the Old Testament sanctuary will help to bring additional clarity to our understanding of the mission of the Christian church in general and the Seventh-day Adventist Church in particular. Important truths concerning man's redemption were taught by the earthly sanctuary and its services.¹ We will bring the entire Scripture to bear upon these truths and, within the larger biblical context, explore the mission of the church.

This study will limit itself to the symbolism of the furnishings of the sanctuary. We will not examine the typology of the various offerings, the functions of the priesthood, the meaning of special feast days, or the rabbinical understanding of them. Nor will we examine the nature of the church, its origin, universality, and the metaphors that highlight its multi-faceted responsibilities.

The questions to be addressed are: Does the Old Testament sanctuary give us a theological basis for a mission statement for the church? Do the New Testament allusions to the sanctuary, such as we find in Hebrews and in the book of Revelation,² help the church understand its mission more clearly and to carry it out more effectively? To answer these questions and to provide some logical progression to this study, we will begin by looking at the symbolism in the Courtyard, the Holy Place, and the Most Holy Place.

First, let us consider the biblical evidence for the legitimacy of such a study. Throughout the book of Hebrews, Paul (who I believe to be its author)³ compares and contrasts Christ's earthly and post-resurrection ministry with the

¹Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1890), 357.

²Heb 8–10; Rev 2:17; 3:7–13; 8:1–4; 11:1, 2, 19.

³Francis D. Nichol, ed.; *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1957), 7:387-388.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

priestly services in the Old Testament sanctuary. In Hebrews 8:5 he says that the earthly sanctuary was an “example and shadow of things to come.” In chapters 9 and 10, Paul tells us that the services of the sanctuary with its offerings and priestly functions were “types” of Christ’s anticipated ministry. These services were a Christological foreshadowing of the Messiah to come, who would live a sinless life, ratify God’s covenant by shedding His own blood as a complete and all-sufficient sacrifice, and then ascend to complete His priestly ministry in the heavenly sanctuary.⁴

Second, if the earthly sanctuary modeled Christ’s ministry, which it did, and if the church is the body of Christ—that is, Christ’s hands and feet in the world—which it is (Rom 12:4–5; 1 Cor 3:16–17; 12:27; Eph 1:22–23; 4:12; 5:23), we can rightly assume that the sanctuary also has something to say to us about the ministry and mission of the church.

Third, “In the ministration of the tabernacle, and of the temple that afterward took its place, the people were taught each day the great truths relative to Christ’s death and ministration, and once each year their minds were carried forward to the closing events of the great controversy between Christ and Satan.”⁵

The Sanctuary Courtyard

We will consider three furnishings connected with the courtyard to see if they give additional insight into the ministry and mission of the church: (1) the Entryway Curtain, (2) the Altar of Sacrifice, and (3) the Laver.

The Veil at the Entryway. In Hebrews 10:20, Paul tells us that a “new and living” way has been made into the sanctuary, that is, a “newly made” way has been opened to God through the body of Jesus Christ. Paul points to the veil as a symbol of Christ’s body which was the means by which the atonement could take place.⁶ In the earthly sanctuary the veil at the entryway to the courtyard barred people from entering the sanctuary unless they were bringing a sacrifice to the Lord to be offered by the priest. But now that the “reality” through the

⁴Paul uses shadow (*skia*) in contrast to reality. What he wants his readers to understand is that the earthly sanctuary is not the reality of God’s atonement. It actually stands in contrast to Christ’s intercessory ministry in the sanctuary which God built and not man (Heb 8:2). He uses example (*hypodeigma*) to mean copy, model, sketch, or reflective image. What Paul is emphasizing is that while the earthly sanctuary was not the reality of the gospel, it did reflect the ministry of Christ.

Note: Definitions of Greek words given throughout the text and notes are taken from the index of *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, abridged in one volume and edited by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, translated into English by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985).

⁵White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 358.

⁶In Heb 10:20, Paul uses the word *sarx* to refer to the muscular parts of a body, which played an important part in animal sacrifices. In v. 19, when he speaks of Calvary, Paul uses the word *soma*, meaning the whole body, that is, Christ’s flesh and blood. While the difference between these two words may be soteriologically significant, it does not detract from the focus of our study.

BLANCO: THE SANCTUARY AND THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

incarnate Christ has come, the “veil” is no longer a deterrent but an encouragement to the people to come boldly into the courtyard and through Christ on into the very presence of God (Heb 4:16).⁷

Christ is the “rock,” the “chief cornerstone” on which the church is built.⁸ Without the Son of God becoming human there would be no sacrifice, redemption, forgiveness, and resurrection. “It was Satan’s purpose to bring about an eternal separation between God and man; but in Christ we become more closely united to God than if we had never fallen. In taking our nature, the Savior has bound Himself to humanity by a tie that is never to be broken. . . . forever to retain His human nature.”⁹ Christ is Emmanuel, God with us (Matt 1:23). The incarnation shatters all philosophical concepts of man working his own way upward or looking within himself for the answers. The answer comes down to us. As Christ told Nicodemus, “You must be born from above” (John 3:3).

It all began at Bethlehem—God in the flesh—the new veil for the new sanctuary. It was the birth of Christ announced by the angels to the shepherds at Bethlehem that started the church on its joyous mission. “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace and good will toward men” (Luke 2:14). This same note of praise and joy is part of the mission of the end-time church, which is to take the good news of the gospel to the world. John said,

I saw an angel fly in the midst of heaven, preaching the gospel to every nation, kindred, tongue and people, saying with a loud voice: Fear God and give glory to Him for the time to complete His work has come, and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the foundations of waters. (Rev 14:6, 7)

The Altar of Sacrifice. The sacrificial altar stood in the very center of the courtyard (Exod 40:6; 2 Chron 7:7). It is called the altar of burnt offering, more precisely, the altar of “whole” burnt offering (Exod 30:28; Deut 33:10). In Hebrew it literally means the “place of slaughter” (*mizbeah*) and in the Septuagint the “place of holocaust” (*holokautoma*). The hill called Calvary was that place of slaughter; the Hill of the Skull was the place of holocaust.

This is the message that Paul tried to convey when he says that Christ put away sin by sacrificing Himself (Heb 9:26). Isaiah says that it pleased the Lord for Him to be made an offering for sin (Isa 53:10). For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes will not perish

⁷Some commentators understand Paul to be speaking of the veil at the entrance to the courtyard, while others think it the veil or the “screen” into the Holy Place. Still others believe it is the veil at the entrance to the Most Holy Place. From the context, Paul seems to have the veil at the entryway in mind, because throughout Heb 8–10 he emphasizes the sacrifice of Christ, in contrast to the sacrifices of animals which are no longer needed (Heb 10:11–12). It is also possible that Paul had all three veils in mind, for it is Christ’s incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension that give the believer the right to come into the presence of God.

⁸Matt 16:13–18; 1 Pet 2:4–7.

⁹White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1898), 25.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

(John 3:16). Paul makes it clear that there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus (Rom 8:1). We are justified by faith and have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom 5:1). Faith does not save us but takes hold of the grace of God made visible in the gift of His Son (Eph 2:8, 9). Christ set us free from having to win God's love and earn our way into heaven. God loved us while we were yet sinners (Rom 5:8). John says, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God" (1 John 3:1). "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name" (John 1:12). This is the heart of the gospel: The good news of salvation.

The cross of Christ is the very center of the mission of the church, even as the altar of sacrifice was centrally placed in the courtyard. At the night meeting with Nicodemus, Christ told Nicodemus that the Son of Man must be lifted up for all to see, just as Moses lifted up the metal serpent in the wilderness (Num 21:9; John 3:14). During His last visit to the Temple, Christ told the people that when He is crucified He will draw people from all nations unto Himself (John 12:32, 33). A few years later, Paul went to Athens, where his less successful mission led him to change his method of approach from a broad-based rational discussion on the nature of man (Acts 17:16-34) to a focus on Christ and Him crucified so that the gospel would stand not in the wisdom and excellency of men but in the power of God (1 Cor 2:1-5).

"The sacrifice of Christ as an atonement for sin is the great truth around which all other truths cluster. In order to be rightly understood and appreciated, every truth in the Word of God, from Genesis to Revelation, must be studied in the light which streams from the cross of Calvary, . . . I present before you," Ellen White says, "the great, grand monument of mercy and regeneration, salvation and redemption—the Son of God uplifted on the cross of Calvary."¹⁰ "The cross stands alone, a great center in the world. It does not find friends, but it makes them. It creates its own agencies."¹¹ Just as the altar of sacrifice in the center of the courtyard was the soteriological center of all the rituals and services of the sanctuary, so the Son of God sacrificed for our sins must be at the center of the mission of the church.

The Laver. Also in the courtyard we find the laver or "wash basin" which was used by the priests to wash their hands and feet to "purify" themselves before entering the Holy Place (Exod 30:17-21), just as the people were expected to follow the laws of washings and purification (Num 19:1-22; Heb 9:6-10). The "washing" points the believer to the cleansing waters of baptism, to a new life in Christ, and to the continual need of God's grace (Ps 51:1, 2; 1 Cor 6:9-11; Titus 3:3-8).

¹⁰White, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Supplement, Vol. 5 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1956), 5:1137.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 5:1138.

BLANCO: THE SANCTUARY AND THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

When Paul spoke to the Sanhedrin in his defense and recounted his conversion experience on the road to Damascus, he told them how the Lord sent him to Ananias, who told him to be baptized and wash away (*apolousai*) his sins (Acts 22:16). In Luke 11:38 the word baptize (*baptizo*) is used for washing before a meal, to purify oneself, to be clean. Jesus Himself was led by the Holy Spirit to be baptized and washed (Matt 3:13-17), not as a sinner, but as an example. “Jesus did not receive baptism as a confession of guilt on His own account. He identified Himself with sinners, taking the steps that we are to take, and doing the work that we must do.”¹² When after Peter’s sermon at Pentecost the people were convicted by the Holy Spirit of sin, they asked, “What must we do?” Peter said, “Repent and be baptized for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:37, 38).

The baptismal water has no curative power, but is a symbol of a new life in Christ. In Romans, Paul adds the “reality” and power of Christ’s resurrection to the meaning of baptism (Rom 6:1-4). Baptism becomes a statement that the old man controlled by sin is dead and buried. Then a new man arises from the watery grave, resurrected to a new life by the transforming power of the Spirit. This watery death to a life of sin and the resurrection to a new life is a grateful response to what Christ has done for us through His death and resurrection (v. 5). Baptism also means being totally immersed in the love of Christ. As Paul said, “I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me (Gal 2:20).

We have looked at three symbols in the courtyard of the earthly sanctuary which together form the foundational triad of the Christian faith: Christ’s sinless human life, His death, and His resurrection. Bethlehem, Calvary, and the Garden Tomb are the first watchwords of the church. The mission of the church is to write into its mission statement this triad of faith and then, “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt 28:19).

The Holy Place

The triad of the courtyard is matched by the triad in the Holy Place: (1) The Table of Shewbread, (2) the Altar of Incense, and (3) the Seven-branched Candlestick. If the first triad directs us to the Son of Man, to Calvary, and to a resurrected life in Christ, and the church has been “espoused” to one husband—that is, to Jesus Christ (2 Cor 11:2)—this new relationship must be nourished (Rom 7:1-6). It is not only the mission of the church to lead people to salvation in Christ but to help them to grow into mature believers, committed to extending His Kingdom. As Jesus said, “you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea, in Samaria and to the uttermost parts of the earth” (Acts 1:8). While the church

¹²White, *The Desire of Ages*, 111.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

must carry the gospel to the world, it must also nurture and equip the family of God (Eph 4:11-16) to ensure its continual growth in Christ and to provide a strong spiritual base from which to launch the church's mission.

The Table of Shewbread. As the priest entered the Holy Place the table of shewbread would be on his right toward the north (Exod 40:22). Two stacks of six flat cakes of freshly baked unleavened bread were placed on the table each Sabbath (Lev 24:5-8), and small golden bowls of fresh grape juice were placed nearby (Exod 29:38-41).¹³

The mission of the church is to feed the people the "bread of heaven" (John 6:22-58), rightly dividing the word of truth (1 Pet 2:2; Heb 5:12-14; 2 Tim 2:15). It has been called to preach the gospel not after the wisdom of men, lest the cross of Christ be made of none effect. For it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save those who believe so that no flesh should glory in His presence (1 Cor 1:21-29). But Paul warns that the time will come when people will not endure (*anecho*) or "hold up" sound doctrine but have itching (*knetho*) ears, that is, ears that like to be tickled and entertained rather than hear the truth, especially the truth about themselves (2 Tim 4:3). For the word of God can be as sharp as a two-edged sword, cutting into a man's spirit, exposing his motives and intentions (Heb 4:12). Scripture is given not only to comfort and encourage but also to correct and if need be to wound and heal in order to bring about a life filled with good works (2 Tim 3:16, 17).

"Men who assume the responsibility of giving to the people the word from the mouth of God, make themselves accountable for the influence they exert on their hearers. If they are true men of God, they will know that the object of preaching is not to entertain. It is not merely to convey information, not to convince the intellect. The preaching of the word should appeal to the intellect and should impart knowledge, but it should do more than this. The minister's utterances, to be effectual, must reach the hearts of his hearers."¹⁴

What does it mean to preach the Word? First, it means that those who preach the word must believe just what it claims to be: The Word of the Living God. While the common writings of men and women might contain insight into truth—for Christ lighteth every man that cometh into the world (John 1:9) and

¹³The twelve flat cakes of bread represented the twelve tribes of Israel as they stood in unity before the Lord. There was one table with bread and wine even as the church partakes of one unleavened bread and unfermented wine at communion, recalling the broken body and shed blood of their Lord and Savior (1 Cor 11:23-26). Paul also reminds us that there is one Lord, one faith, and one baptism as we are led by the gifts of the Holy Spirit to continue to come into and continue in the unity of the faith (Eph 4:1-15).

The "pierced" unleavened bread, together with the grape juice, not only represented the body and blood of Christ which He would give for the sins of the world (Isa 53:5; Zech 10:12; John 6:48-51) but, as with the manna, also represented spiritual food and drink (vs. 52-57). When those who heard Jesus say that He was the bread of heaven could not understand what He meant, He spoke to them plainly and said, "The words that I speak to you, they are spirit and they are life" (v. 63).

¹⁴White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1948), 152.

BLANCO: THE SANCTUARY AND THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

the Holy Spirit guides into all truth (John 16:13)—there is a distinct difference between insight into truth and inspired truth (2 Pet 1:21). The church must be fully committed to Scripture before she can effectively carry out her mission. “It is written,” must be given with certainty, not with equivocation. It must not be clouded with the Cartesian doubt of rationalism which demands that nothing be accepted as truth about which doubt may be entertained. It is an affront to God to pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit while we doubt and do not trust what the Holy Spirit has written. The Word of God must be believed and shared with conviction and in this sense become the incarnate word—the word made flesh in us.¹⁵

Second, to preach the word means to know the difference between Scripture speaking from within an ancient culture and being a product of that culture. If we say that Scripture was a product of its culture, then we have obligated ourselves to demythologize the Word of God to fit the modern mind and unintentionally set man above Scripture. There is no evidence that Christ changed the meaning of the Old Testament to fit the Hellenistic culture of His day. The Sadducees did this, but Jesus rebuked them for accepting only selected portions of the Old Testament and for not believing in the resurrection or in the power of God (Matt 22:23-33). Nowhere in the New Testament do we find Paul or any other inspired writer massaging the Old Testament to make it more acceptable to the thinking of the day. Though given in human language, the Bible is still the Word of God (2 Pet 1:19-21).

Third, to preach the word means to recognize that Scripture is both self-authenticating and sufficiently authoritative. The Word of God needs no additional help to give it authority. It is not Scripture plus tradition or Scripture and archaeology, as valuable as archaeology might be, nor is it Scripture and some additional theological authority. Even the gift of prophecy given by the Holy Spirit must be subject to Scripture. The true prophetic gift will never teach truth contrary to Scripture, for they both have the same Author. The authority of Scripture is as sufficiently authoritative for doctrine as Calvary is for salvation. It is not Christ plus works nor Christ plus religious rituals, nor is it Christ plus the transcendental search for meaning which so characterizes this Post-Self Age. It is Christ and Christ alone who saves us, *sola gratia*, by grace alone. Similarly, we know of this by Scripture alone—*sola scriptura*—so the Scriptures must be our authority.

¹⁵“Those who bring to the investigation of the word a spirit which it does not approve, will take away from the search a spirit which it has not imparted.” White, *Signs of the Times Articles*, Vol. 4 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, n.d., reprints from 1899 to 1915), 254; article, July 30, 1902.

“Without the guidance of the Holy Spirit we shall be continually liable to wrest the Scriptures or to misinterpret them. . . . When the Word of God is opened without reverence and without prayer; when the thoughts and affections are not fixed upon God, or in harmony with His will, the mind is clouded with doubts; and in the very study of the Bible, skepticism strengthens. The enemy takes control of the thoughts, and he suggests interpretations that are not correct.” White, *Steps to Christ* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1908), 110.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

The church, especially the end-time church, must continue to draw its strength from Scripture in order to carry out its mission not only presently but especially in the crisis days ahead. The need to do so is dramatized by Christ's post-resurrection instruction to the disciples on the road to Emmaus. As these two sadly walked along, disturbed over the news that the tomb was empty and that Christ's body was most likely stolen, the Lord suddenly appeared by their side. When they shared their sadness with the stranger, He revived their faith by pointing them to Scripture, beginning at Moses and proceeding through the writings and on to the prophets. Their hearts were strangely warmed as He talked with them. And when He said the blessing for the evening meal, they recognized Him and knew it was the Lord. Then they ran back to Jerusalem to share the good news with the twelve (Luke 24:13-35). Commenting on this experience, Ellen White says, "Had He first made Himself known to them, their hearts would have been satisfied. In the fullness of their joy they would have hungered for nothing more. But it was necessary for them to understand the witness borne to Him by the types and prophecies of the Old Testament. Upon these their faith must be established."¹⁶

The mission of the church must not rest primarily on a celebrated relationship with Jesus Christ, as joyous as that is, but it must rest primarily on Scripture, according to the instruction of Christ Himself, and the joy in the risen Christ will follow. "If you continue in my word, then are you my disciples indeed" (John 8:31). This order of priority is biblical and is not to be confused with bibliolatry, worshiping Scripture in place of Christ. While it is possible to place Scripture above Christ (John 5:39), it is not bibliolatry to give the written word the priority given to it by Christ. This is especially important during the end-time crisis. When Satan appears as an angel of light (2 Cor 11:14), the crisis-issue will be between two authorities, the authority of the impersonated Christ and the authority of what is written. As the impersonated Christ, Satan will claim that he has authority over Scripture and therefore has power to change it. The logic of his argument cannot be denied. But there will be those who remain faithful to what is written, for that is what Christ told them to do (Rev 12:17; 14:12). They will not be swept away by the joy they see in other believers worshiping the impersonated Christ, for they know that Christ would not change what through the Holy Spirit He has written.¹⁷ As He said, "heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away" (Matt 24:35).

The Altar of Incense. The second piece of furniture in the Holy Place is the Altar of Incense, which stood in front of the veil of the Most Holy Place (Exod 30:6), although its function was part of the Most Holy Place (Heb 9:1-5). In vision John saw a golden altar before the throne in heaven and an angel adding incense (*thumiama*) or fragrance to the prayers of the saints (Rev 8:3, 4). Paul

¹⁶White, *The Desire of Ages*, 799.

¹⁷White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911), 624.

BLANCO: THE SANCTUARY AND THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

says that the Holy Spirit takes our prayers and adds to them His own “groanings” (*stenagmos*), that is, His own sighs of love (Rom 8:26). Or, as Ellen White says, “Lift up your eyes toward the heavenly sanctuary, where Christ your Mediator stands before the Father to present your prayers, mingled with His own merit and spotless righteousness, as fragrant incense.”¹⁸ We have the assurance that “Every sincere prayer is heard in heaven. It may not be fluently expressed; but if the heart is in it, it will ascend to the sanctuary where Jesus ministers, and He will present it to the Father without one awkward, stammering word, beautiful and fragrant with the incense of His own perfection.”¹⁹

Prayer is an important part of the mission of the church. It was the united prayer of those in the upper room that prepared the way for the Holy Spirit to be poured out at Pentecost, and the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved (Acts 2:1-47). “From the secret place of prayer came the power that shook the world in the Great Reformation.”²⁰ The end-time church is urged to ask of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain so the Lord will give it showers of rain, to every one grass in the field (Zech 10:1).

However, “As activity increases and men become successful in doing any work for God, there is danger of trusting to human plans and methods. There is tendency to pray less, and to have less faith. Like the disciples, we are in danger of losing sight of our dependence on God, and seeking to make a savior of our activity. . . . While we are to labor earnestly for the salvation of the lost, we must also take time for meditation, for prayer, and for the study of the word of God. Only the work accomplished with much prayer, and sanctified by the merit of Christ, will in the end prove to have been efficient for good.”²¹

The importance of prayer for the ongoing work of God is compellingly and painfully illustrated by the release of Peter from prison (Acts 12:1-19) and the non-release of Paul (Acts 25:1-12). Ellen White, commenting on the difference, says, “When Peter had been made a prisoner and condemned to death, the brethren had offered earnest prayer to God day and night for his deliverance. But no such interest was manifest in behalf of him who was looked upon as an apostate from Moses, a teacher of dangerous doctrines. . . . God had not in his providence ordained that Paul’s labors should so soon end; but he did not work a miracle to counteract the train of circumstances to which their own course gave rise.”²²

A praying church must not only concern itself with the needs of its local members but with the needs of the global church. Corporate prayer, being globally united in prayer, has power with God and is an important factor in the

¹⁸White, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1913), 241.

¹⁹White, *The Desire of Ages*, 667.

²⁰White, *The Great Controversy*, 210.

²¹White, *The Desire of Ages*, 362.

²²White, *Sketches From The Life of Paul* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, [1883] 1974), 226, 231.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

church's mission for completing the work God has given us to do. "It is a part of God's plan to grant us, in answer to the prayer of faith, what which He would not bestow did we not thus ask."²³ It is an indictment of the church that it accomplished less because it prayed less.

The Seven-Branched Candlestick. As the priest entered the Holy Place, on his left toward the south and directly opposite from the Table of Shewbread, stood the Seven-branched Candlestick also called the Menorah (Exod 25:31, 32).

The lampstand with its seven lights filled with the holy oil also pointed to Christ. He came filled with the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:16-19) to bring light to the world (John 1:9). The Menorah is never spoken of in the plural (Exod 37:17) for, although there were individual flames, there was only one light, and every true light that shines in the world will be part of and united with that one light.

In Revelation 1:12, John alludes to the Seven-branched Candlestick when he speaks of seeing Christ walking among seven lampstands. Although John's vision has no direct reference to the Menorah in the Holy Place, the allusion is quite striking. While Jesus tells John that the seven lampstands represent seven churches on earth (Rev 1:20), what John saw does remind us of the Holy Place in the earthly sanctuary. We must remember that the sanctuary was always central to the Hebrew mind, to the disciple's way of thinking, and whenever they could they would use sanctuary imagery to describe what they saw or to emphasize the importance of what they wanted to say.²⁴

However, the question we need to address is: How does the Seven-branched Candlestick and what it represents help clarify the mission of the church? If Christ is the Light of the world, which He is, and if the church is the physical presence of Christ in the world, then the church must also be filled with the Holy Spirit and bring the light of life to the world. Christ's mission was two-fold: (1) to glorify His Father by removing the dark shadow that Satan had cast between the world and the infinite love of God; and (2) to preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to recover the sight of the blind and to set at liberty those who were spiritually bound.²⁵ His ministry was broad-based and all-inclusive. He came, not to be ministered unto but to minister (Mark 10:45).

It is the mission of the church to give the light to the world as it has been given the light. Jesus said, "You are the light of the world. Men do not light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your

²³White, *The Great Controversy*, 525.

²⁴Peter also uses sanctuary analogy when he speaks of God's people as a royal priesthood called to show forth the praises of Him who called us out of darkness into light (1 Pet 2:10). Paul says that the church is the Temple of God (1 Cor 3:17); that those who are Jews are those who are such inwardly (Rom 2:28, 29); and that those who are Christ's are the sons of Abraham (Gal 3:29). The sanctuary analogy and the references to Israel are again obvious.

²⁵White, *Steps to Christ*, 11.

BLANCO: THE SANCTUARY AND THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matt 5:14-16). He also alludes to the mission of the church when He says, “If therefore thine eye be single [healthy], thy whole body shall be full of light. . . . You cannot serve two masters” (Matt 6:22-24). The Greek word for single is *haplous*, meaning a spiritually healthy mind has singleness of purpose, not double-minded (*dipsuchos*) or unsettled (*akatastatos*) (James 1:8). The church’s singleness of purpose must be to take the gospel to every nation, kindred, tongue and tribe (Rev 14:6) within the two-fold mission of Christ, which is to glorify the Father by what we do and to minister to those physically and spiritually in need.

The second triad of the church’s faith is represented by the furnishings in the Holy Place and is an integral part of her mission statement. She is not only to lead men and women to Jesus Christ, but also to help those who are in Christ to become a well-functioning body of believers through which Christ can work (Eph 4:1-16). The symbolism in the Holy Place calls the church to a commitment to Scripture (1 Pet 5:1-4), to global prayer (Luke 11:1; 1 Tim 2:8; James 1:6), and to an all-inclusive ministry (Matt 25:31-46).

The Most Holy Place

The contents of the Ark in the Most Holy Place consisted of: (1) The Tables of the Law, (1) The Golden Pot of Manna, and (3) Aaron’s Rod.²⁶ The Most Holy Place ministry of Christ which began at the end of the 2300-year/day prophecy when the full meaning of the sanctuary would be restored (Dan 8:14) gives a dimension of responsibility to the end-time church which the church in previous ages did not fully have (Rev. 10:5-11). This added dimension of responsibility calls for an eschatological examination of the symbolism of these three items, all of which were placed inside the Ark (Heb. 9:4), to see what added degree of clarity they give to the church’s mission.

The Tables of the Law. The Ten Commandments are the only words in Scripture written by God (Exod 31:18; 32:16) unless we take into account Jesus’ writing in the sand (John 8:6-8) and the handwriting on the wall in Babylon (Dan 5). The first set of the tables of the law Moses threw to the ground and broke at the foot of Sinai (Exod 32:19). The second set, also written by the finger of God, was placed in the Ark, which was God’s intention for the original set (Exod 30:6; 34:1-4, 28; Heb 9:3, 4).

God’s law, in whatever form, has always existed; for without law there is no sin (Rom 5:13). Yet, sin began in heaven and spread to this world (Isa 14:12-14; John 8:44; Gen 3:1-15), so death reigned from Adam to Moses, showing that the law of God did exist before it was written at Sinai (Rom 5:12-14). God amplified the law by writing the Ten Commandments in order to help the Hebrews better understand the offensiveness of sin and to help them sense their need of God’s mercy and grace (v. 20).

²⁶ The meaning of the Ark with its mercy seat, the cherubim, and the Shekinah glory need to be dealt with in a later study.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

“Everything in nature, from the mote in the sunbeam to the worlds on high, is under law. And upon obedience to these laws the order and harmony of the natural world depend. So there are great principles of righteousness to control the life of all intelligent beings, and upon conformity to these principles the well-being of the universe depends.”²⁷ God is not only merciful and benevolent, but a God of impartial justice. He is a moral governor as well as a loving Father. In no kingdom or government are lawbreakers left to decide the importance of the law. But a law that is not enforced has no meaning.²⁸ “I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord God. Repent, and turn from your transgressions, so iniquity will not be your ruin. Cast away your transgressions, for why will you die, O house of Israel?” (Ezek 18:30-32). “Let us hear the conclusion of the matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man” (Eccl 12:13).²⁹ As Jesus said, “If you love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15).

The eschatological mission of the church must correspond to Christ’s Most Holy Place ministry (Rev 11:1, 2, 18-19). It is time for the church to seal the law among His disciples (Isa 8:16) and to magnify the law and make it honorable (Isa 42:21). Daniel prophesied there would be an attempt to change God’s law and to cast down the truth of the Sanctuary, but at the time of the end the truth of the Sanctuary would be cleansed and restored (Dan 7:25; 8:9-17). This restoration of Sanctuary truth is the special mission of the end-time church. The hour is late. His judgment has come (Rev 14:6, 7). He will have a people who unashamedly keep and proclaim the immutability of God’s commandments, of which the

²⁷Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, [1896] 1955), 48.

²⁸Ellen G. White, *Last Day Events* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1992), 240- 241.

²⁹Christ Himself gave Moses the Ten Commandments (Neh 9:13-15). While on earth as a man He kept them (Heb 4:15; John 15:10). If we love Christ and are His friends, we also will keep them (John 14:15; 15:14). If we say that we love God and do not keep His commandments, we lie (1 John 1:3-4; 5:3). While we are justified by faith, we do not use our liberty to make void the law but uphold it (Rom 3:28-31; 6:15; James 2:10-12). We do not keep the law in order to be saved, but because we are saved. There is no higher form of worship and honor we can bestow on our God than to obey Him; there is no better way to show God that we trust Him and believe what He says than to do it. Jesus said, “Whosoever heareth these saying of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, who built his house upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, will be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand” (Matt 7:24-27).

“The essence of God’s law is made visible by Jesus’ experience in Gethsemane and at Calvary. ‘Father, not my will, but thine be done’ (Matt. 26:39-42). ‘Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit’ (Luke 23:46). The law of self-renunciation is the law of life for earth and heaven. It is a love that “seeketh not her own” and finds its source in the heart of God. Sin originated in self-seeking, breaking this law of love. To love means to give. It is the glory of our God to give, and this glory is seen in the face of Jesus Christ. The angels also find their joy in giving. There is no tree, shrub, leaf, ocean or fountain that does not pour out that element of life without which animal or man could live. Everything created serves, except the sinful heart of man. Yet nothing has a right to life unless it serves” (see White, *The Desire of Ages*, 19-21).

BLANCO: THE SANCTUARY AND THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

Sabbath is the point at issue (vs. 8-12).³⁰ The gospel must not be preached without the law; love must not be preached without justice. In the final phase of the great controversy between good and evil, it is God's justice that is called into question more so than His love. If the gospel is denuded of justice it is no longer gospel. Without the law to point out sin the gospel has no meaning other than a good "man" died because he taught some unacceptable ethical truths. Without law there is no accountability for wrongdoing and sin has no opposition. God's love as well as His justice must be preached to the pew as well as to the public. For He who said, Do not dishonor my Sabbaths, said also, Do not commit adultery and Do not kill. Now if you commit adultery, but do not kill or break the Sabbath, you are still a transgressor of the law (James 2:11).

Loving obedience is above legalism. Jesus said, "If you love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). The highest form of worship, the highest man can give to God is respect and obedience. "With what shall we come before the Lord and bow before the High God? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams and ten thousand rivers of oil? He has shown you what is good, what he requires of you, to do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God" (Mic 6:6-8). The end-time call to worship in Revelation 14:6-8, is a call to grateful, respectful, and loving obedience.

The Golden Pot of Manna. There are multiple meanings that can be drawn from the giving of the manna, such as its daily appearance to provide for the needs of Israel, its disappearance by noon, its preservation over the Sabbath and its symbolism of Jesus as the bread of heaven (Exod 16:15-26; John 6:30-58). However, the question we need to pursue is: Does the manna also clarify the mission of the church?

First, the symbolism of the pot of manna adds no new dimension to our understanding of God's concern for the welfare of His people that He had not previously expressed (see Exod 16). The apostolic church not only adhered to the principles of the "health" message that was given to Israel but commissioned Paul and others to teach it to their new converts (Acts 15:19, 20). Paul, in his letter to the Corinthians, admonished them to eat and drink only to the glory of God (1 Cor 6:19, 20; 10:31). John also expressed his concern for the health of believers in his letter to Gaius (3 John 2).

Daniel was aware of the effects of diet on his mental and physical health (Dan 1:8-20). Priests were forbidden to drink alcoholic beverages (Num 10:1-

³⁰"The condition of eternal life is now just what it always has been,—just what it was in Paradise before the fall of our first parents,—perfect obedience to the law of God, perfect righteousness. If eternal life were granted on any condition short of this, then the happiness of the whole universe would be imperiled. But Christ was made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him, that is, His obedience is credited to our account as if we had never sinned (2 Cor. 5:21). But the love of the church for her Master must be tested. The Eden test was to trust God by believing and doing what He said; the end-time test is to trust God and to remain loyal to Jesus Christ in the face of the final onslaught of evil by believing and doing what He said (Rev. 13:11-17)."

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

11), as were the parents of Samson (Judg 13:1-5) and also John the Baptist (Luke 1:13-15). Neither did Jesus provide alcoholic wine for the guests at the wedding in Cana and in the process contradict His own teaching, but turned water into fresh grape juice (*oinos*) (John 2:1-10).³¹ “Be assured that He did not make intoxicating wine on the occasion of His first miracle. . . . Christ never placed a glass of fermented liquor to His lips or to the lips of His disciples.”³² His purpose was to bring their taste into harmony with a healthful appetite.”³³

Second, God gave the “health” message not only to help His people physically but also to change their dispositions as a witness to others (Exod 16:4, 5, 22-28; Num 11:4-6, 32). Whenever the appetite of the Israelites was restricted, they complained. In Egypt their tastes had become perverted. It was God’s design to restore their appetite to a healthy state so the surrounding nations might be led to glorify Him because of the perfect health they saw in Israel.³⁴ Furthermore, His plan was to bring the “higher powers” of their minds into active exercise. That is why He gave them angels’ food from heaven.³⁵

Third, within the above context, the manna also symbolizes the concept of “wholeness” as expressed by Paul in 1 Thes 5:23, when he says, “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” We are to sanctify (*hagiazō*), to consecrate, or set part our whole being, body, soul, and spirit, for the Lord Jesus Christ as He set aside His own being for us.³⁶

The concept of “wholeness” also negates the Platonic concept of dualism which sees the body and the soul as two distinct realities functioning best independently, each in its own sphere. This concept is totally contrary to Scripture. What a person does in the body impacts the soul. “God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil” (Eccl 12:14). Jesus said, “Every idle word that men shall speak, they will give account thereof in the day of judgment” (Matt 12:36). Paul is even more explicit when he says, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath

³¹The Greek word *oinos* is translated by the LXX from the Hebrew word *yayin* and is used interchangeably for both new and fermented wine. See *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1957), 7:299, 314. Ellen White says, “Paul advised Timothy to take a little wine for his stomach’s sake and oft infirmities, but he meant the unfermented juice of the grape. He did not advise Timothy to take what the Lord had prohibited.” *Signs of the Times Articles*, Vol. 4 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, n.d., reprints from 1899 to 1915), 4:58; article, September 6, 1899.

³²*Ibid.*

³³White, *Spirit of Prophecy*, (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, [1877] 1969), 2:104.

³⁴White, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Supplement, (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1953), 1:1102.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 1:1112, 1113.

³⁶In 1847 and 1863, the Lord gave the early Advent believers the “health” message for our physical and spiritual well-being, not merely for longevity.

BLANCO: THE SANCTUARY AND THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

done, whether it be good or bad” (2 Cor 5:10). We cannot with impunity live in sin such as adultery or incest without making an effort to change while with our mouths praising God for our growing relationship in Christ (1 Cor 5:1, 2; James 3:10-12). The mission of the end-time church must include ministering to the health and well-being of men and women in the context of “wholeness,” not simply for longevity but to bring their “higher powers” into active exercise and as a witness to glorify God.

Aaron’s Rod. The third item in the Ark was Aaron’s rod that had budded, blossomed and produced almonds in one night (Num 17:1-10). The issue that brought about God’s intervention was whether or not Moses and Aaron were Israel’s rightfully chosen leaders (Num 16:1-10).

Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, professing to be defenders of the congregation’s rights, accused Moses and Aaron of taking more authority to themselves than God had intended and putting themselves above the congregation (Num 16:3). Korah and his friends had discussed this question so long that they really believed they were led by God. They had deceived themselves into thinking Moses and Aaron had appointed themselves. Moses sensed that the real reason behind their accusations was a desire to be the leaders and priests of Israel (vs. 9–10). But he did not dare to lay down his own leadership until God released him. So he decided to turn the matter over to God and plead for Him to be the judge. He would make no effort to vindicate himself.³⁷ The crisis erupted over who chose Israel’s leadership. It was then that God decided to step in (Num 17:5). The leaders of the twelve tribes were asked to bring their rods to Moses, who took them, together with Aaron’s rod, into the Most Holy Place. The next morning, Aaron’s dry stick had budded, bloomed, and produced fresh almonds (vs. 6-8). The issue was settled, and Aaron’s rod was placed in the Ark for future generations (Heb 9:4).

What clarity does this experience give to the eschatological mission of the church? The end-time question is: Do we believe there is a “remnant” church, a “last” church with no other to follow (Rev 12:17)? Scripture recognizes a special “last day” people who keep the commandments of God (Rev. 14:12) and call others out of Babylon (Rev 18:1-4). Paul admonishes God’s people to assemble or to group themselves together, and so much more as the day approaches (Heb. 10:23-25).

Do we have faith that God has established the Seventh-day Adventist church, provided the mechanism whereby leaders are chosen, and is still guiding the church through that general process today? And do we believe that God is speaking to the church today through a body of its representatives assembled in a General Conference from around the world? The answers to these question are crucial for the church’s understanding of its global mission.

³⁷White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1890), 395-399.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

The church needs to listen to what the Spirit is saying (Rev 3: 22). Notice these observations by Ellen White: “The world is filled with strife for the supremacy. The spirit of pulling away from fellow laborers, the spirit of disorganization, is in the very air we breathe.”³⁸ That is why “God has ordained that the representatives of His church from all parts of the earth, when assembled in a General Conference, shall have authority.”³⁹ Also, “It has been a necessity to organize union conferences, that the General Conference shall not exercise dictation over all the separate conferences. The power vested in the Conference is not to be centered in one man, or two men, or six men; there is to be a council of men over the separate divisions.”⁴⁰

“Satan would rejoice if he could succeed in his efforts to get in among this people, and disorganize the work at a time when thorough organization is essential, and will be the greatest power to keep out spurious uprisings and to refute claims not endorsed by the Word of God!”⁴¹ Speaking for his mother, W. C. White said, “that God would not permit this denomination to so fully apostatize that there would be the coming out of another church.”⁴² “The work is under the control of the Author and Finisher of our faith. . . . He never leaves His work to chance. This work is a great and solemn one, and it is to go forward.”⁴³

As Ellen White reviewed our past history, she said, “Praise God! As I see what the Lord has wrought, I am filled with astonishment, and with confidence in Christ as leader. We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history.”⁴⁴ And in 1892, Ellen White wrote from Australia: “There is no need to doubt, to be fearful that the work will not succeed. God is at the head of the work, and He will set everything in order. If matters need adjusting at the head of the work, God will attend to that, and work to right every wrong. Let us have faith that God is going to carry the noble ship which bears the people of God safely into port.”⁴⁵

The Most Holy Place provides the third triad of faith for the church’s mission statement and derives this eschatological component from Christ’s end-time ministry, symbolized by the tables of the law, the manna, and Aaron’s rod that budded.

³⁸White, *Testimonies for the Church*, (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, [1909] 1948), 9:257.

³⁹Ibid., 261.

⁴⁰White, *Last Day Events*, 55.

⁴¹White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9:257, 258.

⁴²White, *Last Day Events*, 57.

⁴³White, *Selected Messages*, (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1958), 2:228.

⁴⁴White, *Life Sketches of Ellen White* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1915), 196.

⁴⁵White, *Selected Messages*, 2:390.

BLANCO: THE SANCTUARY AND THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

Conclusion

In summary, the church's mission statement correlates with the furnishings of the Old Testament sanctuary in the Courtyard, the Holy Place, and the Most Holy Place. The proclamation of the incarnate, crucified, and risen Christ is the first triad of faith to be written in the church's mission statement; the Word of God as the bread of life, the incense of prayer, and the light of service to others which nurtures and strengthens the church is the next triad; and the final triad to be included is the church's eschatological mission to call the world to obedience, to wholeness for God, and to identify with God's remnant, uniquely guided by the Holy Spirit.

While the Old Testament sanctuary enlarges and gives eschatological clarity to the mission of the church, it is understood that the church's witness is rooted in a loving Savior—whose body the church is—embracing all peoples in arms of divine love.

Recapitulation in Revelation 4–11

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In approaching the Book of Revelation, or at least certain sections of the book, one has basically two options. One can choose recapitulation or progression. Opinions on the structure of Revelation and on the delimitation of certain passages determine, to a large degree, whether one opts for one or the other of these two possibilities.

I will briefly define the terms and state the importance of the issue, then move on to modern representatives of recapitulation. Next, I will address the delimitation of crucial passages, and finally list the arguments in favor of recapitulation in Rev 4–11.

I. Definition of Terms

Recapitulationists perceive several parts of the Apocalypse as somewhat repetitious, and each of these parts seems to lead to the final consummation. In other words, the author repeatedly leads his hearers and readers over the same ground, adding a new perspective each time.

Progression, as opposed to recapitulation, discerns only one final climax in the Book of Revelation. Everything leads up to this culmination. For example, the seven trumpets do not, to a certain extent, cover the same ground which the seven seals have already encircled, but grow out of the seals and are their extension.¹

II. Importance of the Issue

Although the issue of recapitulation may seem somewhat academic and complicated, its implications and its practical effects can be tremendous and far-reaching. The question of progression or recapitulation may not matter too much to a preterist, even though preterists often defend recapitulation. However, it is a

¹See Ekkehardt Müller, *Microstructural Analysis of Revelation 4–11*, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series, Volume 21 (Berrien Springs: Andrews UP, 1996), 12.

MUELLER: RECAPITULATION IN REVELATION 4–11

decisive question for the person maintaining the historical interpretation of the Apocalypse. If one chooses progression one will end up with a different end time scenario from the one recapitulationists hold. Correspondingly, one will place the present time in another frame than would those who prefer recapitulation. This again may influence belief in the nearness of Christ's second coming as well as one's own lifestyle.

III. Modern Exegetes and the Issue of Recapitulation

It seemed that for some time recapitulation in the Book of Revelation had lost its attractiveness. The concept has been revitalized by Günther Bornkamm.² Russell Scott Morton, in discussing different procedures with regard to finding Revelation's macrostructure, distinguishes between source-critical approaches, linguistic/literary analysis, recapitulation theory, and chiasmic approaches,³ although they do not necessarily exclude each other.

Adela Yarbro Collins detects recapitulation in all the visions of the Apocalypse except the first septenary. The recurring pattern in these septet visions is, in her opinion, (1) persecution, (2) judgment, and (3) salvation.⁴ The paradigm for these elements of what she calls the combat myth is allegedly Rev 12. She states: "Each cycle of visions tells the story of the end in its own way. The story of the opening of the scroll with seven seals is the whole story of the end. This story is told again in the cycle of the trumpets from another point of view. This repetition is somewhat like that of a musical theme and variations."⁵

Jan Lambrecht's main emphasis is the encompassing technique that John uses. This technique allows at the same time for recapitulation and progression. In his view, the septets of the seals and trumpets are open-ended and comprise everything that follows. However, despite the overlap that now occurs, each major block is a unit.⁶

Gerhard Krodel also argues for recapitulation. In Rev 6:12-14, the stars fall down from heaven. "However, the *fourth trumpet* and the *fourth bowl* visions

²See Günther Bornkamm, "Die Komposition der apokalyptischen Visionen in der Offenbarung Johannis," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 36 (1937): 132-149.

³Russell Scott Morton, "A History of Religions Analysis of Revelations 4–5" (Th.D. dissertation, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, 1985), 5–38.

⁴Adela Yarbro Collins, *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation* (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1976), 32-44; idem, "'What the Spirit Says to the Churches': Preaching the Apocalypse," *Quarterly Review* 4 (1984): 73.

⁵Adela Yarbro Collins, *The Apocalypse*, New Testament Message, Biblical-Theological Commentary (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1979), 43.

⁶J. Lambrecht, "A Structuration of Revelation 4,1–22,5," in *L'Apocalypse johannique et l'apocalyptique dans le Nouveau Testament*, ed. J. Lambrecht, Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologiarum Lovaniensium LII (Gembloux: Éditions J. Duculot, 1980), 77–104. Lambrecht's proposed open-endedness is derived from three points: (1) The seventh seal and the seventh trumpet do not have a specific content. (2) There is no indication for the end of the third woe. (3) A study of the hymnic material suggests the conclusion that Rev 11:15–19 and 15:1–16:1 belong together as 8:1 and 8:2–5 also do.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

presuppose that the heavenly bodies are still in place (8:12; 16:8). The relationship between the three cycles therefore is thematic, not chronological!" Furthermore, he states: "Recapitulation does not imply mechanical repetition of content, but recapitulation becomes the occasion for *new emphases*."⁷

Kenneth A. Strand's chiastic structure of the Apocalypse consists of eight basic visions besides a prologue and an epilogue. Six of the eight visions can be subdivided into a "victorious-introduction scene," a "basic prophetic description," an "interlude," and the "eschatological culmination."⁸ This very arrangement strongly points to recapitulation.

Jon Paulien argues that the protection of certain objects from destruction in Rev 7:1-3 and Rev 9:4 "raises serious questions whether the trumpet series is to be related as an immediate sequel to the vision of chapter 7." The strongest parallel between Rev 7a and the trumpets is Rev 9:14, 16. In Rev 7a, God's people are described, "in Rev 9 their demonic counterparts." Connections between the two passages include the concept of binding and loosing, the appearance of four angels, and the concept of numbering a people. "The sixth trumpet is the exact historical counterpart of Revelation 7:1-8 . . . The seven trumpets, therefore, do not follow the events of Revelation 7 in chronological order."⁹

Richard M. Davidson points out that the introductory scenes—compared with each other—show progression, whereas the sections to which they belong often present recapitulation.¹⁰

Although Bruce M. Metzger perceives the seventh seal as an introduction to a new series of visions, he adds: "The trumpets more or less repeat the revelation of the seven seals, though they present it more from God's standpoint . . . Following this complicated and repetitious pattern, John preserves unity in his work, interlocking the various parts together and at the same time developing his themes. The development, however, is not in a strictly logical fashion, such as we are familiar with in Western writing; it is, rather, a product of the Semitic mind, which runs through the whole picture again and again. Thus, the seven seals and the seven trumpets essentially tell the same thing, each time emphasizing one or another aspect of the whole."¹¹

⁷Gerhard A. Krodel, *Revelation*, Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989), 190.

⁸See Kenneth A. Strand, "The Eight Basic Visions in the Book of Revelation," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 25 (1987): 107–21.

⁹Jon Paulien, *Decoding Revelation's Trumpets: Literary Allusions and Interpretations of Revelation 8:7–12*, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series, vol. xi (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews UP, 1988), 196–197.

¹⁰See Richard M. Davidson, "Sanctuary Typology," in *Symposium on Revelation—Book I: Introductory and Exegetical Studies*, ed. F. B. Holbrook, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, vol. 6 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1992), 115–116.

¹¹Bruce M. Metzger, *Breaking the Code: Understanding the Book of Revelation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), 55–56.

MUELLER: RECAPITULATION IN REVELATION 4–11

This brief review indicates that the idea of recapitulation in Revelation is not uncommon among modern scholarship. However, the biblical text has to be studied on its own. This is the step we have to turn to.

IV. Recapitulation and the Delimitation of Passages

Most scholars would agree that Rev 1 consists of an introduction to the entire Book of Revelation (1:1-8) and a vision that should be regarded as an introduction to the seven letters (1:9-20).¹² This means that the first septet has an introductory scene, a device one will also find with the other major parts of Revelation. There is also a clear-cut end of this first septet at Rev 3:22 and the beginning of a new section with Rev 4:1, although 3:21 already prepares the way for the next section of Revelation.¹³

The question where the seven seals end and where a new block begins, however, is of vital importance, for it has to do with the very issue of recapitulation, and it decisively affects the interpretation of Revelation, as we have already pointed out above.

¹²For example, Eugenio Corsini, *The Apocalypse: the Perennial Revelation of Jesus Christ*, Good News Studies, vol. 5 (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1983), 62, 65; Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Composition and Structure of the Book of Revelation," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 39 (1977): 364; Martin Karrer, *Die Johannesoffenbarung als Brief: Studien zu ihrem literarischen, historischen und theologischen Ort*, Forschung zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments, vol. 140 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986), 217–219. Kenneth A. Strand, *Interpreting the Book of Revelation: Hermeneutical Guidelines, with Brief Introduction to Literary Analysis*, rev. and enl. ed. (Worthington, OH: Ann Arbor, 1976), 51, perceives the vision of chap. 1 and the seven churches as one unit, but he starts only with 1:11.

¹³See the terms "throne" and "overcomer." Indicators for a new part of Revelation starting with 4:1 are the following: (1) Rev 4 begins with the formula μετὰ ταῦτα εἶδον, καὶ ἰδοῦ. John sees an open door in heaven and is invited to come up there to learn what will happen μετὰ ταῦτα (4:1). The Book of Revelation contains several structuring formulas. Working through the entire document, one gets the impression that no formula besides καὶ εἶδον and those derived from it (καὶ εἶδον, καὶ ἰδοῦ; μετὰ τοῦτο εἶδον; μετὰ ταῦτα εἶδον, καὶ ἰδοῦ; καὶ εἶδον, καὶ ἤκουσα) have the same structuring force. Εἶδον without the conjunction καὶ or without the prepositional phrase μετὰ τοῦτο/μετὰ ταῦτα never occurs at the beginning of a sentence, as the structuring formulas do, and has little or no force as a structuring element. The formulas (καὶ) ἰδοῦ and (καὶ) ἤκουσα seem to have some value for structuring passages. They are, however, much weaker than is καὶ εἶδον and often seem to be dependent on it. Forms of the verb ὀράω occur in Rev 1, but not at all in Rev 2–3. Yet, even in Rev 1, καὶ εἶδον and derived forms are not found. The first clear structuring formula comes in Rev 4:1. This is a strong indication that a new section starts with 4:1. (2) In the first chapters of the Apocalypse, a movement from earth to heaven takes place. Rev 1–3 seems to play on earth. In Rev 4, John in the spirit sees heavenly realities, an entire new setting. (3) There is also a change in personages. The churches of Rev 2–3 fade away, and a throne with the one sitting on it, twenty-four elders, and four beings appear. In Rev 5, angels and a lamb are added. (4) Rev 4–5 functions as an introduction to the next septet in the same way that Rev 1:9–20 introduces the first. (5) Compared with the first septet, there is a change of style with the second one. The former uses the style of a letter; in the latter, narrative and hymns occur.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Several scholars suggest that the seven seals comprise the rest of the book. Out of the seventh seal the other judgment series come forth, at least the seven trumpets.¹⁴ This view is largely dependent on the interpretation of the silence which occurs when the seventh seal is opened. The question is whether the silence is the climax of the series or whether it forms the introduction to another series.¹⁵

If the seventh seal reaches up to Rev 8:5 or Rev 8:6, the seven trumpets seem to grow out of the seven seals and are their extension. In the same way, the seven bowls may grow out of the seventh trumpet. In this case, there is not much room for recapitulation. If, on the other hand, the seven seals end with Rev 8:1, a new section starts with 8:2. In this case, one might opt for recapitulation.

Some exegetes suggest a kind of overlap between the end of the seven seals and the beginning of the seven trumpets, using the device of “interlocking” or “intercalation.” This means that the seals series comprises 4:1–8:5 or 4:1–8:6 and the trumpet series 8:2–11:19 or 8:3–11:19.¹⁶

Among other scholars who perceive Rev 8:1 as the end of the section, irrespective of the question of whether Rev 4–5 is an introduction to the seals only or rather to a larger portion of Revelation,¹⁷ are Strand,¹⁸ Bowman,¹⁹ and Hol-

¹⁴See, for example, Gary G. Cohen, *Understanding Revelation: An Investigation of the Key Interpretational and Chronological Questions Which Surround the Book of Revelation* (Chicago: Moody, 1978), 96; Hans Werner Günther, *Der Nah- und Enderwartungshorizont in der Apokalypse des heiligen Johannes*, Forschung zur Bibel (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1980), 235; Krodell, 150–151; Collins, *The Apocalypse*, 55, supports this view, but she states that “this relationship should not be understood chronologically. . . . The interlocking of the two cycles is a literary device.” See also *ibid.*, 56. Rolf J. Pöhler, “Der literarische Aufbau der Offenbarung des Johannes,” in *Studien zur Offenbarung: Die Bedeutung der drei Engelsbotschaften - heute (Offenbarung 14,6-12)* (Hamburg: Grindeldruck, 1988), 1:69–71, suggests what he calls a telescope theory.

¹⁵See, for example, Richard Fredericks, “A Sequential Study of Revelation 1–14 Emphasizing the Judgment Motif: With Implications for Seventh-day Adventist Apocalyptic Pedagogy” (Ph.D. dissertation, Andrews University, 1987), 185–87, who points to Hab 2:20, Zeph 1:7, Zech 2:13, and consequently understands the silence as a symbol of the “day of the Lord.” See also Jean-Pierre Charlier, *Comprendre l’Apocalisse*, 2 vols. (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1991), 1:194–195. Mathias Rissi, *Was ist und was geschehen soll danach: Die Zeit- und Geschichtsauffassung der Offenbarung des Johannes* (Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1965), 8–11, also connects the silence with the day of the Lord. It is a climax and not a transition to the next septenary. On the other hand, Henry Barclay Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John: The Greek Text with Introduction Notes and Indices* (London: Macmillan, 1917), 107, thinks the OT texts are not relevant with regard to Rev 8:1. Jürgen Roloff, *The Revelation of John: A Continental Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 101–102, states: “In fact, the silence in heaven appears to be a reference to the end-time work of God’s new creation.”

¹⁶See, for example, Collins, *The Combat Myth*, 16–19; and Leroy C. Spinks, “A Critical Examination of J. W. Bowman’s Proposed Structure of the Revelation,” *Evangelical Quarterly* 50 (1978): 216.

¹⁷See, for example, Corsini, 118, 161; Michel Gourgues, “‘L’Apocalypse’ ou ‘Les trois apocalypses’ de Jean?” *Science et Esprit* 35 (1983): 304–311; Rissi, 8–11; Ernst R. Wendland, “7 X 7 (X 7): A Structural and Thematic Outline of John’s Apocalypse,” *Occasional Papers in*

MUELLER: RECAPITULATION IN REVELATION 4–11

brook.²⁰ According to their interpretation, the septet begins with Rev 4 and ends with 8:1.

Starting with Rev 8:7, the seven trumpets are described as the seals are in Rev 6. What about the section 8:2–6? Indeed, many words are parallel between Rev 4:1–8:1 and Rev 8:2–6.²¹ However, some of the words are not important for our purpose. They occur everywhere in Revelation and belong to the common stock of vocabulary in Revelation. They do not indicate progression. Sometimes words are used in a different way and with a different meaning in other places.²² Some words come in clusters or formulas which are also found in other parts of Rev.²³ Some may even indicate that a new section has begun.²⁴ None of this vocabulary can be used to build a case for progression. On the other hand, the terms “altar,” “incense,” and the “prayers of the saints” apparently form an important connection with 4:1–8:1. Nevertheless, Rev 8:2–5(6) does not seem to be part of the seventh seal. It is, rather, the introduction to the next septet.²⁵ This conclusion is supported by the following evidence:

1. 8:2–6 forms an inclusion²⁶ which is immediately followed by the individual trumpets:²⁷

Translation and Textlinguistics: OPTAT 4 (1990): 376-78; Vester Eugene Wolber, “A Study of the Literary Structure of Revelation as an Aid to Interpretation” (Th.D. dissertation, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1950), 36, 39, 42, 61; and Theodor Zahn, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes*, reprint (Wuppertal: R. Brockhaus Verlag, 1986), 364.

¹⁸Strand, *Interpreting the Book of Revelation*, 48; idem, “The Eight Basic Visions,” 112.

¹⁹John Wick Bowman, “The Revelation to John: Its Dramatic Structure and Message.” *Interpretation* 9 (1955): 441.

²⁰Frank B. Holbrook, “Issues in the Book of Revelation,” *Ministry*, January 1991, 10–11, summarizing a committee statement, declares that Rev 4:1–8:1 belongs to the historical section of Revelation. Rev 8:2–6 forms the introduction to the sequence of the trumpets in the form of an inclusion.

²¹In each case just one reference per section is given: εἶδον (6:1; 8:2), ἑπτὰ (6:1; 8:2), ἄγγελος (7:1; 8:2), θεοῦ (6:9; 8:2), εἰστήκεισαν/ἑστήκασιν (7:11; 8:2), σάλπιγγες (4:1; 8:2), ἄλλος ἄγγελος (7:2; 8:3), ἦλθεν (6:17; 8:3), θυσιαστηρίου (6:9; 8:3), ἔχων (6:2; 8:3), χρυσοῦν (4:4; 8:3), ἐδόθη αὐτῷ (6:2; 8:3), θυμιάματα (5:8; 8:3), προσευχαί τῶν ἁγίων (5:8; 8:3), πᾶς/πάντων (6:15; 8:3), ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου (4:5; 8:3), χειρὸς (6:5; 8:4), εὔληφεν (5:7; 8:5), πυρός (4:5; 8:5), βαλοῦσιν/ἔβαλεν (4:10; 8:5), γῆν (6:4; 8:5), ἐγένετο/ἐγένοντο (6:12; 8:5), βρονταὶ καὶ φωναὶ καὶ ἀστραπαὶ (4:5; 8:5), and σεισνός (6:12; 8:5).

²²For example, the golden altar in Rev 8:3 is not necessarily identical with the altar in Rev 6:9.

²³For example, καὶ εἶδον and καὶ ἐδόθη.

²⁴For example, καὶ εἶδον and βρονταὶ καὶ φωναὶ καὶ ἀστραπαὶ (καὶ σεισνός). The latter enumeration occurs also in 4:5; 11:19; and 16:18 and seems to be used only once per vision in what Strand calls victorious introduction scenes; Strand, “The Eight Basic Visions,” 112–113.

²⁵See, for example, Corsini, 171, and Charlier, 1:203. Swete, 109, states: “The whole scene in vv. 3–5 is a prelude to the Seven Trumpets, which now begin to sound.”

²⁶See, for example, Adolf Pohl, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes, Wuppertaler Studienbibel* (Wuppertal: R. Brockhaus Verlag, 1982), 2:20. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Revelation: Vision of a Just World*, Proclamation Commentaries (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 70, states that the

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

- A Seven angels with seven trumpets (2)
- B Another angel (3-5)
- A' Seven angels with seven trumpets (6)

One might even go further and suggest a more detailed structure of this passage.

- A Seven angels with seven trumpets (2)
- B Angel, altar, censer (3a)
- C Incense, prayers of the saints (3b)
- D Altar before the throne (3c)
- C' Incense, prayers of the saints (4)
- B' Angel, censer, altar (5)
- A' Seven angels with seven trumpets (6)

Rev 8:1 does not seem to have a place in this chiasmic structure or in the inclusion, if one takes it as such. Obviously it lies outside the boundaries of the passage.

2. In Revelation *καὶ εἶδον* (“and I saw”) oftentimes introduces a new section or at least a new aspect of a vision.²⁸ In the first six seals, the formula *καὶ εἶδον* and related formulas, which seem to come as a package, set off one seal from the following one and are not preceded but followed by the content of the respective seal.

In the seventh seal the content is presented immediately without the vision formula. This formula is only introduced in 8:2. If Rev 8:2–5 belongs to the seventh seal, the pattern that the content follows the vision formula is obviously destroyed. Another option that some persons might want to propose would be to regard the silence as not being the content or not belonging to the content of the seventh seal, taking it instead more as a kind of formula. However, the audition formula occurring with the first four seals, including the statement of what has been heard—a living creature says: “Come!”—differs widely from 8:1. A formula becomes a formula only by repetitive use, not by being used just once. On the other hand, the silence is connected to a time element. Even if we might not precisely understand its meaning, this setting seems to indicate that the idea connected with the time element—in this case the silence in heaven—is important enough to be regarded as the content of the seventh seal. Since, especially with the fifth and the sixth seal, *καὶ εἶδον* is used right in the beginning, it might be better to understand *καὶ εἶδον* in 8:2 as introducing a new part of the Apocalypse.²⁹

heavenly liturgy in Rev 8:3–5 is sandwiched or intercalated between 8:2 and 8:6–9:21a. Krodell, 194, points to the A-B-A' structure of Rev 8:2–6.

²⁷See, for example, Wendland, 379.

²⁸See, for example, Rev 8:13 and the discussion on introductory formulas within footnote 13.

²⁹See E. Müller, 200–201, 317–325, and 422–423. The possible argument that in 5:5–6—within the same vision—John hears about a lion yet sees a lamb, so the same technique must be applied to the seventh seal—John “hears” the silence but sees the seven angels with seven trumpets and therefore the trumpets have to be included into the seventh seal—does not seem to be valid. Lion

MUELLER: RECAPITULATION IN REVELATION 4–11

The Four Horsemen

Package of introductory formulas Content of the respective seal

lamb *audition* *living* *vision*
opens *formula* *creature* *formula*
a seal *saying*

First rider ³⁰	*	*	*	*	*
Second rider	*	*	*	—	*
Third rider	*	*	*	*	* ³¹
Fourth rider	*	*	*	*	*

The Last Three Seals

Package of introductory formulas Content of the respective seal

vision *lamb* *vision*
formula *opens* *formula*
 a seal

Fifth seal		*	*		*
Sixth seal	*	*			*
Seventh seal		*			*

3. Vision formulas are found throughout the entire seal series. There is no other septet in Rev characterized by καὶ εἶδον statements as is the vision of the seven seals, including its introductory part. With the trumpets this formula is found only rarely.

4. The seven trumpets start with a common formula, namely καὶ ὁ ἄγγελος ἐσήπνευσεν (“and the . . . angel sounded the trumpet”) This formula is prefigured by 8:2 and 6. It is quite different from that of the seals (καὶ ὅτε ἤνοιξεν τὴν σφραγίδα τὴν . . . [ἤκουσα τοῦ . . . ζῶου λέγοντος]) (“and when it opened the . . . seal [I heard the . . . living being saying]”) which draws on Rev 4–5. Instead of viewing the trumpets as coming out of the last seal, it seems to be more appropriate to perceive Rev 4–5 and Rev 8:2–6 as introductory scenes providing the vocabulary for the introductory formulas used with each element of the respective septet.

5. In comparing septenaries it is often helpful to take a look at the particular personnel that appear. The vision of 4:1–8:1 is dominated by the lamb, four living creatures, and twenty-four elders. The lamb is found ten times within the

and lamb refer to the same reality, the same person. The silence in heaven and the blowing of the trumpets with the effects on earth obviously do not.

³⁰The very first occurrence of the vision formula in 6:1 has been omitted here since it sets off the actual opening of the seals from the heavenly scene in Rev 5 which, together with Rev 4, forms an extended introduction scene to the seal septet.

³¹Another audition formula has been added here.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

seal series, but not at all with the trumpets. In the seals, angels are only introduced later (Rev 5 and Rev 7). There are four angels in 7:1–2, not seven as in 8:2, 6.³² Right at the beginning of the seals the four living creatures and the lamb are found, whereas in the case of the trumpets angels are mentioned. Since no angels occur in the first six seals, with the exception of the expansion of the sixth seal—a special case in itself—one probably should not expect to find them in the seventh seal. In other words, the personnel in the two septets are quite different. This is also true if one leaves the heavenly sphere. The trumpets seem to focus on the earth dwellers (8:13). In the case of the seals the focus seems to be somewhat more on the people of God.³³ This evidence would support recapitulation.

6. Βρονταὶ καὶ φωναὶ καὶ ἀστραπαὶ (“thunder, voices, flashes of lightning”), depictions of theophany, as well as θυμιάματα (“incense”) in connection with ταῖς προσευχαῖς τῶν ἁγίων (“prayers of the saints”) are only found in the introductory scene Rev 4–5, not in the seals themselves. The three-fold enumeration of natural phenomena is again used in the introductory scene of Rev 11:19.³⁴ It would be fitting to find these items in another introductory scene and not in an extension of the seventh seal. Although there are some literary connections between Rev 8:2–6 and the seals,³⁵ as indicated above, they cannot prevent one from viewing Rev 8:2–6 as an introductory scene to the seven trumpets. The different introductory scenes of the main visions of Revelation are apparently temple scenes. Therefore—in spite of all differences between them—one has to expect common elements and even progression if one takes these scenes by themselves.

7. Since Rev 8:1 is introduced by neither καὶ εἶδον (“I saw”) nor καὶ ἤκουσα (“I heard”), it seems that this verse has a very close relation to the preceding material, which points to the *parousia* (sixth seal) and perceives God’s people as already standing before His throne (Rev 7:15). The climax has been reached. With the sixth seal, not only the heavenly signs pointing to Jesus’ second coming have been fulfilled. The day of the Lord itself has come. The expansion of the sixth seal, namely Rev 7, answers the question at the very end of the sixth chapter: “Who is able to stand?” and describes the persons who will be found before God’s throne, led by the lamb to the water of life. The seventh seal adds silence in heaven. So, the seals lead up to the final consummation. Having reached Christ’s second coming, the Millennium, judgment, and new creation, a

³²Seven angels are mentioned in 15:1,6-8; 16:1; 17:1; and 21:9.

³³See especially the fifth seal.

³⁴Actually, each time βρονταὶ, φωναὶ, and ἀστραπαὶ are enumerated an augmentation takes place. Three elements are found in Rev 4:5. Rev 8:5 adds σεισμός. In Rev 11:19 a fifth element is stated, namely χάλαζα μεγάλη. See also Rev 16:18-21.

³⁵For example, an altar is mentioned in Rev 6:9 as well as in Rev 8:3. Yet the altar of 6:9 is not characterized as the golden altar, as is the case in 8:3, and might refer to the altar of burnt offering. The martyrs are found there, but no incense. Furthermore, the blood of the martyrs and the death of other saints are mentioned.

MUELLER: RECAPITULATION IN REVELATION 4–11

return to the old earth as described by the effects of the trumpets does not make sense if understood chronologically. If Rev 8:2–6—which draws with it Rev 8–9—would be connected with 8:1, the progression of Rev 6–7 up to 8:1 would be reversed and the climax destroyed. There seems to be a movement from heaven to earth and back to heaven in order to reach the final consummation, as pointed out in both septenaries.

Basic Locations in Rev 4:1–8:1 and in Rev 8:2–11:18

<p>Heaven Rev 4–5 thunder, voices, flashes of lightning; incense</p>	<p>Earth Rev 6:1–7:8 6 seals</p>	<p>Heaven Rev 7:9–8:1 part of the 6th seal, 7th seal; <i>climax</i></p>
<p>Heaven Rev 8:2–6 thunder, voices, trumpet, flashes of lightning, earthquake; incense</p>	<p>Earth Rev 8:7–11:14 6 trumpets</p>	<p>Heaven Rev 11:12, 15–18 part of the 6th trumpet, 7th trumpet; <i>climax</i></p>

8. Both introductory scenes, Rev 4–5 and Rev 8:2–6, seem to form a kind of chiasmic structure in themselves. In the first one, the lamb is the center of attention. In Rev 8:2–6, angels are very important. Rev 4:1–2a sets the stage for Rev 4–8a. Rev 8:1, on the other hand, concludes the vision. Although both passages are small, there are a number of similarities between Rev 4:1–2a and Rev 8:1. The terms ἀνοίγω and γίνομαι (“to open,” “as/like” and “to be/become”) occur in both passages. Furthermore, the prepositional phrase ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ (“in heaven”) is found in both texts.³⁶ In Rev 4:1–2a, a door in heaven was opened, and a voice talked to John. In Rev 8:1, the seventh seal was opened, and there was silence in heaven for a limited time. These two passages are a fitting frame for the vision of Rev 4–7. Their similarities and their contrasts both prepare the way for the vision and conclude it. When the consummation has come, no further speech is necessary. Wendland calls 4:1–8:1 “a contrastive inclusion.”³⁷

Scholars propose an outline of this septet that consists of (1) an introduction (Rev 4–5), (2) six seals (Rev 6; four plus two plus later one more), (3) an interlude (Rev 7), and (4) the seventh seal (Rev 8:1).³⁸ This study suggests the

³⁶The only other places in this part of Revelation in which this phrase is employed are Rev 5:3 and Rev 5:13.

³⁷Wendland, 378.

³⁸See, for example, Günther, 162, although he takes only 5:1 to 8:1 as a section; Strand, “The Eight Basic Visions,” 112; and Wendland, 376–78. Ferdinand Hahn, “Zum Aufbau der Johannesoffenbarung,” in *Kirche und Bibel: Festgabe für Bischof Eduard Schick*, ed. Otto Böcher et al. (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1979), 153, however, regards 6:12–7:8 as the sixth seal, whereas 7:9–17 contains a prospect of the consummation. Charlier, 1:197, proposes a detailed chiasmic structure reaching from A to H and to A’. He does not include Rev 4 in this septenary.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

elements printed below. At the same time, as at least partially indicated by this outline, Rev 4:1–8:1 seems to form a kind of chiasmic structure with regard to the occurrence of hymns and the place of action.³⁹

The Structure of Rev 4:1–8:1

- (1) Prelude or general introduction (heavenly setting—4:1–2a)
- (2) Introductory scene (heavenly setting—4:2a–5:14)
 - (a) Throne vision (including hymns—4:2b–11)
 - (b) The vision of the lamb and the scroll (including hymns—5)
- (3) The seven seals (6:1–8:1)
 - (a) The four horsemen (6:1–8)
 - (b) The fifth seal (6:9–11)
 - (c) The sixth seal (6:12–7:17)
 - (i) The seal proper (6:12–17)
 - (ii) First expansion: the 144,000 (7:1–8)
 - (iii) Second expansion: the great multitude (heavenly setting, including hymns—7:9–17)
 - (d) The seventh seal as conclusion (heavenly setting—8:1)

The large picture, drawn in Rev 4:1–8:1, starts with God and the lamb and with praises given to them. It ends in the same way, namely with the lamb and God and the praises given to them, for the goal is achieved: God's servants are with him and he is with them. The lamb is their shepherd, leading them to all the resources of an abundant life.

The Chiasmic Structure of Rev 4:1–8:1

- A Prelude or general introduction: heavenly setting (4:1–2a)
- B Introductory scene: heavenly setting, hymns (4:2a–5:14)
 - C The first six seals, including the first expansion of the sixth seal (6:1–7:8)
 - B' The second expansion of the sixth seal: heavenly setting, hymns (7:9–17)
- A' The seventh seal as conclusion: heavenly setting (8:1)

9. In Rev 7:3 the earth, the sea, and the trees are not harmed. This is quite different from the first trumpet in 8:7, where a third of the earth and a third of the trees are burned up. Representatives of the idea of progression point to this fact. However, in 9:4, when the fifth trumpet is blown, the earth and the trees are protected.⁴⁰

³⁹Charlier, 1:150, suggests another chiasmic structure:

- A Vision inaugurale (5,1–14)
 - B Les quatre premiers sceaux (6,1–8)
 - C Le cinquième sceau (6,9–11)
 - B' Le sixième sceau (6,12–7,8)
- A' La liturgie de clôture (7,9–8,1).

⁴⁰See, for example, Jon Paulien, "Seals and Trumpets: Some Current Discussions," in *Symposium on Revelation—Book I: Introductory and Exegetical Studies*, ed. F. B. Holbrook, Daniel and Revelation Committee, vol. 6 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1992), 196.

MUELLER: RECAPITULATION IN REVELATION 4–11

10. Under the sixth seal the stars fall to the earth. The idea of stars is found again with the trumpets. They are still in their place up to the fourth trumpet, when they are struck.⁴¹

11. The term “prayers of the saints,” already mentioned, is found only twice in Revelation, namely in 5:8 and in 8:3-4. These two passages seem to be parallel insofar as they are introduction scenes to basic visions of the Apocalypse.

12. The phrase “I heard their number” is found only in 7:4 and in 9:16. In the first case, it belongs to the expansion of the sixth seal. In the other case, it is part of the sixth trumpet. Looking at their respective contexts one detects the same ideas: holding back and releasing, four angels, and a crowd which is numbered. In Rev 7 the people of God are depicted, and in Rev 9 their demonic counterpart. Therefore it seems that the sixth trumpet is the exact historic antagonist to the expansion of the sixth seal in Rev 7a.⁴²

IV. Some Additional Arguments in Favor of Recapitulation

1. The seal septet seems to start with the time of John. The twofold introductory scene in Rev 4–5 obviously points to Jesus’ enthronement in heaven, which took place in 31 A.D. As already briefly hinted at above, this septet reaches even beyond Christ’s second coming. Thus it covers the entire Christian time span. The vision following the seven trumpets has been referred to as the vision on the satanic trinity. It starts with a woman giving birth to a male child. The reference is undoubtedly to the birth of the Messiah. The vision mentions the three and a half times of Dan 7 and 12 and again covers the Christian period, including the medieval conflict as well as the end time persecution and the *parousia*. Therefore the question is not whether the Apocalypse uses recapitulation—this issue is clear—but whether the trumpets recapitulate the seals. In any case, recapitulation in the Book of Revelation cannot be negated categorically. It would be possible that it also applies to the trumpets. The above mentioned reasons foster this view.

2. Within the trumpet series several chronological statements are found. With regard to these time elements the trumpet septet is much more structured than the seals are. The prophetic time elements of chapter 11 which are part of the expansion of the sixth trumpet point to a long historic development and especially focus on the end of this time span, namely around 1798 A.D. Since the trumpets evidently come in a chronological order, the first trumpets obviously precede this time and therefore seem to be more or less parallel to the seals. In any case, the trumpets contain the 1260 prophetic days.

3. An exposition of the seven seals demonstrates that the seals imitate the Synoptic Apocalypse in Matt 24 and its parallels. The difference is that the seals seem to concentrate on the spiritual dimension. If the Synoptic Apocalypse, with

⁴¹See, for example, Krodel, 190.

⁴²See, for example, Paulien, “Seals and Trumpets,” 196-197.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

its climax of Christ's second coming, is found in Rev 6:1 to 8:1, there is no room left for partial judgments that are meant to lead persons to repentance (9:20–21), because the *parousia* has already happened before the trumpets are sounded, and after the *parousia* one has only to expect the final and universal judgment.

4. A strong relation between the Book of Revelation and the Book of Daniel must be recognized. Both the seal vision and the trumpet vision allude to certain passages of Daniel. Both books belong to the same type of literature, namely, apocalyptic prophecy. These are the only predominantly apocalyptic books in the whole Bible. Thus there might be a certain similarity or correspondence between them. The Book of Daniel undeniably contains recapitulation. Since the Book of Revelation depends on the Book of Daniel, we might also expect recapitulation in the case of the Apocalypse. In Daniel one series adds additional elements to the preceding one. Whereas Dan 2 discusses the political dimension—that is, the kingdoms of the world—Dan 7 adds a religious dimension, namely, the saints, and Dan 8 adds another spiritual dimension, namely, the sanctuary. Recapitulation in Revelation seems to follow this pattern by adding new aspects to formerly revealed historical developments. With the trumpets, these new facets include the different time elements and the emphasis on those who dwell on the earth.

Conclusion

In this paper I have wrestled with the question of recapitulation in Revelation, especially with regard to the seven trumpets. A very important question was the delimitation of the seventh seal. Since the seventh seal can be limited to Rev 8:1 and since other reasons favor recapitulation, one is not forced to regard the seven trumpets as extensions of the last seal. On the contrary, recapitulation in the case of the seals and trumpets seems to be a reasonable option. This is decisive for the interpretation of the seals and the trumpets. Suggesting that Rev 8:1 is the content of the seventh seal, however, does not mean that 8:2–5(6) is totally disconnected from the preceding material. The passage seems to look back to a certain degree at the previous chapters and at the same time look forward to the next main part, serving as a kind of joint in the larger structure of Revelation (cf. 3, 21; 11, 18). This literary connection, however, does not necessarily point to a chronological sequence of seals and trumpets.

MUELLER: RECAPITULATION IN REVELATION 4–11

Appendix: The End of the Trumpet Septet

The seven trumpets start with Rev 8:7. Each trumpet is clearly identified. The last trumpet begins with Rev 11:15. The question, however, is where the trumpets end. Several suggestions, sometimes related, have been made:

(1) Many scholars take Rev 11:19 as the end point of the trumpet vision or as the end of the first part of the Book of Revelation. This option does not necessarily exclude the view that the seventh trumpet includes other parts or the rest of Revelation.⁴³

(2) Some suggest Rev 11:18 as the end point of the trumpet septet. Consequently, Rev 11:19 is the introductory scene to a new cycle whose main part starts with 12:1.⁴⁴

(3) Others propose that Rev 11:19 at the same time closes one vision and opens another one.⁴⁵

⁴³See, for example, Collins, *The Combat Myth*, 26, 36, who takes Rev 11:19 as the end point of the material associated with the scroll of Rev 5; Desmond Ford, *Crisis! A Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, 3 vols. (Newcastle, CA: Desmond Ford Pub, 1982), 2:504, 548; Wayne Richard Kempson, "Theology in the Revelation of John" (Ph.D. dissertation, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1982), 119, 123, 140; and Richard C. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John's Revelation* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1963), 357–358. Isbon T. Beckwith, *The Apocalypse of John: Studies in Introduction with a Critical and Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1967), 611, states: "The two parts of v. 19 correspond then with the two parts of v. 18. . . . This verse is often taken as introductory to chapt. 12; but its connection with that scene, which forms a new and quite distinct vision, is much less immediate than with the preceding." Roloff, 103–104, 138–140, states on p. 139: "A large caesura lies between 11:19 and 12:1. . . . In 11:19, the first part of the visions has reached its end. . . . This series of visions beginning with 12:1 is not a continuation, but a complementary supplement of everything heretofore. John makes a fresh beginning to portray the end event from a different perspective." See also Barbara Wootten Snyder, "Combat Myth in the Apocalypse: The Liturgy of the Day of the Lord and the Dedication of the Heavenly Temple" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California at Berkeley, 1991), 97. James Valentine, "Theological Aspects of the Temple Motif in the Old Testament and Revelation" (Ph.D. dissertation, Boston University, 1985), declares on pp. 265–266: "Rev. 11:19 is the climax of all of chs. 1–11, but especially of chs. 4–5. . . . Just as in 4:1ff, the author is able to see the throne through the open door in the heavenly temple, so in 11:19 the temple in heaven is opened and the ark of the covenant is seen. . . . A new prophecy begins at 12:1." On p. 270, he remarks: "Rev. 11:19 forms an inclusion with 4:1ff, bringing to a climactic end the first half of the book." See further, Robert W. Wall, *Revelation*, New International Biblical Commentary, vol. 18 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 155.

⁴⁴See, for example, Alfred Loisy, *L'Apocalypse de Jean* (Frankfurt: Minerva, 1972), 221; C. Mervyn Maxwell, *God Cares*, vol. 2 (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1985), 58–61, 309–310; Paul S. Minear, *I Saw a New Earth: An Introduction to the Visions of the Apocalypse* (Washington, DC: Corpus, 1968), 96–97, 105, 114, 117; Strand, "The Eight Basic Visions," 114; John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ: A Commentary*. (Chicago: Moody, 1966), 186; Wendland, 378, 380; and Michael Wilcock, *The Message of Revelation: I Saw Heaven Opened*, The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1975), 110.

⁴⁵See, for example, M. Robert Mulholland, *Revelation: Holy Living in an Unholy World* (Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury P of Zondervan, 1990), 211, 214. Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament: with a Critically Revised Text: a Digest of Various Readings: Marginal References to Verbal and Idiomatic Usage: Prolegomena: and a Critical and Exegetical Commentary. For the Use of*

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

(4) Finally, the suggestion is made that the seventh trumpet extends from Rev 11:15 to Rev 13:18⁴⁶ or even further.⁴⁷

In any case, there is almost general agreement that something new starts with Rev 12. A woman and a dragon are introduced in Rev 12. In Rev 13, the dragon empowers a beast from the sea. Then a beast from the earth arises and instigates the inhabitants of the earth to establish an image of the beast. The dragon and the beasts belong together and form a counter-trinity. The woman is opposed to that trinity. Clearly, this is a new part of Revelation. The major evil powers enter the scene. Later in Revelation, they will exit in reversed order (Rev 17-20).

However, another significant feature indicates that a new part of the book starts. It is a literary device, namely, the structuring vision formula. The importance of the formula καὶ εἶδον has already been stressed. Yet, at the end of Rev 11 and the beginning of Rev 12, the aorist passive of ὀράω instead of the aorist active is used to designate a new section. It is the formula (καὶ) ὤφθη (“it was seen”). This formula occurs just three times in Revelation: Rev 11:19; 12:1; and 12:3.⁴⁸

Thus, a new part of Revelation starts with Rev 12—actually with Rev 11:19, for it is introduced by Rev 11:19.⁴⁹ The unique formula (καὶ) ὤφθη connects Rev 11:19 with Rev 12. A further link between Rev 11:19 and Rev 12:1-3 is the phrase ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ in Rev 11:19; 12:1; and 12:3.

Taking a closer look at Rev 11:19, one detects that this verse is a fitting introduction to the next major part of Revelation. Rev 4–5, the introduction to the seven seals, reports a throne scene. According to Rev 7:15, throne and temple are related and belong together. Thus, indirectly the heavenly temple is in view in Rev 4–5. The same is true for Rev 8:2–6, the introductory scene to the seven trumpets. Utensils of the sanctuary are mentioned in this passage, and in Rev 9:13 the golden altar is still seen. Rev 11:19 uses the word ναός twice. John is allowed to see the innermost part of the heavenly sanctuary containing the ark of

Theological Students and Ministers. In Four Volumes. Vol. IV. Part II. Containing the Epistles of St. John and St. Jude, and the Revelation, 3d ed. (London: Rivingstons, 1866), 666, calls it “concluding and transitional.”

⁴⁶See Hahn, 154. Charlier, 1:204–205, 256–257, takes this decision, but in his opinion, “la septième trompette introduit quatre séquences” (256). The first consists of Rev 11:15–12:12 and has the following elements:

- A Liturgy (11:15–18)
- B Vision (11:19–12:9)
- A’ Liturgy (12:10–12).

⁴⁷See the discussion on the third woe in E. Müller, 383-385.

⁴⁸It seems that Charlier, 1:263, and J. Ramsey Michaels, *Interpreting the Book of Revelation*, Guides to New Testament Exegesis (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 63, are the only ones, besides this study, who have made this observation.

⁴⁹See, for example, François Rousseau, *L’Apocalypse et le milieu prophétique du Nouveau Testament: Structure et préhistoire du texte* (Tournai: Desclée, 1971), 196.

MUELLER: RECAPITULATION IN REVELATION 4–11

the covenant. All three introductory scenes have their setting in the heavenly temple and influence the respective subsequent visions.

Yet, there are two more connections between the introductory scenes. The phrase *καὶ ἠνοιγῆ ὁ ναὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ καὶ ὤφθη* (“And God’s temple in heaven was opened, and it was seen . . .”) in Rev 11:19 reminds one of Rev 4:1: *μετὰ ταῦτα εἶδον, καὶ ἰδοὺ θύρα ἠνεωγμένη ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ* (“After this I saw and behold a door was opened in heaven”).⁵⁰ In Rev 4:1, John sees in a vision an open door in heaven. In Rev 11:19, the temple in heaven is opened, and John sees a vision.

Furthermore, four of the five elements mentioned in Rev 11:19, namely flashes of lightning, voices, thunders, earthquake, and a heavy hail, also occur in Rev 8:5. Only the hail is missing there. Three of them—flashes of lightning, voices, and thunders—are found in Rev 4:5. These elements are thus fitting components of introductory scenes. An intensification takes place, however, the farther one gets in the Apocalypse. Therefore more elements are mentioned with each major part of Revelation.⁵¹

The introductory scene Rev 11:19 is linked to the succeeding material by the formula *(καὶ) ὤφθη* and the phrase *ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ*. Thereby one knows that a new section has started and that the trumpets end with Rev 11:18. On the other hand, Rev 11:19 is not totally identical with the next few verses, otherwise it could not function as an introductory vision, or this vision would also comprise the next few verses. But Rev 11:19 is different from Rev 12:1 and Rev 12:3, because the term *σημεῖον* is only applied to the two latter verses. Furthermore, the focus of Rev 11:19 is on an object—the ark of the covenant—whereas with Rev 12:1 and Rev 12:3 the focus is on living creatures, a woman and a dragon.

The Beginning of the Fourth Part of Revelation

Scene	Vision Concept	Prelude	Focus Location
Scene 1: (11:19)	<i>καὶ ὤφθη</i>	temple opened: the ark of the covenant	<i>ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ</i>
Scene 2: (12:1–2)	<i>ὤφθη</i>	a great sign: a woman clothed with the sun	<i>ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ</i>
Scene 3: (12:3)	<i>καὶ ὤφθη καὶ ἰδοὺ</i>	another sign: a great red dragon	<i>ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ</i>

In addition, the term *ὁ ἐρχόμενος*—occurring elsewhere in Revelation in the tripartite formula of the divine name “who is and who was and who is to

⁵⁰See also Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 1-7: An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1992), 335.

⁵¹See Lambrecht, 93–94.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

come”⁵²—is omitted in Rev 11:17. That in this verse God is designated only as the one “who is and who was” points to the fact that he now has come and that the end of world history has arrived. Since the consummation cannot be surpassed, a new part of Revelation must start with the end of Rev 11. At the same time, Rev 11:18 summarizes final events that are described more extensively in the following chapters of Revelation. In other words, although several parts of Revelation can definitely be delimited, they nevertheless are not unrelated to the rest of Revelation. One part of Revelation paves the way for the next part.⁵³ Recapitulation takes place.

In conclusion, the seven trumpets apparently start with Rev 8:2 and end with Rev 11:18. Rev 11:19 already belongs to the next part, functioning as an introductory sanctuary scene.

The usual outline suggested for the third septet in the Book of Revelation consists of (1) an introduction (Rev 8:2–6), (2) six trumpets (Rev 8:7–9:21; 4+2+ later 1 more), (3) a twofold interlude (Rev 10 and Rev 11:1–13), and (4) the seventh trumpet (Rev 11:15–19).⁵⁴ The outline of this study does not differ substantially from the one just mentioned

At the same time, Rev 8:2–11:18 seems to form a chiastic structure⁵⁵ with regard to the place of action (see below). The septet starts in heaven and ends in heaven. The introduction and the seventh trumpet have a heavenly setting while also mentioning the earth. The remaining six trumpets have an earthly setting. Taking, however, a closer look, one can notice certain movements. In the first

⁵²For example, in Rev 1:4,8; 4:8.

⁵³For example, at the end of Rev 3 an open door and the throne of God occur, found again in Rev 4–5. The fifth seal contains elements pointing to Rev 8:2–6. Leonard L. Thompson, “The Mythic Unity of the Apocalypse,” in *Society of Biblical Literature 1985 Seminar Papers*, ed. Kent Harold Richards (Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1985), 21–24, in an important article, opts for “soft boundaries” in Revelation. He notes: “Although the seer marks his boundaries well, often as battle lines, those boundaries are not hard and impenetrable borders over which nothing passes. Rather they are ‘soft’ boundaries through which transformations or modulations occur” (21).

⁵⁴See, for example, Gourgues, 313; D. W. Hadorn, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes*, Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament, vol. 13 (Leipzig: A. Deichertsche Verlagsbuchhandlung D. Werner Scholl, 1928), 99; Alan Johnson, “Revelation,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 12:414; George E. Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 15–16; and Ulrich B. Müller, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes*, Ökumenischer Taschenbuchkommentar zum Neuen Testament, vol. 19 (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1984), 8–9. Barbara Wooten Snyder, 89–98, tries to see a broader picture and therefore goes beyond the limitations of this septenary. On p. 89, she suggests a chiasm which reaches from Rev 10 to Rev 13 as well as a “parallelism”—as she calls it—reaching from Rev 10 to 12. She perceives a major break in the book between Rev 11 and 12 (ibid., 98). Furthermore, the opposition between the mighty angel in 10 and the dragon points toward the tentative conclusion that the angel is the lamb (ibid., 91–92).

⁵⁵Charlier, 1:205–206, also suggests a chiastic structure. In his opinion, the boundaries of this septenary comprise Rev 8:2–14:5. By counting the verses, he finds Rev 11:8 right in the middle of the septenary, dealing with the crucifixion of the Lord. Thus, the center of the chiasm is to be located in Rev 11:1–14, entitled death and resurrection.

MUELLER: RECAPITULATION IN REVELATION 4–11

four trumpets, a movement from heaven to earth is discernable. This corresponds with the sixth trumpet and its expansion. In the fifth trumpet, a movement from abyss to earth can be found. However, the sixth trumpet, including the expansion, surpasses the first four insofar as it also contains a reversed movement, namely, from earth to heaven. It even briefly hints at a movement from abyss to earth, fully developed within the fifth trumpet.

The Structure of Rev 8:2–11:18

- (1) Introductory scene (heavenly setting—8:2–6)
- (2) The seven trumpets (8:7–11:18)
 - (a) The first four trumpets (8:7–12)
 - (b) The three woes (8:13–11:18)
 - (i) First transitional statement (8:13)
 - (ii) The fifth trumpet (9:1–11)
 - (iii) Second transitional statement (9:12)
 - (iv) The sixth trumpet (9:13–11:13)
 - The trumpet proper (9:13–21)
 - First expansion: John and the scroll (10:1–11)
 - Second expansion: measuring of the temple, two witnesses (partly heavenly setting—11:1–13)
 - (v) Third transitional statement (11:14)
 - (vi) The seventh trumpet as conclusion (heavenly setting—11:15–18)

The Chiastic Structure of Rev 8:2–11:18

- A Introductory scene: Heavenly scene, but the earth is mentioned (8:2–6; voices)
- B The first four trumpets: Movement from heaven to earth (8:7–12)
- C Fifth trumpet: Movement from abyss to earth (9:1–11)
- B' The sixth trumpet and its expansion: Movement from heaven to earth and from earth to heaven (9:13–11:13)
- A' The seventh trumpet as conclusion: Heavenly scene, but the earth is mentioned (11:15–18; voices)

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The Servant-Master Roles of the Laws of Christ, of Scripture, and of Nature

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This article is the third in a series on a model for theology which is inclusive of revelation in Christ, Scripture, and nature. In this model, Scripture has a unique role that belongs only to Scripture. However, Christ and nature also have roles in faith and practice, as Scripture teaches. According to Scripture and Seventh-day Adventist theology, there is a harmony among the divine revelations in Christ, Scripture, and nature.¹ The thesis of this article is that there are servant-master roles for the laws of Christ, of Scripture, and of nature in Christian faith and practice. The law is a servant of God which rules as a master over those who are without faith in Christ. However, for those who through faith are exalted with Christ, the role of law is transformed. The law, which is a servant of God, functions as a servant rather than as a master of those who have faith. This article surveys the history of the interpretation of Paul's statements about the laws of Christ, Scripture, and nature (part 1). Then it surveys Paul's actual references to the law (part 2), especially in Galatians 3:24–25 (part 3). Finally, this article surveys Ellen G. White's Seventh-day Adventist perspective on the servant-master roles of law (part 4).

Part 1: History of Interpretation

The servant-master roles of the laws of Christ, Scripture, and nature may be presented with advantage against the background of the history of the interpretation of Paul's writings. The history of the interpretation of

¹ See Martin Hanna, "Science and Theology: Focusing the Complementary Lights of Jesus, Scripture, and Nature," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 6/2 (Autumn 1995): 6-51; "Pre-Advent Explosion of Knowledge: Scripture Authority and Plural Revelations," *Issues in Theology and Spiritual Leadership: Journal of the Department of Religion and Theology at Northern Caribbean University*, 1 (1999): 11-35.

HANNA: THE SERVANT-MASTER ROLES OF THE LAWS

Paul's statements about the laws of Christ, Scripture, and nature will be surveyed here in terms of (1) new law or new relations to law, (2) Jewish views of law, and (3) the laws of nature or the elements of the world.

New Law or New Relations to Law. Thomas Aquinas (a father of Catholic Scholasticism) interprets Paul's statements on law in terms of an old law and a new law. On one hand, human attempts to control sin by the old covenant law are ineffectual. On the other hand, grace accompanied by the giving of the new covenant law in Christ transforms nature and supplies the change of heart needed to act virtuously and to merit eternal life.²

In contrast, Martin Luther (a father of the Protestant Reformation) interprets Paul's statements on law in terms of a new relationship to the law. The law restrains sin and crushes human righteousness. On one hand, the righteousness of Christ frees us from law, since works are inadequate for righteousness, which comes only with justification by faith. On the other hand, the Christian is both righteous and sinner. Thus, while the Christian conscience is free from law, the flesh must be subject to and disciplined by the law.³

Jewish Views of Law. Traditional Protestant views of Paul's teaching on law focus on the issue of legalism. The legalistic enemies of the Reformation were equated with the legalistic enemies of Paul. However, many contemporary scholars conclude that Judaism is wrongly viewed as a legalistic contrast to justification by faith.⁴

Frank Thielman documents a diversity of views in first century Judaism which were not all legalistic. The law was viewed as (1) distinguishing Jews and Gentiles, (2) showing election, (3) punishing the lawless, and (4) waiting for divine intervention in people's hearts, the dwelling of the Spirit among them, the restoration of their fortunes, and the acquittal of the obedi-

²After the Reformation, Aquinas' views continued to enjoy wide reception among Catholics in their responses to Luther (Frank Thielman, *From Plight to Solution. A Jewish Framework for Understanding Paul's View of the Law in Galatians and Romans*. Supplement Novum Testamentum 61 [Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1989], 15-18). After Aquinas, there have been four major approaches to this issue: (1) justification by faith (Luther, Calvin); (2) Greek philosophy (Tübingen school, Baur); (3) Hellenistic religions (History of Religions School, Deissmann, Reitzenstein, Bousset); (4) Apocalypticism (Schweitzer, Dodd, Cullmann) (C. Marvin Pate, *The End of the Age Has Come: The Theology of Paul* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995], 22-34).

³Stephen Westerholm, *Israel's Law and the Church's Faith: Paul and His Recent Interpreters* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 4-12. There is a great debate over whether a study of Martin Luther is helpful or harmful for an understanding of Paul's view of the law. However, there is unanimity, if often begrudged, in the view that a study of Luther is essential to understanding the scholarly debate about Paul (Westerholm, 3). See Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*. Vols. 26 & 27, ed., J. Pelikan (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1963-64).

⁴Thielman, 24; Westerholm, 34.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

ent. "All of these convictions about law are addressed in Paul's letters. Some of them he affirms, some he reshapes, and some he rejects."⁵

Other scholars emphasize variously Paul's affirmation (E. P. Sanders), reshaping (Hans Schoeps), or rejection of Jewish views on law (Albert Schweitzer).⁶ Some suggest that Paul meant to exclude law as a path to faith (W. G. Kümmel, Krister Stendahl). Others conclude that Paul regards the law as a preparation for faith (Stephen Westerholm).⁷ Some view the

⁵Thielman, 68.

⁶Sanders argues that Paul and Rabbinic Judaism are actually in substantial agreement as to the rule of law but are divided over the role of Jesus Christ. Despite the halakic (law explaining) nature of much Rabbinic literature, the common denominator of Jewish thought is "Covenantal nomism," whereby Israel's place is determined by the covenant. Obedience is a proper response to grace. The covenant is unconditional, divine grace and human merit are compatible, and in judgement, perfect or even 51% righteousness is not required, but only membership in the covenant. E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), xi, xii, 1, 81, 119, 135, 147, 149, 157, 204, 551; "The Covenant as a Soteriological Category and the Nature of Salvation in Palestinian and Hellenistic Judaism," in *Jews, Greeks, and Christians: Studies in Honor of W. D. Davies*, ed. R. Hamerton-Kelly, R. Scroggs (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976), 11-44. Hans Schoeps argues that Paul's view of law is rooted in but goes beyond Judaism, which regards the Torah as law and doctrine, limiting sin, bringing life, impossible of total obedience, given in the presence of angels, and weak because of the flesh. Paul saw the law (*nomos*) as simply law (apart from doctrine), promoting sin and death, given by angels, beyond the power of repentance, and abrogated (as the Jews expected it would be when the Messiah came). Jesus ushered in the expected Messianic age, not only as the suffering servant (expected by the Jews) but as the divine Son of God. National Israel rejected Christ and was replaced by a new Israel including the Gentiles without requiring that they become Jews. Thus the law was a custodian intended to bring the Jews to Christ. Hans Schoeps, *Paul: The Theology of the Apostle in the Light of Jewish Religious History* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961). Schweitzer relates Paul's polemic against Jewish opponents to the issues of bondage to the rule of elements of the world and to the rule of Jewish Law. Paul's doctrine of redemption is eschatological, mystical, and juridical. It involves deliverance from the rule of angelic powers and from the rule of the law they mediated, which is designed for the natural rather than the supernatural realm. Albert Schweitzer, *Paul and His Interpreters* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1950, 1912); *The Mysticism of the Apostle Paul* (New York: Seabury, 1931); *The Quest for the Historical Jesus* (New York: Macmillan, 1968).

⁷W. G. Kümmel argues that Paul's view of law is evident in that his conscience was not depressed with regard to the law. The "I" in Rom 7 is rhetorical, portraying the lot of humanity. Paul's aim is to defend the law as holy, in spite of its relation to sin. The problem is a contrast between the holy nature of the rule of law and the sinful nature of humanity, even when they think that they have kept the law (Westerholm, 52-58). See W. G. Kümmel, *Römer 7 und das Bild des Menschen im Neuen Testament* (Munich: Christian Kaiser, 1974), 36-87, 104-117, 134-160. Stendahl argues that Paul's Jewish and Christian piety is untroubled with regard to law (Phil 3:6; Acts 23:1; 1 Cor 4:4; 2 Cor 1:12; 5:11; 12:7, 10; Gal 4:13). Paul's concerns were his role among Jews and Gentiles and the relations between them. Stendahl notes that the transition from the age of law to the age of faith is a process in every believer. Paul's concern was to place Jews and Gentiles on common ground as equally culpable under law and equally graced with justification. Augustine used Paul to address the Western introspective conscience. Luther used Paul to address how to find a gracious God (K. Stendahl, *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976]). Westerholm argues: (1) Though Paul believes that

HANNA: THE SERVANT-MASTER ROLES OF THE LAWS

“righteousness of the law” either as good (U. Wilckens), bad (Rudolph Bultmann), or indifferent (E. P. Sanders).⁸ Others propose that in Paul’s writings there is both discontinuity and continuity between law and faith.⁹

law points to Christ and righteousness by faith, he regards Sinaitic law as based on works which are not a perversion of law. (2) Sin has made law inoperative as a means to life. Justification excludes any role for works. (3) Law originates from God and increases sin as a prelude to the revelation of Christ. The plight of Jews and Gentiles without Christ is the same. Law is a preparatory stage in salvation history. Yet, its rule/bondage remain a reality. (4) Christian ethics correspond to the law. Yet, law has no abiding validity. Christians fulfill law but are not obligated by its precepts. Life in the Spirit is contrasted to obligation to law which is a covenantal obligation only on Israel (Westerholm, 106, 142, 176, 199). In brief, Westerholm argues (1) distinction of Scripture and law, (2) law demands impossible works, (3) law increases sin and need for the gospel rather than foreshadows the gospel, (4) obligation to and fulfillment of law are incompatible, (5) law is for Israel not the world. This article suggests that (1) distinction between law and Scripture does not involve disharmony between them (2) law does foreshadow gospel, (3) obligation and fulfillment are compatible, and (4) law is for Israel and the world. Bandstra argues: bondage to law may be expressed in different ways, in the high religious zeal of the devout Pharisee (Phil. 3:3ff.), or among those whose god is their belly (Phil. 3:19), or those who exchange the glory of the immortal God for images (Rom 1:23), or among those who are wise according to the world (1 Cor 1:26, Col. 2:8) (Andrew J. Bandstra, *The Law and the Elements of the World: An Exegetical Study in Aspects of Paul’s Teaching* [Amsterdam: J. H. Kok N. V. Kampen, 1964], 70-71).

⁸For Wilckens, Paul suggests a rule of law in faith which is a works righteousness based on Judaism. This righteousness was neglected by Jews, who concluded that Gentile sin leads to damnation and Jewish sin is countered by covenant. Paul holds that none can be justified by law, for all have sinned. Thus, justification by faith in Christ is needed. Yet, faith is not opposed to works and does not free the believer from obligation to law. Justification delivers from sin’s consequences/condemnation. The inoperative rule of law toward life is replaced by God’s righteousness. Law as God’s will remains, and believers are intended to fulfill it in the Spirit and in love. Cultic/ritual commands are abrogated, but the law is not done away. Judgment by works is valid. Only when evil has worked itself out, either on the doer or on a substitute provided by God, is it done away. Bultmann’s view is in some respects similar to Wilckens’. Law demands obedience which seeks life and security in the Creator. Humanity misunderstands the law’s promise of life and seeks its life and righteousness by doing what law requires. The person who fulfills law is as much in need of grace as the one who does not, for no one can fulfill the law entirely. Christian morality fulfills law as a statement of God’s will. This is not meritorious accomplishment but submission to God. Freedom from law indicates freedom to distinguish the ethical from the ritual/cultic (Westerholm, 70-78). Sanders rejects aspects of Bultmann’s and Wilckens’ views and incorporates elements from others. He argues that: (1) Jewish boasting was not of achievement of righteousness but of covenant privilege (see Wilckens); (2) the Jews did not observe the law in the wrong way, rather they rejected Jesus (see Schoeps); (3) righteousness by obedience to law is a “gain,” but it is loss in comparison to righteousness by faith in Christ (see Westerholm and Wilckens). Sanders rejects Wilckens’ view on universal sin, arguing that Paul is inconsistent (see Räisänen); suggesting that sin’s dominion is the result of transgression (see Romans) and the result of being in the flesh (see Galatians). For Sanders, Paul’s problem is that people are not under the lordship of Christ. Thus, Paul does not reject the law because it cursed Christ, or out of a frustrated search for righteousness by law (see Kümmel), or because the messianic age had come (see Schoeps). Rather, when asked concerning conditions of membership in the body of Christ, he said no to the law (see Luther, Stendahl, and Wilckens); when asked about Christian behavior he said: ful-

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

The Laws/Elements of the World. Andrew J. Bandstra has surveyed the interpretation of Paul's references to law in terms of the "elements of the world" (Gal 4:3). Prior to and during the New Testament period, the word element took on a wide variety of specific meanings, such as inherent component, fundamental, basic, power, or force. Scholars have proposed interpretations of the elements of the world as: principles by which the world exists and/or functions, component parts of the world, or personal forces behind the world.¹⁰

First, many scholars have interpreted Paul's references to the laws or elements of the world in terms of principles of one kind or another. These proposed elements include: (1) principles of the world and of Scripture which are weak and even evil apart from their proper spiritual use (Luther); (2) the Mosaic law (Greijdanus), which had an elementary nature correlated with the immature circumstances of humanity prior to Christ (De Wette); (3) the beginnings of Jewish and heathen humanity and religion (Ellicott, Weiss, Meyer); (4) rudimentary instruction in material things (Lightfoot, Moule); (5) the elementary knowledge of the heathen (Ewald); (6) impersonal principles related to harsh slavery rather than positive preparation for

fill the law (see Luther, Wilkins, and Bultmann). E. P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983).

⁹(1) Discontinuity—because justification by faith delivers from the law (Luther); because mystical faith union in Christ elevated the Christian into the new age (Schweitzer); or because Paul's view of faith is a rejection of Rabbinic Judaism (Montefiore); (2) continuity—for Jewish Christians (Stendahl, Gaston) or all Christians (Cranfield and Dunn); and (3) discontinuity and continuity—because of a shift in Paul's theology (Drane), because of irreconcilable contradictions in Paul's theology (Räsänen), or because of the overlap of two ages in Paul's eschatology (Thielman) (Pate, 125-136). These same categories are discussed by C. Thomas Rhyne in *Faith Establishes the Law* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981), 8-23.

¹⁰Bandstra, 46. "Christians—in baptism—have put off the body of flesh (Col 2:12, 13), and therefore are to put to death their members which are upon the earth (3:5). From such parallel usage, it appears likely that here in Colossians, as in Galatians, the Apostle thinks, not [primarily] of personal spirits, but primarily of law and the flesh as the two basic components of the world" (Ibid, 68-69). See also Herold Weiss, "The Law in the Epistle to the Colossians," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 34 (1972): 294-314. Paul proclaims that these elements shall have passed away (1 Cor 15:24) at the time of the end, and that they have been defeated in Christ (Col 2:15). Nowhere does he speak of believers having died to them. The Apostle does assert that Christians have died to the law (Gal 2:19; Rom 7:4). In light of Paul's reference (in connection with the elements) to questions of food and drink, feast days, new moons, and sabbaths, which are only a shadow of what is to come (Col. 2:16, 17), it seems at least probable that the elements could also include the law (Ibid). Being under the curse of law results from failure to submit to law (cf. Rom 8:7), and service to the elements of the world constitutes submission to cosmic powers (Charles H. Cosgrove, "The Law and the Spirit: An Investigation into the Theology of Galatians," Ph.D. Thesis, Princeton Theological Seminary, 1985, 209). Christ's creation, redemption, headship, and victory over spiritual powers is important (Col 1:16, 20; 2:10, 15). However, the elements are not cosmic beings to the exclusion of law. They "might be reckoned among the fundamental forces inherent in the world." (Bandstra, 68). They include human nature with its philosophy and religious traditions (2:8, 20).

HANNA: THE SERVANT-MASTER ROLES OF THE LAWS

Christ (Ridderbos); (7) temporal succession as the demonic and tyrannical basis of legal tradition, cosmological principles, or philosophy (Torrance); (8) elements of power and legal ordinances suited to elementary education (Schippers); (9) elementary education in faith (Grant); (10) elementary education and celestial bodies (Knox); (11) outward, external, and visible things (Williams); (12) astrological elements or obedience to law (Berkhof).¹¹

Second, other scholars have interpreted Paul's references to the laws or elements of the world in terms of cosmology. These proposed elements include: (1) the earthly, worldly or material (Neander, Zahn, Kögel); (2) the flesh as the motivating element (Blom); (3) the present material world in contrast with the future spiritual world (Hofmann); (4) material things from a religio-ethical standpoint (Kurze); (5) Epicurean atomism (DeWitt); (6) heavenly bodies as in Stoic reference to signs of the Zodiac (Van Wagenin-gen, Colson).¹²

Third, some scholars have interpreted Paul's references to the laws or elements of the world in terms of personalized cosmology. These proposed elements include: (1) spiritual powers, angels, elemental or astral spirits, gods or demons (many Church Fathers, Klöpffer, Spitta); (2) angelic mediators of Jewish law (Ritschl); (3) personalized heavenly bodies (some Church Fathers, Hilgenfeld, Holsten, Diels); (4) elemental spirits (Spitta, Everling, Hincks); (5) spiritual beings who influence the world (Dieterich); (6) spirits or angels working through the world (Reiche); (7) angels (Percy, Masson, Daniélou); (8) astral and elemental spirits (Haupt, Bultmann, Dieterich, Deissmann, Dibelius, Pfister, Abbott, Jones, Easton, Hatch, Radford, Bauer, Langton, Lietzmann, Lochmeyer, Duncan, Allan, Macgregor, Richardson, Leivestad, Caird, Lump); (9) angelic powers who rule the planetary spheres and mediate the law and hostile powers in opposition to God (Bruce).¹³

Summary. The need for careful study of the servant-master roles of the laws of Christ, Scripture, and nature is evident in the fact that scholars have interpreted Paul's use of the term law in many contradictory ways. These views raise a number of issues, such as: a change in law, and a change in relations to law; legalism and justification by faith; affirmation, reshaping, or rejection of Jewish views on law; whether law is a path to faith; continuity and/or discontinuity of law and faith; righteousness of the law as good, bad or indifferent; and principal, cosmological, or personalized-cosmological views of the elements/laws of the world. Now that the history

¹¹Also elements of the world in contrast to elements of the new creation (Lagererantz), and fundamental principles (Arndt, Gingrich). See Bandstra, 13-23.

¹²Bandstra, 17, 24.

¹³Bandstra, 18-19, 25-29.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

of the interpretation of Paul's view of law has been surveyed, part 2 of this article will describe Paul's actual use of the term law.

Part 2: Paul's Use of the Term Law

The concept of servant-master roles of the laws of Christ, Scripture, and nature is an inclusive concept. It proposes different types of roles for law (servant-master roles) and different categories of laws (laws of Christ, Scripture, and nature). This inclusive concept of the roles of law is supported by Paul's teaching in various epistles. A survey of Paul's actual usage of the term law should "give as much attention to those letters in which the law is not a bone of contention as to those in which it is, and as much attention to Paul's allusive references as to his explicit statements."¹⁴ (Many of Paul's references to law in Galatians will be surveyed in part 3 below).

This article proposes harmonious servant-master roles for the laws of Christ, of Scripture, and of nature. This description of Paul's perspective on law is a simplification of the great diversity among the references to law in his writings. This simplification is warranted in light of the fact that Paul's use of the term law is characterized by unity in diversity.

First, Paul links the word "law" with various genitive nouns to form the following expressions which may imply a diversity of laws: for example, law of faith; law of works (Rom 3:27); law of a husband (7:2); law of God (7:22, 25; 8:7); law of my mind or of sin (7:23, 25); law of sin and death or of the spirit of life in Christ (8: 2); law of righteousness (9:31); law of Moses (1 Cor 9:9); and law of Christ (Gal 6:2). However, Paul aims to show how these laws relate to each other. For example, with regard to the laws of faith and works, on one hand, he writes that we were confined under law until faith was revealed (Gal 3:23). On the other hand, he writes that there is a law of faith (Rom 3:27) and that faith upholds the law (3:31).¹⁵

Second, there are also diverse patterns of use where other terms are parallel with law, indicating a specific law or aspect of law: "the law and the prophets" (Rom 3:21), law as specific commandment(s) (Rom 13:8-10;

¹⁴ Chinedu Adolphus Amadi-Azuogu, *Paul and the Law in the Arguments of Galatians: A Rhetorical and Exegetical Analysis of Galatians 2,14-6,2* (Weinheim, Germany: Beltz Athenäum Verlag, 1996), 11. No distinctions will be made between Paul's use or non-use of the article "the" with the word "law." Paul makes no such distinction in Gal 3:10-13, 17-24; 5:3-4; Rom 2:17-27; 5:13-14; 7; 10:4-5. See Thomas R. Schreiner, *The Law and Its Fulfillment: A Pauline Theology of Law* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1993), 33-34; also Michael Winger, *By What Law? The Meaning of Nomos in the Letters of Paul* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1992), 44-46.

¹⁵ Winger, 43-44. The referents of the uses of law with genitive nouns or to a general category of law is not clear. In at least two places law refers to a law other than Jewish law. In at least three places law does not refer specifically to any law. In at least two places law is generic, law as such (Ibid, 86).

HANNA: THE SERVANT-MASTER ROLES OF THE LAWS

7:7–13), the letter and spirit of the law (Rom 7:6; 2 Cor 3:5–6). Here a unity in diversity is evident when in Rom 3:21 Paul writes that the righteousness of God has been manifest apart from law, but immediately adds that “the law and the prophets bear witness to it. Of the letter and the spirit of the law, Paul writes: we are discharged from the letter of the law, dead to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new life of the spirit (Rom 7:6, 14).¹⁶

Third, there are patterns of use which show a diversity of characteristics of law. The law is verbal (10 times); perceived (3 times); a standard for judgment (17 times); a guide (23 times); a controller (31 times); it is tied to a people (17 times); it has a source (6 times); and people put themselves under it (6 times).¹⁷ In each case, connections among these components are found in the immediate context, indicating unity. For example, Paul regards the law as verbal in the revelation of law to Gentiles (written in the heart—Rom 2:14–15) and in the revelation of law to Jews (the oracles/words of God—3:1–2).¹⁸

Fourth, the unity of the law is evident in spite of the tension between Paul’s reference to the law as Jewish¹⁹ and as divine.²⁰ On one hand, Paul

¹⁶ “These passages take us beyond the merely puzzling into major theological issues: the nature of faith, of righteousness, and of the spirit, issues which thus become intertwined with the nature of law.” “Underlying all of these difficulties is a question which Paul himself does not address . . . : what does Paul mean by “law” . . . ?” (Winger, 2; also 32-34).

¹⁷ Winger, 34-40. Winger suggests that “all seven of these components belong together, and together constitute a single meaning of *nómov* as it is used in Paul’s letters.” (40). See Rom 2:12-14, 23, 25, 27; 3:19-20, 27, 31; 4:13-16; 5:13, 20; 6:14-15; 7:1-9, 12, 14, 16, 21-23, 25; 8:2-4, 7; 9:31; 10:4-5; 13:8, 10; 1 Cor 9:8-9, 20; 14:21, 34; 15:56; Gal 2:16, 18-19, 21; 3:2, 5, 10-13, 17-19, 21, 23-24; 4:4-5, 21; 5:3-4, 14, 18, 23; 6:2, 13; Phil 3:5-6, 9 (Winger, 32-64).

¹⁸ Nevertheless, Paul refers to the Gentiles as not having the law (2:14). In a sense the Gentiles have the law of God in nature (2:14-15), and in a sense they do not have the law of God as revealed to the Jews (2:17; 3:1-2). This apparent contradiction may be clarified by consideration of Paul’s references to divine law, Jewish law, and natural law.

¹⁹ In every letter his [Paul’s] first reference to *nómov* is accompanied by a marker that this *nómov* is specifically Jewish” (i.e. Gal 2:14-16) (Winger, 97). We do not have direct evidence for what Jewish law is in its broadest sense, but only for what it includes (Winger, 95). References to Jewish law may be clear (58 times—Rom 2:12-18, 20, 23, 25-27; 3:19, 21, 31; 4:16; 5:13, 20; 7:7, 12, 14; 8:4; 9:31; 10:5; 13:8, 10; 1 Cor 9:8, 20; 14:21, 34; 15:56; Gal 3:12, 17, 19, 21, 23, 24; 4:4, 21; 5:3, 14; 6:13; Phil 3:5, 6, 9), probable (37 times—Rom 3:20, 21, 28; 4:13, 14, 15; 6:14-15; 7:1, 4-9, 16; 8:3; 10:4; Gal 2:16, 19, 21; 3:2, 5, 10, 11, 13, 18; 4:5; 5:4, 18, 23); alternative Jewish law (2 times—Gal 3:21); ambiguous (2 times—Rom 7:2-3) classes of laws, with genitive (15 times—Rom 3:27; 7:2, 22, 23, 25; 8:2, 7; 9:31; 1 Cor 9:9; Gal 6:2); non-Jewish law (4 times—Rom 2:14-15; 5:13; Rom 7:21) (Ibid, 89-90). In 32 references to Jewish law it includes specific legal provisions (Rom 7:7; 13:8, 10; 1 Cor 9:8; Gal 5:14); legal provisions in general (Rom 10:5; Gal 3:12); fore-tellings (Rom 3:21; 1 Cor 14:21, 34); judgments (Rom 3:10-19); narratives (Gal 4:21); and the law at Sinai (Rom 5:13, 20; Gal 3:17, 19, 21). The latter excludes Scripture as a common denominator for the term law by its specific reference to 430 years after the promise. For Paul, law most often refers to Jewish law. In the

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

hints at (but does not declare) a sense in which Jewish law is separate from God. For example the Jewish trust in the righteousness of the law is contrasted with the righteousness which is of God by faith of Christ (Phil 3:9; see also discussion of Gal 1:14–16; 2:19; 3:19–20; 4:4–5 in part 3). On the other hand, Paul never says that the words of Jewish law are from man; rather, he cites them as authoritative. God and law are linked in his argument that the doers rather than the hearers of the law are just before God (Rom 2:13), and that God is dishonored and blasphemed by the breaking of the law (2:23–24). Paul also implies that there will be divine judgment according to the law and the gospel (2:15–16). Finally, he explicitly refers to the law as belonging to God: with the mind I serve the law of God (7:25); the carnal mind is not subject to the law of God (8:7).²¹

Fifth, the unity of the law is evident in spite of the tension between Paul's reference to the law as divine as well as natural. Paul's refers to elements/rudiments of the world which are weak and related to observances of days, months, times, and years, as is the law (Col 2:6–23; Rom 6:19; 8:3; Gal 4:3–10). Yet Paul counts "law among the worldly powers and in such close conjunction with the flesh, without denying its divine origin and spiritual character."²² In Paul's writings, the law is divine as well as natural (Rom 1:18–20; 2:10–16).²³

majority of these (63 references), Jewish law is identified with Judaism either directly, negatively, or indirectly (Winger, 95-97).

²⁰ Paul may seem ambivalent about God's relation to Jewish law (Winger, 102). Paul's identification of the law as Jewish may explain in part why Paul often seems to describe the law negatively. Up to Gal 3:13-14, Paul has not given any praise to the law, or described it as from God. The law seems to be the enemy of the gospel. It does not justify (2:16) or bring the Spirit. It reigns over life in the flesh (3:2-3) and is a temporary restrainer (3:23). It is not given a positive role, but promotes personal and relational slavery (4:1ff; 5:16-21), raises superstition and moral sin (4:9-10 and 5:19-21), and allows exaltation in the flesh, i.e., for human religious lords (4:17; 5:12-13). The issue is whether or not this seemingly negative attitude toward law is concerned with the law as Jewish or with the Jewish misconception of the law. Both Midrash and Mishnah involved what might be called the Judaization of the Tanak. That is, in Judaism the Tanak came to be interpreted in order to further and illuminate the self-understanding of the Jews and to preserve their identity.

²¹ Winger, 99-101.

²² Bandstra, 72.

²³ On one hand, Paul regarded the world as the good creation of God which was invaded by sin (Rom 1:20; 5:12-14; 1 Cor 4:9; 8:4, 15ff; 8:5-6; 15:44-49; Eph 1:4; Phil 2:15). On the other hand, Paul uses the term "world" (*cosmos, aion*) to refer to all which stands over against God because of sin (1 Cor 1:20, 21, 27-28; 2:6-8; 3:18-19; 2 Cor 4:4; Gal 1:4; Eph 2:2; 2 Tim 4:10; Tit 2:12; Rom 12:2) and is in need of reconciliation to God in Christ (2 Cor 5:19). See F. W. Danker, "Romans v.12: Sin Under Law," *New Testament Studies* 14 (1967-68): 424-39; T. F. Morris, "Law and the Cause of Sin in the Epistle to the Romans," *Heythrop Journal* 28 (1987): 285-91; L. E. Keck, "The Law and 'The Law of Sin and Death' (Rom 8:1-4): Reflections on the Spirit and Ethics in Paul," in *The Divine Helmsman*, 41-57, ed. J. Crenshaw, S. Sandmel (New York: Ktav, 1980). "Compared with Christ and His new order of things, the . . . [world] is "vain" or "weak" and ineffectual for salvation, even when considered in its tempo-

HANNA: THE SERVANT-MASTER ROLES OF THE LAWS

In summary, an inclusive concept of servant-master roles of God's laws is supported by the fact that Paul's use of the term law is characterized by unity in diversity. There are different laws, aspects of law, and characteristics of law which are interrelated in a unity of law. For example, Jewish, natural, and divine law may be distinguished but not separated from one another. However, the servant-master roles of the law need to be further clarified. Part 3 of this article examines Paul's epistle to the Galatians in order to clarify the servant-master roles of the laws of Christ, Scripture, and nature.

Part 3: Servant-Master Roles of Christ, Scripture, and Nature

The harmony among the servant-master roles of the laws of Christ, Scripture, and nature may be demonstrated by a study of Galatians 3:24–25. The King James Version uses the word schoolmaster to translate the Greek word *paidagogos* in Gal 3:24.

However, in the ancient world the *paidagogos* was usually a servant who was given authority as master over immature children. Therefore, the translation of *paidagogos* as servant-master illuminates Paul's message in Galatians.²⁴

rary aspect. It is open . . . to the possibility of sin and cannot, by its own resources, overcome sin. But we should not confuse or identify this state of existence with that which is inherently and positively evil" (Bandstra, 52). By reconciliation in Christ, Christians are placed in a new relation over against the world (Gal 6:14) in that they are part of a new creation (Gal 6:15; 2 Cor 5:17). However, they continue to make discriminate use of the world (1 Cor 5:10; 7:31) while they wait for the coming world (*aión*) (Eph 1:21; 2:7), which is the liberation of the present world (Rom 8:19ff.). Abraham's seed inherit the world (Rom 4:13), which belongs to Christians, who belong to Christ, who belongs to God (1 Cor 3:22). Paul uses the word flesh in similar ways to his use of the word world. In harmony with Is 31:3, the flesh is weak in contrast to the spirit. We cannot be made perfect in the flesh (Gal 3:3), which leads to death (Rom 6:6). As such, flesh cannot inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor 15:50ff.). In Gal 6:14, Paul refers to his crucifixion to the world as a rejection of any attempt to glory in the flesh by circumcision. "Now circumcision was not, for Paul, a 'positive evil'; it was merely 'ineffective,' 'without power,' 'weak,' in terms of attaining salvation. Thus 'world' should here be viewed, not as something positively or structurally evil in itself, but as that sphere of activity that is weak and ineffectual for salvation, and open to the awful possibility of glorying in one's self rather than in God." (Bandstra, 54-55). (This is also evident in the prayer of Jesus that his disciples be in the world but not off the world [John 17:15-16]).

²⁴Norman H. Young, "The Figure of the *Paidagogos* in Art and Literature," *Biblical Archaeologist*, 53 (1990): 80-86; "Paidagogos: The Social Setting of a Pauline Metaphor," *Novum Testamentum*, 29 (1987): 150-176; David T. Gordon, "A Note on *Paidagogos* in Galatians 3:24-25," *New Testament Studies*, 35:1 (1989): 150-154; Anthony T. Hanson, "The Origin of Paul's Use of *Paidagogos* for the Law," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, 34 (1988): 71-76; Richard N. Longenecker, "The Pedagogical Nature of the Law in Galatians 3:19-4:7," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 25 (1982): 53-61; J. W. MacGorman, "The Law as *Paidagogos* : A Study in Pauline Analogy," *New Testament Studies*, (1975): 99-111; Edwin M. Yamauchi, "Slaves of God," *Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 9:1 (1966): 31-49.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

The discussion of Galatians presented in this part of the article may be previewed as follows. First, the law is a *servant* of God which rules as a *master* over those who don't have faith. The law is a *servant-master to bring us to Christ* that we might be justified by faith (Gal 3:24). Scripture "shuts up together" (*sugkleio*) all who are without faith in Christ under sin and under law (3:22–23) and under the elements of the world (nature)(4:3).

Second, after faith is come, we are *no longer under a servant-master* (Gal 3:25). When we have faith in Christ we are liberated from under sin, law, and the elements of the world. Christ is our *master* who humbles Himself to be our *servant*. So His law, as manifest in Scripture and in nature, is our *servant*.

Third, therefore, faith in Christ is not contrary to laws of Scripture or the laws of nature. Faith works by love (Gal 5:6) to fulfill all the law (5:14), which is the law of Christ (6:2; also Rom 3:31). Those who have faith in Christ are sons of God with the authority of Christ—their *master*. However, like Christ, they become *servants* (Gal 6:2, 5, 16; also Rom 1:9; 7:6; 16:18) and fulfill the law of Christ.

The three part discussion previewed above will be further developed under the following headings: (1) Under the Law and the Elements, (2) No Longer Under the Law and the Elements, and (3) Faith Works by Love. This will show that faith in Christ is not contrary to the laws of Scripture or to the natural laws or elements of the world.

Under the Law and the Elements

Many interpreters of Paul perceive the condition of being under the law in totally negative terms. However, Paul presents the concept of being under the law in both negative and positive terms. This is evident in Paul's five diverse but related references to being "under law" in the book of Galatians. (1) According to Gal 3:10–14 (cf. Deut 21:23)—to be under law is to be under the curse of the law because of sin. However, (2) the curse of being "under law as servant-master" can lead to faith and Christ (Gal 3:23–25). (3) Christ came to be under law to redeem those who are under law (4:4–6). (4) The law itself says to those under its curse that they may be free in Christ (4:21–5:1). (5) Those who are led by the Spirit are not under the curse of the law (5:16–24).²⁵

The negative aspect of Paul's discussion of being under law is highlighted in that he not only includes sinners but also the law among the "all things" which are, according to Scripture, shut up under sin (Gal 3:22–23). The law as a slave gives birth only to slaves (4:21–31). Paul does not deny the positive authority of the law to curse sin and sinners (3:23). However,

²⁵L. L. Belleville, "'Under law': Structural Analysis and the Pauline Concept of Law in Galatians 3:21- 4:11," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 26 (1986): 56. In another Epistle Paul actually claims to be under the law to Christ—1 Cor 9:19-23.

HANNA: THE SERVANT-MASTER ROLES OF THE LAWS

he does deny that the law has the dynamic power to produce life (3:21).²⁶ (Elsewhere, Paul writes positively of the law as “holy, righteous and good” [Rom 7:12]. However, negatively, the law is contrary to a relationship with God [vv. 7–11] *because sin manipulates the law to evoke disobedience* [v. 13] *in those who are in the flesh* [v. 14]). Paul states this negative function of law even more strongly when he writes that the law was added for the sake of transgressions (Gal 3:19). (There is a close parallel here with Rom 5:20: the law entered that the offense might abound).²⁷

Paul uses similar negative and positive language to refer to being under the law and being under the elements of the world. (1) Even Gentiles are under the curse (Gal 3:13–14) and in bondage under the elements of the world (Gal 4:3–9) and under the law (3:23; 5:23–25). (2) Positively, the elements of the world and the law are not sinful; but negatively, they are weak and beggarly (4:3, 9) and “open to and defenseless before sin.”²⁸ (3) Christians have died or been crucified to the elements of the world (Gal 6:14; Col 2:20). Similarly, there is a crucifixion through the law and to the law. Paul testifies: “I through the law am dead to the law that I might live unto God” (Gal 2:19). This is linked with his testimony: “I am crucified with Christ” (2:20).²⁹ (4) Positively, the elements of the world were the guardians and managers of Israel (and by implication the Gentiles) prior to

²⁶ Responsible for the righteousness of those under its rule, it is powerless to make them alive and deliver them from a cosmos shut up under sin; hence its very authority goes into effect to seal their fates” (Cosgrove, 199-200). Law was added because of transgressions and is impotent to give righteousness or life (Gal 3:19-21) (Pate, 137-143). “If the question is put whether the deliverance from the sphere of law [as servant-master] . . . has the same emphatic character as death to the world and death to sin, the answer must be affirmative. But a further question, often overlooked in this context, remains. Is the reality of the law and its meaning in salvation history altogether summed up in this image of the . . . [servant-master]? Or does the apostle here treat the law only in a particular aspect?” (Cosgrove, 192). In referring to a “discontinuity between existence under the [law] . . . and being in Christ,” Paul has in mind a specific function of the law (Cosgrove, 192). His negative statements do not refer to the law but to a function of law. In Galatians Paul argues that: “The Law itself is in need of liberation from the grip of sin so that it can perform its original purpose of fostering friendship between humans and their God” (Pate, 93).

²⁷ Schreiner argues that Paul may not be referring to the restriction of transgressions by the law because of the negative view of law in the remainder of Galatians. Also he may not be referring to the law's function as the definer of sin because the context requires the interpretation of law as cause of sin (Schreiner, 74-81). This article argues that the law is not the cause of sin but the basis of the imputation of sin. In other words, where there is no law sinners could not be held responsible for sin. The terms “under the elements of the world” (4:3), “under a pedagogue” (3:25), and “under guardians and managers” (4:2) are also parallel but are specially discussed in other sections of this article.

²⁸ Bandstra, 55.

²⁹ There is also similarity in (a) crucifixion to and resurrection in the flesh (5:24; 2:20), (b) being under the law and in the flesh (5:16-18), and (c) in righteousness without the law, witnessed by the law (Rom 3:21) and “the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us” (8:4).

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Christ (4:2–3) as was the law (3:24). Also, Christ was made under law to redeem those under bondage to the law and under bondage to the elements of the world (4:1–10).³⁰

(5) The law and the elements of the world are related to observances of days, months, times, and years (Gal 4:9–10; Col 2:6–23; Rom 6:19; 8:3). The semantic links between Gal 4:10 and Gen 1:14 may indicate: (a) deliverance from negative submission to the cosmos (1:4) through (b) crucifixion to the cosmos (6:14), (c) positively, participation in a new creation rule for faith and practice within the cosmos (6:14–15; 2 Cor 5:17).³¹

In brief, the servant-master laws and elements are inclusive of the laws of Scripture and nature. Paul refers to being under the law and the elements in a multiplicity of ways both positive and negative. Positively, the law is a servant-master to bring us to faith in Christ. Negatively, being under the law is equal to being under sin. Finally, there is a close relation between the concepts of (1) being under the law and the elements and (2) being no longer under them. The second concept will be further explored below.

No Longer Under Law and Elements

It is often assumed that Paul's reference to being no longer under the law or the elements indicates a purely negative attitude to the law and the elements. However, this section will provide evidence to show that deliverance from under the law and the elements within Christian faith includes fulfillment of the laws of Christ, Scripture, and nature. This involves a survey of Paul's view of two ages/worlds, and two covenants.

Two Ages/Worlds. The sense in which Christians are no longer under the law or under the elements of the world may be clarified by Paul's discussion of the present age which is passing away and the future age which is coming into existence. Explicit age (aeon) vocabulary occurs in Gal 1:4 concerning deliverance from the present evil age. Later Paul replaces the term "age" with the term "world" (*kosmos*). He writes of bondage under the

³⁰Bandstra, 71. The same holds true for the flesh (as for the world and the law). (1) Jerusalem and her children according to the flesh are in bondage (Gal 5:23, 25). (2) The law is weak through the flesh (Rom 8:3); and the weakness of the flesh causes weakness in judgment and in effort (Rom 6:19; 2 Cor 10:3-4). (3) Christians have put off the flesh (Col 2:11) and been crucified to the flesh (Gal 5:24). (4) humanity was in debt to the flesh (Rom 8:14) (Bandstra, 71). See Winger, 99-101; Bandstra, 55, 70-71; R. Jewett, "The Law and the Coexistence of Jews and Gentiles in Romans," *Interpretation* 39 (1985): 341-356; J. Louis Martyn, "A Law-Observant Mission to Gentiles: The Background of Galatians," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 38 (1985): 307-324; Krister Stendahl, *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles and Other Essays* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976); Hendrikus Boers, "'We Who Are by Inheritance Jews; Not from the Gentile Sinners,'" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 111 (1992): 273-81.

³¹Schreiner, 77-81.

HANNA: THE SERVANT-MASTER ROLES OF THE LAWS

elements of the world (Gal 4:3) from which he is delivered because he is crucified to the world (6:14).³²

In Paul's discussion of the evil age and world there is no suggestion that the law or the old age/world is abolished when the new age/world begins. Paul does not describe the death of Christ so much as destroying the old age as delivering from the present evil age (Gal 1:4) which is under the continuing judgment of God's law. Paul writes: when the fullness of time was come God sent His Son to redeem those who were under the law by replacing the curse of the law with the blessing of the Spirit (Gal 3:13-14; 4:4-6). Far from accomplishing the end of the law, Christ has redeemed those who are under law both before and after His first Advent.

The law continues to have a function in the new age/world within faith which works by love to fulfill the law (Gal 5:14). With the advent of the messianic age/world and its gift of the Spirit, God's people are now capable of obeying the law. Christians are to fulfill the law of Christ (Gal 6:2).³³ That the laws of Christ, Scripture, and nature are harmonious is a central theme which will be further developed in this article. To fulfill the law of Christ is to fulfill the laws of Scripture and nature.

The terms servant-master, guardian, and manager have a temporary sense while the law and the elements of the world minister to one who is an immature child (*nepios*). These functions cease in Christ when human beings become full-fledged sons (*uios*) of God (Gal 3:19-4:7). However, the suggestion that the ability of law to exercise these functions has ended seems to be based on an overly literalistic view of Paul's language. These functions have not come to an absolute temporal limit in salvation history. There has been no end to the function of law as a servant of God. Rather, when a person exercises faith in Christ, the function of law as master comes to an end.³⁴

Deliverance from the age/world that is passing away does not mean that the passing age/world no longer exists or functions. Similarly, deliverance

³²See also 1 Cor 1:20; 2:6, 8; 3:18-19; 7:29-31; 10:11; 2 Cor 4:4; Rom 12:1-2; Eph 1:21; 2:2; Col 2:8. Deliverance from under law includes deliverance from under natural law. Also, apart from Eph 1:21 Paul does not specifically label the future era as the "age to come." He prefers to write of the future kingdom of God (1 Cor 6:9; 15:50; Gal 5:21; Eph 5; 1 Thess 2:12; 2 Tim 4:1, 18) (Pate, 44). Pate comes close to suggesting that because the OT prophets looked forward to a future era of obedience to the law they were also stating by implication that the law could not be obeyed in their age (Pate, 138-139). The Hebrew language of the OT suggests a contrast between the qualities of the present age (*olam hazzeh*) and the coming age (*olam habbah*). The matching NT (Greek) terms are *ho aion* and *ho aion mellon*.

³³Pate, 141.

³⁴Schreiner, 77-81; Pate, 139-140; Thielman, 76, 78-79; Cosgrove, 197. Belleville emphasizes a contrary perspective. "This is not to say that existence under the law is positive or negative. In Paul's thinking it was merely necessary" (Belleville, 60). She considers a structural parallelism between "under sin" and "under law," a distinction between "Scripture" and "law" (Ibid, 57-59).

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

from under the law does not mean that the law no longer exists or functions. Faith does not take the Christian out of the world. It changes the Christian's relation to the world. Faith does not abolish the law. It changes the Christian's relation to the law. Christians make use of the world and the law as their servants even though they are no longer under the world or under the law as under a master. Christ is their Master.

Two Covenants. As with his discussion of two ages or worlds, Paul's discusses a shift from the old to the new covenant. At the same time he discusses a continuing function of the law and the elements of the world in faith and practice. On one hand, the continuity of God's plan of salvation is evident in that Paul links the new covenant Gospel with the Abrahamic Covenant which was introduced before the Advent of Christ. Therefore, in a sense, Old Testament believers were in Christ and New Testament believers are in Abraham. Those who are redeemed by Christ receive the blessing of Abraham (3:13–14) and are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the Old Testament promise (3:29). Hence, there is no tension between the laws and gospel of Old Testament Scripture and the laws and gospel of New Testament Scripture.

On the other hand, the continuity of God's plan of salvation has been questioned by some because Paul seems to write negatively of the Old Testament Mosaic covenant. He refers to the Mosaic covenant as an interim covenant given before the promise of the Abrahamic covenant was fulfilled. He indicated that the Mosaic law is limited (2:16; 3:2–6, 8, 10, 21; 5:16, 18). It is not the apex of God's covenant with his people nor does it repeal the Abrahamic covenant. The covenant and promise which God confirmed before in Abraham cannot be canceled by the law which came 450 years later (3:16–18).³⁵ Also, in Paul's allegory, the two covenants represent the distinction between the earthly and heavenly Jerusalem, flesh and promise, bondage and freedom, flesh and spirit (Gal 4:21–31).³⁶

However, Paul's comment on the mosaic law and covenant do not undermine the continuity of the plan of salvation. Paul's statements may be seen as a response to a misunderstanding of the law and covenant. In Gal

³⁵ Law belongs to the penultimate and is misconstrued if treated as a *source* of the ultimate. Since law contains the promise, law is not abolished by the promise. Christians are not under the curse. "Since the *righteousness* of the law's curse, by which captivity under the law is sealed, is not impugned, the law's relevance for the church as an expression of divine righteousness is in no way precluded" (Cosgrove, 202).

³⁶ The Abrahamic or new covenant was ratified at the death of Christ. However, when Christ destroyed the curse of the law he did not abolish the law itself. Rather he resolved the conflict between promise and law and destroyed the curse of the law in himself. He also destroyed the use of the law as a barrier between Jew and Gentile. Many scholars presume that while the OT is Paul's *sola scriptura*, the gospel is his *regula*; the core of his reading is the gospel (Galatians 1.6ff.). "He has a 'canon within the canon'" (Sanders, *Paul, the Law and the Jewish People*, 162).

HANNA: THE SERVANT-MASTER ROLES OF THE LAWS

2:15–21 he describes Jewish covenant law in human terms, as the *way of life* of the Jewish people rather than the command of God. He also describes the authority of law as under the authority of the Jews who don't actually keep the law (Rom 2:17–29).³⁷ Among the things that have ceased in Christ is the Jewish “illusion” of separation from Gentiles according to the law. The knowing which arises from faith recognizes that the law was never intended as a means to fulfill the promise of life (Gal 3:21) and that the divisions which this misunderstanding of law fostered have been destroyed “in Christ Jesus” (3:28). “The separatist understanding of the law is awry; God’s purpose for the law was otherwise” (3:19–22).³⁸

Therefore, for Paul the mosaic law and covenant does not actually exist in “*disconnection from the promise*” of salvation by faith (Gal 3:19, 24).³⁹ The Mosaic and Abrahamic covenants are not actually two different ways of salvation, one based on works and the other on faith. Such an understanding of gospel and law is a misunderstanding, because Paul did not see the Mosaic law as contrary to the promises of God (3:21).

The continuity of the plan of salvation is also evident in Paul’s view that Christ fulfills both the Mosaic and the Abrahamic covenants. With Christ the fulfillment of salvation history has arrived, and believers are no longer under the mastery of law. However, this does not indicate that the role of the Mosaic covenant has ceased. The promises made to Abraham as well as the moral absolutes of the Mosaic law are fulfilled in Christ and His Church.

Paul regarded the Christian Church as the true Israel of God because it is the body of Christ, who is the expected Jewish Messiah to whom the rulership of the law pointed. The creation of the people of God is described as fulfillment, in God’s salvation deed in Christ, of the Old Testament promise of a New Covenant.⁴⁰ Paul’s use of the Old Testament indicates that he viewed all God’s covenants as covenants of grace and as fulfilled in Christ and the Church.

Paul views Christians as the eschatologically restored people of God about whom the prophets spoke, and he describes them with key features from the Mosaic covenant. He echoes Jeremiah’s and Ezekiel’s view of a restored Israel with a renewed ability and desire to keep the law of God because it is written in their hearts. In Gal 5:13–14 he uses an Old Testament summary of the law (Lev 19:18). Therefore we should not conclude that the

³⁷Winger, 158, 196, 198-199, 200. Paul usually designates the Mosaic law as law. However, he also uses the term “law” to refer to “principle,” “order,” “rule,” or “power,” “the law of Christ,” “Scripture.”

³⁸Cosgrove, 229-231.

³⁹Cosgrove, 197.

⁴⁰T. J. Deidun’s *New Covenant Morality in Paul* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1981), 32, 43-44, 50.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Old Testament law cannot be kept and is now in every respect part of a by-gone era.⁴¹

In brief, the law is a servant-master to bring us to Christ that we might be justified by faith (Gal 3:23–24). Those who have faith in Christ are no longer under the mastery of the law (3:25). However, this does not indicate that the law ceases to be the servant of those who have faith. When we have faith in Christ we are liberated from under sin, law, and the elements of the world. Christ is our master who humbles Himself to be our servant. So His law, as manifest in Scripture and nature, is also our servant.

Faith Works by Love

Paul makes it clear in Galatians that faith in Christ is not contrary to the laws of Scripture or nature. Those who have faith in Christ are sons of God with the authority of Christ—their master. However, like Christ, they become servants (Gal 6:2, 5, 16; also Rom 1:9; 7:6; 16:18) and fulfill the law of Christ. “Paul is always more concerned with discussing concrete moral/ethical issues . . . than with abstract intellectual faith.”⁴²

⁴¹Thielman, 124-139.

⁴²Edwin R. Freed, *The Apostle Paul, Christian Jew: Faithfulness and Law* (New York: University Press of America, 1994), 45. For Freed, faith in Jesus and the faithfulness of Jesus are equivalent in Gal 2:20; 3:22; Rom 3:22, 26; Phil 3:9. Note also “the faith of Abraham,” Rom 4:16. The function of law until faith means until Christ (Ibid, 89, 93, 95). “Faithfulness toward God was Paul’s primary concern . . . [I]f we judge by the amount of space he gives to any one subject, Paul’s main concern, along with faithfulness toward God, is the moral/ethical responsibilities of his readers” (Freed, 43). Paul not only emphasizes faithfulness but relates it to salvation. “Participation in the kingdom of God, whether perceived as a present or future phenomenon . . . depends on right moral conduct, life worthy of the kingdom” (Freed, 44-45). Some of Freed’s extreme statements may be qualified with profit by the words added in brackets below. “Any suggestion of faith [apart from faithfulness] as a requirement for entrance into the kingdom is entirely absent from the reported teachings of Jesus and in the letters of Paul [Rom 14:17; 1 Cor 4:20; 6:9-10; Gal 5:16-21].” “The justification or forgiveness of past sins of converts on the basis of the faithfulness of Jesus . . . through God’s grace and the reception of the Holy Spirit [apart from faithfulness] do not assure participation in the kingdom of God, whether perceived as a present or future phenomenon. That depends on right moral conduct, life worthy of the kingdom” (Ibid). “Paul’s primary concern is faithfulness toward God, with a simultaneous concern that Christian converts live moral/ethical lives under the power of the Holy Spirit. That dual concern is the central message in all Paul’s letters. And, according to Paul, moral/ethical probity is necessary for justified converts in order to gain ultimate salvation in the future” (Freed, preface; also 35). However, Paul does not suggest that human faithfulness merits salvation. “Conversion to Christianity through justification or forgiveness of past sins meant a change with respect to *pistis* [faithfulness]” (Freed, 30). It is James (2:14-26), not Paul who makes an antithesis of faith and works. For Paul, faith is the ‘obedience of faith’ which trusts in God rather than in self and works of the law. Paul’s interpretation of Abraham as father of those justified by faith is contrasted to the interpretation of Abraham as father of those justified by works as reflected in the Epistle of James. Nevertheless, for Freed, “the right or wrong conduct of a person always puts that person in a right or wrong relationship with God. As with Judaism, Paul never separates faithfulness from morality/ethics. In every letter he

HANNA: THE SERVANT-MASTER ROLES OF THE LAWS

In Galatians, Paul links true faith and love with a proper appreciation for law. He writes: faith works by love (Gal 5:6) to fulfill all the law (5:14), which is the law of Christ (6:2; also Rom 3:31). The law of Christ need not be conceived as different from the law that led to Christ (3:24). Gal 2:17–18 may be interpreted as follows: If when we seek to be justified with Christ we are found to be sinners [according to law], is Christ the minister of sin? God forbid! Rather, if I build again the things [sinful actions] which I had destroyed [in Christ] I make myself a transgressor.⁴³

Paul's linking of faith and obedience to law is also indicated in the concept of faithfulness. This concept is presented in his discussion of Abraham's faith. Those who are of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham because the just shall live by faith (Gal 3:6–11). Human faith may be viewed in terms of its source in God's faithfulness as well as in terms of its fruit in a life of faith. On one hand, "through Jesus" is parallel with "through faith." This is because the promise to Abraham concerns his seed Christ (3:14–19). On the other hand, the promise through "the faithfulness of Jesus" is given to those who "exercise faith" (3:22). The faithfulness of Jesus is the faith Paul preached (1:23) and the faith Paul lived. He testifies: I live by the faithfulness of the Son of God (2:20).

Both the faithfulness of Jesus and our faith in Him seem included in the following text from Galatians. "But before faith . . . we were shut up unto faith . . . [and] unto Christ [unto faith = unto Christ], that we might be justified by faith [faith in Christ or the faith of Christ] . . . After faith is come . . . we are children of God by [exercising] faith in Jesus [Gal 3:23–26]. Faith in Jesus allows us to participate in His faithfulness/righteousness. Christians are "justified . . . by the faithfulness of Jesus Christ" (2:16).

That the life of faithfulness involves obedience to the law is evident in Paul's linking of faith, love, and law. He writes: we wait for the hope of righteousness by faith which works by love and "fulfills the law" (Gal 5:5, 6, 14). For Paul, "love is the *total* formal content of the demand that is addressed to the members of the new holy People *as such*."⁴⁴ On one hand, love belongs to a sphere in which law is in a sense irrelevant, first, because the law does not prohibit love; second, because the Christian now lives no longer on the basis of human work but in the power of the Spirit of love.

is concerned with the moral lives of the people to whom he is writing" (Freed, 43). Paul is not concerned with the problem of faith *versus* faithfulness, but rather with the source of faith and faithfulness. It is not necessary to assume that Paul makes a demarcation between OT and NT or between promise and law, and between law covenant and gospel testament. Since, for Paul, the law is not based on promise, and since both law and promise are contained in Scripture. Paul does not use Scripture against Scripture.

⁴³Thielman, 140-143.

⁴⁴Deidun, 103.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Thus Paul writes that circumcision or uncircumcision avails nothing, but faith that works by love (5:6).⁴⁵

On the other hand, Paul links faith, love, and law through the Spirit. He writes: we wait for the hope of righteousness by faith which works by love and fulfills the law (Gal 5:5 6, 14). This faith is a fruit of the Spirit (5:22). Paul's understanding of *agapê* corresponds exactly with the Old Testament prophet Ezekiel's understanding of the outworking of the Spirit in the New Covenant (Ezek 36:27).⁴⁶ To be led by the Spirit (Gal 5:18) is to allow God to deploy His love in our actions (5:22). The coming of faith that works by love "does not mean that the *demand* expressed in the Law is laid aside. On the contrary, it is only in the economy of faith that the Law as the expression of God's eternally valid demand is brought to fulfillment" (5:14).⁴⁷ The 'fruit' of the Spirit, far from rendering superfluous or inappropriate the external word of God's law, *needs* it for its germination *and growth*.⁴⁸ The

⁴⁵Deidun, 118-119, 123-126.

⁴⁶Deidun, 135.

⁴⁷Deidun, 153. While it is clear that love is the supreme formal norm of all Christian activity, "Is it the only norm—and, if so, in what sense? Is the Christian subject to moral precepts which are so *obviously* specifications or explications of the love demand but nonetheless unconditionally binding? Does Paul intend any of his directives to have the force of precept? Does the 'free impulse of love' now replace or make redundant the dictates of the Christian's native moral conscience? What part, if any, does external law (ie. Obligations formulated or imposed by an external authority) play in the lives of those who now have God's 'law' written in their hearts (cf. Jer 31, 33), and his Spirit given them so that they are impelled by God to obey (cf. Ez. 36, 27)? . . . Is 'liberation from external law' a correct and adequate description of what Paul sees as the essential effect of the New Covenant and the distinctive feature of New Covenant morality?" (Deidun, 150-151). The claim of the law is not tied to the authority of the law in itself. Yet, "the Christian can always look to the Mosaic Law as the privileged historical expression of God's claim upon man" (Deidun, 154). "The Christian does not 'live by' a code of law . . . if by that is meant that he draws life from its observance[;] . . . that his love is contained within the limits of prescription[;] . . . that he avoids evil not because it is evil but merely because it is prohibited by law[;] that he seeks security in it and 'boasts' of his observance before God" (Deidun, 155). "But [this is] far from justifying the view that the Christian is no longer liable to the claim of particular precepts . . . or that the Christian who holds himself bound by such precepts . . . has thereby relapsed into 'unauthentic existence'" (Deidun, 155). "This intimate relationship between external commandment and inner imperative gives to Paul's injunctions a peculiar urgency and validity. As binding ethical demands, they no doubt deserve the name 'law'. Yet they are not *merely* demands, but authoritative *declarations* of what the Spirit is intent on effecting — and is already effecting — in the core of the believer's personality." (Deidun, 187).

⁴⁸Deidun, 210. "The immediacy of God's saving activity in the hearts of believers dominates his [Paul's] thought and constitutes for him a 'hermeneutical key' by which both to penetrate the mystery of Christ and to interpret the Old Testament prophecies and their fulfillment in the new People of God" (Deidun, 84). It is not true that for Paul "law, as a rule, does not enter upon the scene except to repress an existing disorder" (Lyonnet, "Liberty and Law," 251). "There is overwhelming evidence in the Letters that, for Paul, law enters upon the scene at the very beginning, and stays there, independently of any existing situation, for he sees the external demand as a *normal* and *integral* (we do not say 'supplementary' or 'complementary')

HANNA: THE SERVANT-MASTER ROLES OF THE LAWS

faith from hearing God's word (Rom 10:17) describes the *permanent* dialectic of Christian existence.⁴⁹

In summary, this section has provided evidence that deliverance from under law within Christian faith includes fulfillment of the laws of Christ, Scripture, and nature. Paul describes a continuing role for law in the new age/world, and the new covenant of Christ. Faith works by love and fulfills the law of Christ, which includes the laws of Scripture and nature. The law, which is a servant of God, rules as master over those who are without faith in Christ. However, for those who gain the mastery through faith in Christ, these same laws function as their servant. Part 4 of this article will demonstrate that the interpretation of Paul presented above is in harmony with the Seventh-day Adventist perspective represented in the writings of Ellen White.

Part 4: Ellen White's Seventh-day Adventist Perspective

In this part of this article Seventh-day Adventist theology as represented in the writings of Ellen White will be surveyed. White's writings are

part of Christian experience *as such*, and hence of New Covenant morality *as such*" (Deidun, 191). "God's gift and God's demand confront the Christian *both* in the *verbum internum* of the Spirit's impulse *and* in the *verbum externum* of the Apostles' *paraklêsis*, for both of these belong integrally to the one Gospel" (Ibid, 210).

⁴⁹Deidun, 211. "So within the gospel there is a *dialectical* relationship between the *verbum externum* (whether as *kerygma* or *paraklêsis*) and God's inner activity. The *verbum externum* makes possible God's inner intervention, and this in turn makes possible the reception of the *verbum externum*. For God's inner self-communication takes place *through* his confronting man in the word of the Gospel" (Ibid, 213-214). The hearing of faith opens the way to God's "interior intervention" in the heart of believers and continues to articulate the moral implications of God's "interior activity," and, "through appeal to the Christian's free self-engagement, 'calls forth the fruit of justification' which it produces: and this it does as a necessary and normal function of the Gospel." The interplay of God's external and internal activity "enters permanently into the relationship between God and man in the Christian economy" (Deidun, 213-214). Paul did not think "of the Spirit as normally supplying the Christian with *ad hoc* guidance in the manifold ethical decisions required of him in the concrete circumstances of daily living" (Deidun, 219). Rather, Paul himself exhorts the believers as to the type of lifestyle which is in harmony with the Spirit (Gal 5). Neither is love the sole ethical norm that Christians follow. "Love, in itself, is not a sufficiently articulated ethical norm for guiding the Christian in the manifold and often complex circumstances of daily life—even though it is true that all the Christian is required to do is to love" (Deidun, 220-221). "So the Christian who loves will, for that very reason, take the external law with a high degree of seriousness, for it has not only the negative rôle of mapping out the lower confines of love's demand, but also the highly positive one of continuously highlighting the implications of that demand. For from considering it an anachronism or an unfortunate necessity, genuine Christian love will look to it as a personal invitation to obedience and a way of pleasing the beloved" (Deidun, 223). Finally, neither is the imitation of Christ a sufficient norm. "Paul knew *many* other norms, which can only be reduced to the 'imitation of Christ' (if at all) by dint of rather long and complicated theological reasoning" (Deidun, 222). Christ is the subject of this faith that works by love (2:15-21). (Deidun, 118-119, 123-126).

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

regarded by SDAs as a lesser light under the authority of the greater light of Scripture and the supreme light of Jesus. The purpose of this survey is to show whether SDA theology is faithful to Paul's presentation of the servant-master roles of Christ, Scripture, and nature.⁵⁰ The subsequent sections will survey Ellen White's perspective in terms of (1) laws of Christ, Scripture, and nature, (2) being under law until faith in Christ, and (3) the law within faith in Christ.

Laws of Christ, Scripture, and Nature. Ellen White distinguishes between but does not separate Christ and law. "Christ presented the principles of the law of God" (Evan 230).⁵¹ "This whole sermon [on the mount] was an exposition of the law" (ST Jan 10, 1900).⁵² "The glory of the law is Christ" (2 MR 232).⁵³ "Christ, the angel whom God had appointed to go before his chosen people, gave to Moses statutes and requirements necessary to a living religion and to govern the people of God" (SARSH May 6, 1875).⁵⁴

Scripture, according to White, is God's law.⁵⁵ "The written word, [is] the law of God" (GC 268).⁵⁶ "Everyone should understand the Scriptures. 'What saith the law?'" (18 MR 174). "It is your privilege to search the Scriptures for yourself. 'To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not

⁵⁰Everett N. Dick, *Founders of the Message* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1938). On the metaphor of light see Ellen G. White, "An Open Letter," *Review and Herald* (January 20, 1903): 15, in *Colporteur Ministry* (Mountain View, CA.: Pacific Press, 1953), 125; Roger Coon, *A Gift of Light* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1983); William Clyde Sands, "Nature as a Biblical Hermeneutic Device: The Role and Use of Light in the Experience and Writings of Ellen G. White," M.A. thesis, Andrews University, 1989.

⁵¹*Evangelism* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1946).

⁵²*Signs of the Times*.

⁵³*Manuscript Releases* (Silver Springs, MA.: Ellen G. White Estate).

⁵⁴*Second Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*.

⁵⁵The doctrine of the Jews, who accept only the Old Testament, is not unto salvation, since they reject the Saviour whose life and ministry was a fulfillment of the law and the prophecies. And the doctrine of those who discard the Old Testament is not unto salvation, because it rejects that which is direct testimony of Christ" (*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, ed. Francis D. Nichol [Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1952-1957], 5:1094). "We should dwell on the law and the gospel, showing the relation of Christ to the great standard of righteousness. . . . the relation of Christ to the law" (ARSH Feb 4, 1890). In the Old Testament the very same principles were revealed as those which Christ gave in his sermon on the mount. The scribes and Pharisees knew so little of these principles through every-day practice, that Christ's sermon on the mount was as a new revelation to them, and sounded like heresy to their ears. They had misinterpreted the Scripture, and regarded the maxims and sayings of men that had passed to them from rabbi to rabbi, as having the sanctity of inspiration. But the commands of men were not like the divine commands, and better suited their carnal hearts. Jesus, who had instituted the law, knew just how far these professedly pious teachers had departed from the law, and how far they had made it void by their traditions. They had worshiped God in vain, "teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (ARSH Dec 25, 1894; see also *Welfare Ministry*, 48; ST Jun 5, 1901).

⁵⁶*Great Controversy* (Mountain View, CA.: Pacific Press, 1911), 268.

HANNA: THE SERVANT-MASTER ROLES OF THE LAWS

according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.’ We must be acquainted with the Scriptures ourselves” (LHU 114).⁵⁷

This relationship between Christ and law is inclusive of the ceremonial laws of Scripture. “Christ was the angel who . . . gave Moses the ceremonies and ordinances of the Jewish law to be repeated to the people” (SARSH Apr 29, 1875). “Christ was the foundation of the whole Jewish economy” (ARSH May 23, 1899). “Let not one declaim against the law of God, and let not one rail out against the sacrificial offerings. If men were abiding in Christ, if they had a knowledge of His relation to the law, they could not make a raid against the law. Christ Himself was the One who devised the system of the Jewish economy” (EGW 1888 Materials 782–783).⁵⁸

In addition, laws of nature are also identified by White as God’s law.⁵⁹ In fact, she identifies natural law, Scripture law, and the moral law as God’s law. “Every law governing the human system is to be strictly regarded; for it is as truly a law of God as is the word of Holy Writ; and every willful de-

⁵⁷*Lift Him Up* (Hagerstown, MD.: Review and Herald, 1988). “[Christ] pointed to the Scriptures as of unquestionable authority, and we should do the same. The Bible is to be presented as the word of the infinite God, as the end of all controversy and the foundation of all faith” (*Christ’s Object Lessons* [Washington, DC.: Review and Herald, 1952], 39-40). “God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms. The opinions of learned men, the deductions of science, the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils, as numerous and discordant as are the churches which they represent, the voice of the majority—not one nor all of these should be regarded as evidence for or against any point of religious faith. Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain ‘Thus saith the Lord’ in its support” (GC 595). “Scripture Interprets Scripture. All things written in the law and in the prophets are true, and they carry the proof of it in themselves. Nothing is gained by endeavoring to prove by argument the divine origin of the Bible. It is its own expositor. It carries its own keys; Scripture unlocks Scripture”—Ms 40, 1895, p. 2 (2 MR 96).

⁵⁸*The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials* (Washington, D.C.: Ellen G. White Estate, 1987).

⁵⁹Human knowledge of both material and spiritual things is partial and imperfect; therefore many are unable to harmonize their views of science with Scripture statements. Many accept mere theories and speculations as scientific facts, and they think that God’s word is to be tested by the teachings of “science falsely so called.” 1 Timothy 6:20. The Creator and His works are beyond their comprehension; and because they cannot explain these by natural laws, Bible history is regarded as unreliable” (Mar 135). However, “To make Natural law plain, and to urge obedience to it, is a work that accompanies the third angel’s message” (*Counsels on Health [Mt. View, CA: Pacific Press, 1995]*, 21). “The health reform is one branch of the great work which is to fit a people for the coming of the Lord. It is as closely connected with the third angel’s message as the hand is with the body. The law of ten commandments has been lightly regarded by man; yet the Lord will not come to punish the transgressors of that law without first sending them a message of warning. Men and women cannot violate Natural law by indulging depraved appetite and lustful passions, without violating the law of God” (CTBH 9; see 3 T 161; 3 T 51; MLT 162; CH 22; CH 68-69). “By hurtful indulgences these are working against their own highest interest and happiness in this life, and are, in so doing, disqualifying themselves to obtain the future life (HR Oct 1, 1871; see also 3 T 161).

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

violation from obedience to this law is as certainly sin as a violation of the moral law. All nature expresses the law of God, but in our physical structure Jehovah has written His law with His own finger upon every thrilling nerve, upon every living fiber, and upon every organ of the body. We shall suffer loss and defeat, if we step out of nature's path, which God Himself has marked out, into one of our own devising" (Tem 213–214).⁶⁰

The importance of obedience to God's natural law is outlined as follows. "As the Supreme Ruler of the universe, God has ordained laws for the government not only of all living beings, but of all the operations of nature. Everything, whether great or small, animate or inanimate, is under fixed laws which cannot be disregarded. There are no exceptions to this rule; for nothing that the divine hand has made has been forgotten by the divine mind" (1 SM 216).⁶¹ "The harmony of creation depends upon the perfect conformity of all beings, of everything, animate and inanimate, to the law of the Creator" (PP 52).⁶²

For White, on one hand, zeal for the law disconnected from Christ is valueless. "Paul was very confident in an hereditary piety; but his confidence was founded on falsehood. It was faith out of Christ, for he trusted in forms and ceremonies. His zeal for the law was disconnected from Christ and was valueless. His boast was that he was blameless in his performance of the deeds of the law; but the Christ who made the law of any value he refused" (1 SM 346).

On the other hand, for White, "the most fatal delusion of the Christian world in this generation is, that in pouring contempt on the law of God they think they are exalting Christ. What a position! In so doing, they array Christ against Christ. It was Christ who spoke the law from Sinai. It was Christ who gave the law to Moses, engraven on tables of stone. It was his Father's law; and Christ says, 'I and my Father are one.' The Pharisees held the reverse of the modern-position, but were in just as great an error. They rejected Christ, but exalted the law. And it makes little difference which position we take, so long as we ignore the true one,—that faith in Christ must be accompanied by obedience to the law of God" (SARSH Sep 27, 1881).

Under Law Until Faith in Christ. White's interpretation of Gal 3:24 identifies the law which brings human beings to Christ as inclusive of the moral law. She writes: "'The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith' (Gal 3:24). In this Scripture, the Holy Spirit through the apostle is speaking especially of the moral law. The law reveals sin to us, and causes us to feel our need of Christ and to flee

⁶⁰*Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain view CA.: Pacific Press, 1885-1909).

⁶¹*Selected Messages* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1958).

⁶²*Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, CA.: Pacific Press, 1913).

HANNA: THE SERVANT-MASTER ROLES OF THE LAWS

unto Him for pardon and peace by exercising repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 SM 234).⁶³

The ceremonial laws are also described as object lessons pointing to Christ. Note the following comment on the teaching of Christ. “He brought his hearers down through the types and shadows of the ceremonial law to Christ,—to his crucifixion, his priesthood, and the sanctuary of his ministry,—the great object that had cast its shadow backward into the Jewish age” (3 SOP 409).⁶⁴

White’s view of Jesus’ attitude toward the ceremonial and the moral law is beautifully summarized in the following quote. “Jesus would convince his enemies that his teachings and miracles did not supplant the law, detract from its dignity, or lessen its claims. His works were in strict accordance with both the moral and the ceremonial law” (SARSH Apr 29, 1875).

The Law Within Faith in Christ. According to White, the law is not only a servant-master to bring us to Christ. It also has a role to play within faith in Christ. Her perspective may be outlined in terms of the following headings: (1) Christians and Law, (2) Is the Law Void?, (3) Christ’s Cross Establishes Law, (4) Christ’s Cross Enables Obedience to Law, (5) Christ’s Righteousness and Law, (6) The Law of Love.

Christians and Law. For White, to be “no longer under law” does not mean that the Christian is lawless. Rather, the true Christian “has learned to be obedient to all the commandments of God, through Jesus Christ, who is made to him wisdom, sanctification, and righteousness” (ST Dec 28, 1891). “That so-called faith in Christ which professes to release men from the obligation of obedience to God, is not faith, but presumption” (SC 61).⁶⁵ We should “exalt the law of Christ’s kingdom by giving to it willing obedience” (FCE 511).⁶⁶ “That law is still the believer’s rule of life, the sinner’s condemnation” (SFLP 323–324). “No man can be saved unless he comes un-

⁶³These testimonies of the Spirit of God, the fruits of the Spirit of God, have no weight unless they are stamped with your ideas of the law in Galatians. I am afraid of you and I am afraid of your interpretation of any Scripture which has revealed itself in such an unChristlike spirit . . . [M]y prayer is that I may be as far from your understanding and interpretation of the Scriptures as it is possible for me to be. I am afraid of any application of Scripture that needs such a spirit and bears such fruit as you have manifested. One thing is certain, I shall never come into harmony with such a spirit as long as God gives me my reason” (13 MR 54). “Now, brethren, I have nothing to say, no burden in regard to the law in Galatians. This matter looks to me of minor consequence in comparison with the spirit you have brought into your faith. It is exactly of the same piece that was manifested by the Jews in reference to the work and mission of Jesus Christ. The most convincing testimony that we can bear to others that we have the truth is the spirit which attends the advocacy of that truth” (13 MR 54–55).

⁶⁴*Spirit of Prophecy* (Battle Creek, MI.: Review and Herald, 1884).

⁶⁵*Steps to Christ* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1908).

⁶⁶*Fundamentals of Christian Education* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1923).

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

der the rule of Christ. . . . It is our salvation to make His law our rule, His life our pattern, His glory our chief aim” (ST Nov 15, 1899).

This message is especially relevant just before the return of Christ. “God has brought out a people in these last days and has given to them a knowledge of his law. Christ has shed a flood of light upon their pathway, revealing himself as the invisible leader of Israel in both the Old and in the New Testament. Christ has made his people the depositaries of his law. They are to keep and to teach the commandments of God, and to show their binding obligations upon men. Christ has promised that to those who obey his commandments he will be as a pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night, guiding them in and lighting them along the pathway cast up for the ransomed of the Lord, that they may enter in at the gate of the eternal city” (ST Jan 24, 1895).

Is the Law Void? There are many who conclude that the law, which was a servant-master to bring us to Christ, has been abolished or made void now that Christ has come. White does not support such a conclusion.⁶⁷ She writes: “Adam and Eve became sinners because of transgression, and now the Lord has given to the world His only begotten Son—that He might abolish the law? that law that Adam transgressed? Do you read it thus? I do not” (9 MR 235).

In addition, “we have a work to do in the world . . . The law of God is made void. God calls upon us to stand in defense of this law” (ARSH Jul 23, 1901). “It was for the recovery of the law that Christ . . . lived out the law of God . . . This must also be our experience” (ST Jan 16, 1896).⁶⁸ While “the law of God will be almost universally made void in the world, there will be a remnant of the righteous that will be obedient to God’s requirements. . . . It is the people who make void the law, who place themselves on the side of the dragon, and persecute those who vindicate God’s precepts” (ST Apr 22, 1889).

Christ’s Cross Establishes Law. Quite contrary to the idea that the cross of Christ abolishes the law, White proposes that the cross establishes the law of God. With regard to the teaching of Paul, White writes: “The question was asked why such an immense sacrifice was required, and then he went back to the types, and down through the Old-Testament Scripture,

⁶⁷There are many who try to blend these two systems, using the texts that speak of the ceremonial law to prove that the moral law has been abolished; but this is a perversion of the Scriptures. The distinction between the two systems is broad and clear. The ceremonial system was made up of symbols pointing to Christ, to His sacrifice and His priesthood. This ritual law, with its sacrifices and ordinances, was to be performed by the Hebrews until type met antitype in the death of Christ, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. Then all the sacrificial offerings were to cease. It is this law that Christ ‘took . . . out of the way, nailing it to His cross.’ Colossians 2:14” (PP 365).

⁶⁸See ARSH Apr 29, 1902.

HANNA: THE SERVANT-MASTER ROLES OF THE LAWS

revealing Christ in the law, and they were *converted to Christ and to the law*" (6 STMW 55, emphasis mine).

White's perspective is evident in the following quotes. "The divine Son of God was the only sacrifice of sufficient value to fully satisfy the claims of God's perfect law" (LHU 24). "What means it that the divine Victim hangs there in dying agony?—It means that not one jot or tittle of the law could be set aside to save the transgressor of law" (ARSH Jul 5, 1892). "The death of Christ is an unanswerable argument that demonstrates the unchangeable character of the law of God. If God could have changed one precept of his law, then Christ need not have died" (ST Sep 23, 1889).⁶⁹ The transgression of God's law made the death of Christ essential to save man and yet maintain the dignity and honor of the law (FILB 104),⁷⁰ and its "high claims."⁷¹

"Men may talk of the law as a yoke of bondage; but the question of vital interest is, If you are found disobedient to God, can they pay a ransom for your soul? I beg of you, do not take the word of man that the law is abolished, for that law is as immutable as the throne of God. If the law could have been altered to meet man in his fallen condition, Christ need never have died. The cross of Christ is an unanswerable argument demonstrating the changeless character of the law. The very fact that Christ died establishes the law" (ST May 27, 1889).⁷²

Christ's Cross Enables Obedience to Law. For White, not only does the cross establish the law, it also enables believers to obey the law of God. "Christ came to our world and died a shameful death . . . to bring us into harmony with the law of Heaven" (ST June 2, 1890). "Think you that men,

⁶⁹Let us study God's law in connection with the work of Christ. Man broke the law. Christ came to this earth to make an atonement for transgression" (ST Jul 31, 1901). "The law cannot release the sinner from the consequence of his transgression, but Christ himself pays the penalty the sinner has incurred by his disobedience" (ST Jul 18, 1878).

⁷⁰*The Faith I Live By*. "More could not be done than has been done to demonstrate the immutability of God's law. Christ did not die to abolish the law or to detract in the slightest degree from its influence or power. He died to exalt the law and make it honorable" (ST Apr 14, 1898). "God has a standard of righteousness by which he measures character. This standard is his holy law, which is given to us as a rule of life. We are called upon to comply with its requirements, and when we do this, we honor both God and Jesus Christ; for God gave the law, and Christ died to magnify it, and make it honorable" (ST Sep 24, 1896). "Jesus had come to 'magnify the law, and make it honorable.' He was not to lessen its dignity, but to exalt it" (*Desire of Ages* [Mountain View, CA.: Pacific Press, 1898], 206).

⁷¹Christ is our hope. Those who trust in Him are cleansed. The grace of Christ and the government of God walk together in perfect harmony. When Jesus became man's substitute, mercy and truth met together, and righteousness and peace kissed each other. The cross of Calvary bears witness to the high claims of God's law" (ST Jul 31, 1901).

⁷²Not one precept of the law could be altered to meet man in his fallen condition; therefore Christ gave His life in man's behalf, to suffer in his stead the penalty of disobedience. This was the only way in which man could be saved, the only way in which it could be demonstrated that it is possible for man to keep the law" (ST Jun 13, 1900).

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, will be received into glory who break the precepts of that law which Christ came to magnify and make honorable by his death upon the cross?" (ST Apr 28, 1890).

White views this conclusion as necessary in order to avoid the implication that Christ is encouraging sin. "Was such an infinite sacrifice made by the Son of God for the purpose of perpetuating sin?—No; it was not possible" (ST Dec 28, 1891). "Christ did not die to encourage man in rebellion against God, but to provide a way whereby he might keep the whole law. His garment of spotless righteousness clothes the repenting, believing sinner. He is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption" (ST Jul 31, 1901).⁷³

White's view of the enabling power of the cross is very evident in the following quote. "It is the work of redemption to exalt that law, and Christ's great sacrifice was made in order that man might be a doer of that law. The law shows us our sins, as a mirror shows us that our face is not clean. The mirror has no power to cleanse the face; that is not its office. So it is with the law. It points out our defects, and condemns us, but it has no power to save us. We must come to Christ for pardon. He will take our guilt upon his own soul, and will justify us before God. And not only will he free us from sin, but he will give us power to render obedience to God's will" (ST Sep 24, 1896).

Christ's Righteousness and Law. Closely related to White's concept of the enabling power of Christ's cross, is her concept of Christ's righteousness and the law. "Everything that we of ourselves can do is defiled by sin. But the Son of God was 'manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin.' Sin is defined to be 'the transgression of the law.' But Christ was obedient to every requirement of the law. . . . By His perfect obedience He has made it possible for every human being to obey God's commandments. When we submit ourselves to Christ . . . we live His life. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness. Then, as the Lord looks upon us, He sees, not the fig-leaf garment, not the nakedness

⁷³This do, and thou shalt live,' Christ said. In His teaching He ever presented the law as a divine unity, showing that it is impossible to keep one precept and break another; for the same principle runs through all. Man's destiny will be determined by his obedience to the whole law" (LHU 154). "Sin is the transgression of the law. Christ was manifest in our world to take away transgression and sin, and to substitute the pure robes of His righteousness for the covering of fig leaves. The law of God stands vindicated by the suffering and death of the only begotten Son of the infinite God" (21 MR 194). "We are to look into the great mirror of God's law and see if our characters are condemned therein. If condemnation is resting upon us, we need not despair, for he has provided a way whereby we may not perish, but have pardon and life" (ST Mar 10, 1890).

HANNA: THE SERVANT-MASTER ROLES OF THE LAWS

and deformity of sin, but His own robe of righteousness, which is perfect obedience to the law of Jehovah (MLT 311).⁷⁴

The connection between Christ's righteousness and law is evident in many statements by White. "Our standard has been too low, and may the Lord help us that we may come as we are, and learn of his righteousness, that through his power we may be enabled to keep the commandments of God" (ARSH Jul 19, 1892).⁷⁵ "That law Christ, by His example, taught men to obey. The righteousness of the law is seen in His life" (SJ 61).⁷⁶ "The holy law itself rejoiced in Christ's righteousness. The living representation of the law, Christ, could look around on a nation of witnesses, and say, 'Which of you convinceth Me of sin?'" (21 MR 38). "Placing the righteousness of Christ in the law distinctly reveals God in His true character and reveals the law as holy, just, and good, glorious indeed when seen in its true character" (12 MR 190). "What exalted ideas of the law of God do we obtain as we behold Jesus fulfilling every precept, and representing the character of God before the world! It was by fulfilling the law that Christ made known the Father to the world" (ST Jan 2, 1896).

The Law of Love. Like the apostle Paul, White identifies God's law as a law of love. "Love is the law of Christ's kingdom" (MLT, 52). "Those who love God with all the heart, will love the law of his kingdom. . . . The law of God is to be lived out" (ARSH Aug 13, 1895). "The love of God

⁷⁴*My Life Today* (Washington: Review and Herald, 1952). "The law requires righteousness,—a righteous life, a perfect character; and this man has not to give. He cannot meet the claims of God's holy law. But Christ, coming to the earth as man, lived a holy life, and developed a perfect character. These He offers as a free gift to all who will receive them. His life stands for the life of men. Thus they have remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. More than this, Christ imbues men with the attributes of God. He builds up the human character after the similitude of the divine character, a goodly fabric of spiritual strength and beauty. Thus the very righteousness of the law is fulfilled in the believer in Christ. God can "be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Rom. 3:26 (DA 762; see also ARSH May 8, 1900).

⁷⁵Christ never reproved the Jews for keeping the law of God On the contrary, He ever upheld the law in all its completeness" (SJ 70).

⁷⁶By His own obedience to the law, Christ testified to its immutable character and proved that through His grace it could be perfectly obeyed by every son and daughter of Adam. On the mount He declared that not the smallest iota should pass from the law till all things should be accomplished—all things that concern the human race, all that relates to the plan of redemption. He does not teach that the law is ever to be abrogated, but He fixes the eye upon the utmost verge of man's horizon and assures us that until this point is reached the law will retain its authority so that none may suppose it was His mission to abolish the precepts of the law. So long as heaven and earth continue, the holy principles of God's law will remain. His righteousness, "like the great mountains" (Psalm 36:6), will continue, a source of blessing, sending forth streams to refresh the earth" (TFMB 49). "Those who truly follow Christ will keep God's commandments as he kept them" (ST Mar 4, 1897). "The law which Christ gave from the mount, and which he exemplified in his sinless life, is far-reaching in its character. It condemns every evil action, and demands perfect obedience" (ST Mar 4, 1897).

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

dwells in their hearts, as it dwelt in the heart of Christ, leading them to obey God's holy law" (ST Mar 3, 1898). "Kindness fulfills the law of Christ" (EGW 1888 Mat 1790).⁷⁷

For White, "obedience is not a mere outward compliance, but the service of love. The law of God is an expression of His very nature; it is an embodiment of the great principle of love, and hence is the foundation of His government in heaven and earth. If our hearts are renewed in the likeness of God, if the divine love is implanted in the soul, will not the law of God be carried out in the life? When the principle of love is implanted in the heart, when man is renewed after the image of Him that created him, the new-covenant promise is fulfilled, 'I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them.' Hebrews 10:16. And if the law is written in the heart, will it not shape the life? Obedience—the service and allegiance of love—is the true sign of discipleship" (SC 60–61).

White comments specifically on Paul's discussion of love in the book of Galatians. "The injunction of the apostle Paul is: 'Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.' Keeping the commandments of God requires of us good works, self-denial, self-sacrifice, and devotion for the good of others, not that our good works alone can save us, but that we surely cannot be saved without good works. After we have done all that we are capable of doing, we are then to say: We have done no more than our duty, and at best are unprofitable servants, unworthy of the smallest favor from God. Christ must be our righteousness and the crown of our rejoicing" (3 T 526).

Many other quotes from White emphasize the relation between law and love. "We have full faith in the Scripture that says, 'God is love;' and yet many have shamefully perverted this word, and have fallen into dangerous error because of a false interpretation of its meaning. God's holy law is the only standard by which we can estimate divine affection" (ARSH Jun 17, 1890). "That law Christ came to magnify and make honorable. He showed that it is based upon the broad foundation of love to God and men, and that obedience to its precepts comprises the whole duty of man" (SFLP 323–324).⁷⁸ "Our only definition of sin is that given in the word of God; it

⁷⁷Our spiritual strength and blessing will be proportionate to the labor of love and good works which we perform" (*That I May Know Him* [Washington, DC.: Review and Herald, 1964], 334).

⁷⁸The quote continues: "In his own life he gave men a perfect example of obedience to the law of God. In his sermon on the mount he showed how its requirements extend beyond the outward acts, and take cognizance of the thoughts and intents of the heart. That law, obeyed, will lead men to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live "soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Ibid)."Christ said to his disciples, 'Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.' What a startling declaration was this! It made manifest the insufficiency of legal or natural religion, and showed the need of moral renovation and the necessity of di-

HANNA: THE SERVANT-MASTER ROLES OF THE LAWS

is “the transgression of the law;” it is the outworking of a principle at war with the great law of love which is the foundation of the divine government” (GC 493).

Conclusion

The material presented in this article may be briefly summarized. Part 1 introduced the issue of servant-master roles of the laws of Christ, Scripture, and nature against the background of various interpretations of the writings of Paul. There are a multitude of conflicting interpretations of Paul’s references to law in terms of: changed laws or changed relations to law; legalism or justification by faith; affirmation, reshaping, or rejection of Jewish perspectives; whether or not law is a path to faith; continuity, and/or discontinuity of law and faith; righteousness of the law as good, bad or indifferent; and principal, cosmological, and/or personalized-cosmological interpretations of the laws or the elements of the world.

Part 2 supported the inclusive view of servant-master roles of Christ, Scripture, and nature by documenting the unity in diversity of Paul’s use of the word “law.” Paul refers to various sources and realms of law. However, a unified view is evident in his linking of the divine nature of the law with Jewish law and natural law. A unified view of law also lies behind the concepts of being under the law and being no longer under the law.

Part 3 of this article presented a study of Gal 3:24–25 which elucidates the thesis that (1) the laws of Scripture and nature function as a master to bring us to faith in Christ; (2) those who have faith in Christ are not under the master rule of these laws; and yet (3) there is a servant role for these laws within Christian faith and practice. Paul’s discussion of law includes the natural laws (general revelation) and the laws of Scripture (special revelation). Therefore, both the interpretation of the cosmos by special revelation and the revelation in the cosmos itself plays a role within Christian faith.

Legalists, like the lawless, are under the condemnation of the “servant-master” law because they wrongly reduce the law to commandments, separate themselves from others by the law, or believe that the law gives life. Those who think that the law is contrary to Christ also misinterpret the law. Thus they are under the law while they claim to be in Christ. To be free

vine enlightenment. The Jewish nation had occupied the highest position; they had built walls great and high to inclose themselves from association with the heathen world; they had represented themselves as the special, loyal people who were favored of God. But Christ presented their religion as devoid of saving faith. . . . “[T]he only true faith is that which works by love and purifies the soul. It is as leaven that transforms human character. The truth brought into the soul temple cleanses it of moral defilement; but where there is no change in the characters of those who profess to believe it, it is evident that it is not taken into the soul temple, and is simply no truth to those who advocate it. Such are under a deception” (ARSH Apr 30, 1895).

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

from under law involves a proper hearing and doing of the law. Those who walk in the Spirit are not under the law. They fulfill the law by works of love. Love is not an alternative ethic to that of law. It is the ethic of the law properly understood.

Part 4 of this article demonstrated that Ellen White's SDA theology is in harmony with the thesis of this article. Like Paul she links the law with God's unique revelations in Christ, Scripture, and nature. She also emphasizes their unique roles to bring us to Christ and within Christian faith and practice. Her perspective may be further summarized in her own words concerning the roles of the laws of Christ, Scripture, and nature.

Concerning Christ and Scripture, on one hand she writes: "The Bible and the Bible only is the foundation of our faith" (Letter 131, 1898; 4 EGW *Bio* 374).⁷⁹ On the other hand: "[Christ] was, in life and teaching, the gospel, *the foundation of all pure doctrine*" (TIMKH 97). The apparent contradiction involved in Christ and Scripture as foundations for faith is resolved as follows: "The gospel is glorious because it is made up of His righteousness. It is Christ enfolded, and Christ is the gospel embodied. . . . Every text [of Scripture] is a diamond, touched and irradiated by the divine rays" (7 SDABC 907, 921; Ed 132).⁸⁰

Similarly with regard to nature and Scripture she writes: "Every law governing the human system is to be strictly regarded; for it is as truly a law of God as is the word of Holy Writ; and every willful deviation from obedience to this law is as certainly sin as a violation of the moral law. All nature expresses the law of God, but in our physical structure Jehovah has written His law with His own finger upon every thrilling nerve, upon every living fiber, and upon every organ of the body. We shall suffer loss and defeat, if we step out of nature's path, which God Himself has marked out, into one of our own devising" (Tem 213–214).⁸¹

Scripture is in a sense the *only* rule of faith and practice. Scripture's *unique* role in faith and practice belongs *only* to Scripture. However, Scripture teaches that Christ and nature are also *unique* divine revelations which have unique roles in faith and practice. The roles of Christ, Scripture, and nature are described by Paul and Ellen White as servant-master roles to bring us to faith in Christ. Before faith in Christ, the law is a servant of God which rules as master over human beings. After human beings come to faith in Christ the law no longer rules over them. They have been exalted by faith to become sons and daughters of God. Therefore the law is their servant as it is the servant of Christ.

Jesus expressed this perspective concerning his laws in His discussion of Sabbath law. He said: the Sabbath was made for man. Man was not made

⁷⁹Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White* (Washington, D.C. : Review and Herald, 1981-1986).

⁸⁰*Education* (Mountain View, CA.: Pacific Press, 1952).

⁸¹*Temperance*(Mt. View, CA: Pacific Press, 1949) .

HANNA: THE SERVANT-MASTER ROLES OF THE LAWS

for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of man is Lord or Master of the Sabbath law (Mk 2:27–28). Those who are without faith in Christ are under the mastery of law (Gal 4:1). However, the law's ultimate purpose is not to be the master of humanity (4:7). Rather it is the servant of humanity. Humanity was not created to be a servant to God's law. Rather, the law is intended for the benefit of humanity. It is Jesus, rather than the law, who is Master (1:10). If we submit to the Master of the law then the law which is His servant is our servant also.

To paraphrase what Paul wrote in his epistle to the Galatians: "The heir as long as he is a child, does not differ from a slave [to law], though he is actually master of all [including law]. He is under [bondage to] guardians and stewards [laws] until the time appointed by the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements [including laws] of the world. But when the fulness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under law [laws of Scripture and nature], to redeem those who were under law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. Therefore you are no longer a slave [to law] but a [lawful] son [of God]" (Gal 4:1–7).

The Decalogue as Essential Torah in Second Temple Judaism

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In my 1994 Northwestern University dissertation, I argue that in his letter to the Romans, Paul most often uses the term νόμος (*nomos*) to refer to the Decalogue.¹ Those among us who are students of New Testament Theology will immediately recognize the radical nature of this thesis. We are no doubt aware of the scholarly consensus that limits the major understanding of *nomos* in the New Testament to the Mosaic law—particularly in the letters of Paul. However, after years of careful research, I am convinced that the possibility that Paul uses *nomos* as a reference to the Decalogue must be taken seriously. Of course, this thesis goes against such giants as Sanders, Dunn, Thielman, Hubner, Raisanen, etc. In fact, Thielman, who recently conducted a pre-publication review of my revised dissertation,² likes the argument, but is extremely hesitant to concede this possibility. The tough opposition notwithstanding, I am willing to be a David in this field of giants, and feel that there is enough linguistic and historical evidence to support my thesis.

The Decalogue and the Semantic Dilemma

Students of Paul's theology are aware of the problems encountered in Pauline studies with the enigmatic nature of *nomos*, which is sometimes depicted positively and other times negatively. This apparent contradiction has yielded studies on Paul's incoherence,³ his psychological shift in attitude,⁴ a

¹ "So That You May Be With Another: The Status of *Nomos* in the Mystical Life of the Believer in the Rhetoric of Analogy in Romans 7:1-6," PhD Dissertation, Northwestern University, 1994.

² *Rhetoric, Law, and the Mystery of Salvation in Romans 7:1-6* (New York: Mellen Biblical P, Forthcoming).

³ Heikki Räisänen, *Paul and the Law* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1987).

⁴ Hans Hübner, *Law in Paul's Thought* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1984).

BURTON: THE DECALOGUE AS ESSENTIAL TORAH

tension in his teaching,⁵ and his reinterpretation of *nomos*.⁶ I propose that the problem with the interpretation of *nomos* has little to do with Paul's inconsistency, but is due to the nature of language.

Linguists have long recognized that the understanding of a term is determined by the context of its usage. The primary contexts are the literary and social. From a literary perspective, many scholars have recognized the semantic possibilities for *nomos* in the writings of Paul and have suggested several referents: generic law,⁷ Torah (Mosaic law),⁸ Pentateuch,⁹ Tanak,¹⁰ collection of holy writings precious to Jews,¹¹ Decalogue,¹² Christianity as "new law,"¹³ revealed will of God,¹⁴ figurative law,¹⁵ and custom/tradition of Jews.¹⁶

Although many will concede that there is a range of ways in which *nomos* can be understood, most studies automatically assume that the major referent is Mosaic Law. This assumption is based on the presupposition that *nomos* is the

⁵ E. P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983).

⁶ James Dunn, "The New Perspective on Paul: Paul and the Law," 299-309 in Karl P. Donfried, ed. *The Romans Debate*, 2d ed. (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991).

⁷ BAGD, 542, proposes that this is the reference in Rom 3:27a, 7:1f, and Douglas J. Moo, *Romans 1-8* (Chicago: Moody, 1991), 146-47, suggests 2:14d.

⁸ BAGD, 542-43, suggests that this is the reference in a total of 92 of the 118 times Paul uses the term. Stephen Westerholm, "Torah, Nomos, and Law: A Question of 'Meaning'" *SR* 15 (1986), 336, suggests, "Usually, . . . Paul means by *nomos* the sum of obligations imposed upon Israel at Mount Sinai, with the accompanying sanctions." See also J. A. Sanders, "Torah and Christ," *Int* 29 (1975), 373; W. Gutbrod, "Nomos," *TDNT* 4 (1967), 1070; Joseph H. Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977), 427-28; Louw and Nida, *Lexical Semantics*, 33.55; D. M. Davies, "Free from the Law: An Exposition of the Seventh Chapter of Romans," *Int* 7 (1953), 156-57; E.D. Burton, "Nomos," in *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* (New York: Scribner's, 1920), 447, refers to it with the terms: "par eminence nomos."

⁹ Westerholm, "Torah," 336; J. A. Sanders, "Torah," 373; Gutbrod, "Nomos," 1071.

¹⁰ BAGD, 543; Louw and Nida, *Lexical Semantics*, 33.56; Gutbrod, "Nomos," 1071.

¹¹ BAGD, 543, suggests that in a strict sense the Pentateuch is often the intended reference, while in a wider sense the referent is Holy Scripture in general. See also Westerholm, "Torah," 336; W. D. Davies, "Law," 4.

¹² Gutbrod, "Nomos," 1069, states: "As in Rabb. usage, the gist of the *nomos* can be stated in the Decalogue, which is thus to some basic degree the Law in a specific sense (R. 13:8ff.; 2:20ff.; 7:7)." See also Best, *Romans*, 26, who comments: "The conception of 'the Law' was central to the Jewish religion; the term itself was used in different ways. It could mean the set of laws which God gave to the Jews at the time of the Exodus: at its simplest this consisted of the Ten Commandments." See also D. M. Davies, "Law," 157.

¹³ BAGD, 543, proposes this reference for Rom 3:27b and 8:2a.

¹⁴ Gutbrod, "Nomos," 1069-70; Burton, "Nomos," 455; W. D. Davies, "Law," 4; J. A. Sanders, "Torah," 373.

¹⁵ Gutbrod, "Nomos," 1071 (Rom 3:27; 7:21).

¹⁶ J. M. Winger, *By What Law?* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1992), passim; D. M. Davies, "Law," 156; J. A. Sanders, "Torah," 373.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

typical Greek rendering for the Hebrew noun *torah*. However, a growing number of scholars are challenging this understanding.¹⁷

E. D. Burton demonstrates the semantic flexibility of both *torah* and *nomos*. *Torah* is not as rigid as some perceive and has a number of referents in the *Tanak*.¹⁸ While it most often refers to the law attributed to Moses (e.g. Josh 8:31; 2 Kgs 14:6; 23:25), it is also used as a reference to the “book of the law” (Neh 8:2, 8; 1 Kgs 2:3; 2 Chr 23:18), and the Decalogue (Exod 24:12). The flexibility of *nomos* is demonstrated by the fact that the LXX translators use it to translate not only *torah*, but also *huqah*, *dat*, and other related terms.¹⁹ Given the probability that the theology of Paul and his audiences was shaped by the Septuagint and the *Tanak*, one cannot automatically assume that Paul mostly uses *nomos* as a reference to *torah* as Mosaic law.

As I mentioned before, Paul’s use of *nomos* must be understood in the literary and social contexts of the particular letter under observation. My investigation demonstrates that the literary context of Romans provides ample support for the thesis that the primary referent of *nomos* is the Decalogue. Using semantic theory of reference, I establish that whenever Paul reveals the contents of *nomos*, he only lists stipulations from the Decalogue.²⁰ Indeed, it is precisely because he has the Decalogue in mind that he takes great care to defend its continued usefulness. An investigation of the social context provides further support for my thesis.

Centrality of Decalogue in Jewish Tradition

Paul’s use of *nomos* as a reference to the Decalogue was by no means unique in Second Temple Judaism. While the Decalogue is a part of the *Torah*, it was not unusual for Jewish authors to refer to it as a *nomos* by itself. In his summary of the Decalogue’s status in Jewish tradition, Moshe Weinfeld heralds its unique characteristics:

By contrast with many laws and commands, the performance of which depends on special circumstances in the life of the individual or his social group; for example sacrifices, which depend on the obligations of the person (a vow to fulfill, a sin to expiate) or of the community (maintenance of the sanctuary), or other laws that flow from the incidence of certain events, like the laws of ritual purity and impurity, the Sabbatical and Jubilee years; the civil law and the laws of marriage and divorce; the laws affecting tithes and priestly offerings, and so on, and so on—by contrast the commands in the De-

¹⁷ See discussion in Westerholm, “Torah,” *passim*, who lists Julius Wellhausen, Solomon Schechter, C. H. Dodd, J. Parkes, H. J. Schoeps, R. T. Hereford, and P. Lapide, among those who object to the translation.

¹⁸ See Burton, “*Nomos*,” 445. See also article by Sheldon Blank, “The Septuagint Rendering of the Old Testament Terms for Law,” *HUCA* 7 (1930), 259-83.

¹⁹ Burton, “*Nomos*,” 445.

²⁰ Cf. 2:21-22; 7:7; 13:9.

BURTON: THE DECALOGUE AS ESSENTIAL TORAH

calogue obligate *everyone*. Every single individual, regardless of his condition or the circumstances in which he finds himself, is required to observe them. Every Jew undertakes not to worship idols, not to perjure himself, to keep the Sabbath, to honor his parents, not to commit murder, adultery or theft, not to bear false witness and not to covet.²¹

Weinfeld's observation is shared by a number of scholars who recognize that the Decalogue has traditionally been understood as a law in itself.²² Indeed, for Weinfeld, the fact that the tenth commandment forbids an act of the mind shows that these commands are based on divine and not human judgment. For the ancient Jew, the rules of the Decalogue "were perceived . . . as uniquely revealed imperatives, demands made by the Deity directly on the individual human being."²³

Decalogue Recital and the Liturgy of the Temple and Diaspora

The important place of the Decalogue in Second Temple Judaism is strongly supported in Rabbinic literature. This is made most evident in the description of the daily temple liturgy (Mishnah Tamid 5:1):

A. The superintendent said to them, "Say one blessing."

B. They said a blessing, pronounced the Ten Commandments, the *Shema* (Dt. 6:4-9), *And it shall come to pass if you shall hearken* (Dt. 11:13-21), and *And the Lord spoke to Moses* (Num. 15:37-41).

C. They blessed the people with three blessings: *True and sure*, *Abodah*, and the blessing of priests.

D. And on the Sabbath they add a blessing for the outgoing priestly watch.

In his comments on this passage, Rabbi Ba states: ". . . the Ten Commandments are the essence of the *Shema*". And once one has recited them, he has fulfilled his obligation to recite the *Shema* and need not recite it again with its blessings."²⁴

It has also been observed that the practice of reciting the Decalogue during daily prayers was not only confined to the temple liturgy, but was a part of the religious rites throughout diasporic Judaism. Several phylacteries containing the Decalogue alongside the *Shema* have been discovered in Qumran.²⁵ Additionally, evidence of the Decalogue's liturgical centrality has been unearthed in Egypt. For instance, the Nash Papyrus, a first century document,

²¹ Moshe Weinfeld, "The Uniqueness of the Decalogue and Its Place in Jewish Tradition," Ben-Zion Segal, ed. *The Ten Commandments in History and Tradition* (Jerusalem: Magnes, Hebrew U, 1990), 4.

²² Peter Stuhlmacher, "Paul's Understanding of the Law in the Letter to the Romans," *SEA* 50 (1985), 103, comments: "The decalogue was (and is) for Jews and Christians alike, the heart of the Law." See also Gutbrod, "Nomos," 1069.

²³ Weinfeld, "Decalogue," 10.

²⁴ yBer 1.4.3.

²⁵ See Y. Yadin, "Teffilin from Qumran," *Eretz Israel* 9 (1969), 60-83. (In Hebrew)

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

. . . represents a leaf from the daily liturgy giving the Ten Commandments and the *Shema* separated from each other by the verse (found only in the LXX before Deut 6:4 but given here in Hebrew), 'And these are the statutes and the commandments which Moses gave the children of Israel in the wilderness when they went forth from the land of Egypt.'²⁶

Furthermore, phylactery discoveries in Babylonia add credence to the recognition of the Decalogue as the essential Torah.²⁷

The religious importance of the Decalogue for Jewish life was also noticed by Jewish thinkers who "have often regarded the Ten Commandments as the essence of the Torah."²⁸ For example, in his essay "About the Decalogue, Being the Principal Laws of Moses," Philo contends that the individual laws of the Torah derive from each of the commandments.²⁹ In a similar vein, Pseudo Philo describes the giving of the Decalogue as God establishing "the *nomos* of his eternal covenant with the sons of Israel and . . . his commandments that will not pass away."³⁰ He further suggests that it is by this "everlasting law" that God judges the entire world.³¹

Reciting the Decalogue Prohibited

The liturgical esteem for the Decalogue was to wane during the Second Temple era. In fact, a Rabbinic prohibition halted its recital in the daily liturgy. Rabbi Levi offers a rationale for the prohibition with his argument that the full recital was not necessary since "the Ten Commandments are embodied in the paragraphs of the *Shema*."³² However, the Talmud traditions are probably more honest in their explanations. The Jerusalem Talmud reports:

²⁶ Jacob Mann, "Genizah Fragments of the Palestinian Order of Service," *HUCA* 2 (1925), 283. For full commentary see *ibid.*, 269-338. See also Weinfeld, 29. For further information on the text of the Nash Papyrus see F. C. Burkitt, "The Hebrew Papyrus of the Ten Commandments," *JQR* 15 (1903), 392-408, and Alfred Jespen, "Beiträge zur Geschichte und Auslegung des Dekalogs," *ZAW* 79 (1967), 277-304.

²⁷ For further information on the continuation of this liturgical practice in Babylonia, see A. M. Haberman, "The Phylacteries in Antiquity," *Eretz Israel* 3 (1964), 174-7. (Hebrew)

²⁸ Moshe Greenberg, "The Decalogue Tradition Critically Examined," in *The Ten Commandments in History and Tradition*, ed. B.-Z. Segal (Jerusalem: Magnes, Hebrew U, 1990), 117.

²⁹ Philo, *Decalogue* 154. "Never forget this, that the ten words (*nomos*) are the sources of the laws (*nomos*) which are recorded (*nomos*) in appearance before the entire legislation in the Sacred Books." Elsewhere (*Decalogue* 176) he refers to them as "ten laws" (*nomos*).

³⁰ PsPhil 11:5. The rest of the prescriptions that follow the Decalogue are termed "statutes" and "judgments" by the author, as they are in Deuteronomy 4:13.

³¹ PsPhil 11:2.

³² yBer 1.4, 2. E. E. Urbach, "The Role of the Ten Commandments in Jewish Worship," in *The Ten Commandments in History and Tradition*, ed. B.-Z. Segal (Jerusalem: Magnes, Hebrew U, 1990), 167, comments: "It would appear that Rabbi Levi's midrash was spoken at a time when the Ten Commandments were no longer recited every morning, for when that practice was still followed there was no need to seek out parallels to the Decalogue in the paragraphs of the *Shema*."

BURTON: THE DECALOGUE AS ESSENTIAL TORAH

Both Rav Matna and Rav Samuel bar Nahmani stated that by rights the Ten Commandments should be recited every day. Why then is this not done? *Because of the antipathy of the Minim. The purpose was to deny their claim that these Ten, and no more, were spoken to Moses at Sinai.*³³

A similar reason is given by the Babylonian Talmud in its comment on the clause, “They recite the Ten Commandments”:³⁴

Rabbi Judah quoted Samuel: *People wanted to recite the Ten Commandments together with the Shema outside the Temple, but the practice had long been abandoned because of the arguments of the Minim.* The same has been taught in a baraita: R. Nathan said, people outside the Temple wanted to read in this manner, but *the custom had long been abolished because of the arguments of the Minim.* Rabbah bar Rav Huna thought to institute the practice in Sura, but R. Hisda said to him: *The custom was set aside because of the arguments of the Minim.* Amemar considered doing the same in Nehardea, but Rav Ashi said to him: *It was set aside because of the arguments of the Minim.*³⁵

Both the Babylonian and the Jerusalem Talmuds agree that the prohibition was due to a controversy with the *Minim*, who viewed the Decalogue as the center of the law revealed on Sinai. If *Minim* is a designation for those Jews who embraced Christianity (as is generally accepted),³⁶ then these statements portray a Christian-Rabbinic controversy in which Christians maintained that the Decalogue was the only “essential” law.

Apparently, the dispute with the *Minim* affected Rabbinic Judaism to such an extent that “rabbinic writings retain but few references to the centrality of the Decalogue.”³⁷ However, in spite of this apparent censure, even in the later period of Rabbinic Judaism “there [remain] vestiges of the ancient view that the Ten Commandments are the essence of Torah, or that they include all of Torah.”³⁸

³³ yBer 1:5 (emphasis mine).

³⁴ mTam 5.1.

³⁵ bBer 12a (emphasis mine).

³⁶ For a comprehensive study that identifies the term *Minim* with Christians, see R. Travers Hereford, *Christianity in Talmud and Midrash* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1903), 97-396. After surveying all the Talmudic and Midrashic statements about the *Minim*, he concludes, 379, “wherever the Talmud or the Midrash mentions *Minim*, the authors of the statement intend to refer to Jewish Christians.”

³⁷ Greenberg, “Decalogue,” 119.

³⁸ Greenberg, “Decalogue,” 119, refers to A. J. Heschel for support: *Theology of Ancient Judaism* (London/New York: Sonico, 1965), 108-110. However, he advises that Heschel is to be taken critically, for E. E. Urbach has argued against the elevation of the Decalogue in *The Sages* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1975), 360-365. Nevertheless, I agree with Greenberg that this disagreement in the interpretation of the primary sources “reflects the ongoing polemic of the matter.” 119 fn. 57. See also Mann, “Genizah Fragments,” 284, who suggests that the Nash Papyrus, which he feels is at most second century, “shows that in Egypt the Ten Commandments were recited in spite of the objections from the Rabbis.”

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

An example of this esteem is evidenced in the following excerpt from a second century rabbinic homily:

Why were the Ten Commandments not placed at the very beginning of the Torah? This can be explained by a parable: Once a king entered a city and said to the people, "Let me be your ruler." They said to him, "Why should we? What good thing have you done for us?" What did he do then? He built a wall around the city, he brought in a supply of water, he fought their battles. After all that, he said to them, "May I be your king?" They answered "Oh yes! Yes!" So it was with the All-Present. He brought the Israelites out of Egypt, He divided the red sea for them, He gave them manna, He brought up the well in the desert, He assembled the quail, He fought the battle with Amalek. And then He said to them, "Shall I be your King?" And they answered "Oh yes! Yes!"³⁹

The Decalogue in the Liturgy of Emerging Christianity

Given the esteemed place of the Decalogue in Judaism, it was only natural that it would have a central place in emerging Christianity. Indeed, the problem between the Rabbis and the *Minim* is an indication that adherence to the Decalogue was one of the early articles of Christian faith. Additional support for the centrality of the Ten Commandments in Christianity is apparently present in one of Pliny's letters to Trajan, in which he describes the worship habits of Christians.⁴⁰ He informs the emperor that one of the Christian meetings, which was held on a "certain fixed day before it was light", involved the recital of an oath in which the participants swore "never to commit any fraud, theft or adultery, never to falsify their word, nor deny a trust when they should be called upon to deliver it up."⁴¹ Assuming that Pliny was not giving a *verbatim* report but was recording that which he had heard from his informers, this is more than likely a loose paraphrase of what was really said. It is quite possible that Pliny was misquoting Christians who were continuing the Jewish tradition of reciting the Decalogue in public worship.⁴²

Further evidence in support of the centrality of the Decalogue in Christian teaching and worship, is found in two of the common prayers recorded in the

³⁹ *Mekhilta de Rabbi Ishmael Na-Hodesh V*. Cited in Urbach, "Ten Commandments," 172. A similar sentiment is cited by Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 507, who in referring to the Rabbinic attitude towards the stipulations of the Torah, writes: "As is characteristic of most legalisms, there were more negative than positive commands: 365 negative (the days in the solar year) and 248 positive (the limbs in the body according to the *Targum Yerushalmi* on Gen 1:27). The numerical symbolism noted that the Decalogue in Hebrew has 620 letters, representing the whole Torah plus 7 rabbinical commands."

⁴⁰ Pliny, *Letters* 10.96.

⁴¹ Pliny, *Letters* 10.96.

⁴² In my opinion, the synagogue provides a more likely place to find a parallel than a pagan shrine, as is suggested by A. D. Nock, "The Christian *Sacramentum* in Pliny and a Pagan Counterpart," *Classical Review* 38 (1924), 58-69, who could probably have made a more forceful argument with the Decalogue than he has with the fragment from the shrine at Philadelphia.

BURTON: THE DECALOGUE AS ESSENTIAL TORAH

second century Apostolic Constitutions. In 7.36.4, the “ten oracles” (Decalogue) are referred to as a *nomos*:⁴³ “You gave to them a Law, ten oracles uttered by your voice, and engraved by your hand.” And again in 8.9.8 we read about God “who gave an implanted and written law to wo/man, so that s/he might live lawfully as a rational being.”⁴⁴ Thus we see that as late as the second century, esteem for the Decalogue was still central for Christian life and liturgy.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we have seen that the Decalogue, which Weinfeld refers to as “the basic constitution . . . of the Community of Israel,”⁴⁵ was highly esteemed within Second Temple Judaism. The earliest Christian communities joined their Jewish parent and siblings in this reverence for God’s central law. Although rejecting the ceremonial aspects of Pentateuchal law, Christians recognized the Decalogue as a timeless principle with divine origin and affinity. One could say that the Christian viewed the Decalogue as the essential Torah. The Christian elevation of the Decalogue directly affected Jewish religious practice, as is evidenced by the Rabbinic prohibition of the Decalogue’s recital in the daily liturgy. The centrality of the Decalogue in such biblical books as Romans and Hebrews suggests that this interdiction did not affect the Christian theology of law. In fact, both the prayers from the Apostolic Constitutions, and the Letter of Pliny to Trajan show that even in the second century some Christians still viewed the precepts of the Decalogue as central to community life.

⁴³ *Apostolic Constitutions* 7.36.4. This particular prayer defends Sabbath observance, which causes D. A. Fiensy [“Hellenistic Synagogal Prayers,” in James H. Charlesworth, ed., *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 2.671] to believe that it is probably a remnant of a Jewish synagogal prayer.

⁴⁴ *Apostolic Constitutions* 8.9.8.

⁴⁵ Weinfeld, “Decalogue,” 27-28.

God and War in the Old Testament

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We, as theologians, should be the humblest of scholars. Why? Because as finite, imperfect, and sinful beings, we dare to investigate the infinite, perfect, and infallible God! And this God has consented to reveal Himself in a written document, the Bible. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit it is our privilege to explore the inspired information. An attempt to understand the problem of God and war in the Old Testament is still more daring, and we must feel even more humble.

Too often we draw a picture of the Almighty according to our simplistic prejudices: an immovable statue, certainly loving, but remaining in His celestial sphere when His reputation is at risk.

How can a loving God permit or even order cruel wars? From the very outset, I must admit my difficulty in explaining every example. My research will attempt only to trace a basic principle. Could it be applied to cases where the principle is not specifically stated or apparent in the context? The reader must decide.

My study will be divided into the following parts: the ideal plan of God when Israel is confronted with enemies; demonstrations of further fulfillment of this plan throughout Israel's history; situations where this plan was not respected; and what this teaches us about the character of God?

God's Ideal Plan

Repeatedly, clear statements were made by God concerning His plan when Israel was confronted with enemies. We shall limit ourselves to just a few:

Exodus 14*: Fearing the Egyptians marching after them, the Israelites reproved their leader. But "Moses answered the people, Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today . . . *The Lord*

* All Scripture quotations used are taken from the New International Version. All emphasis is added.

WINANDY: GOD AND WAR IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

will fight for you; you need only to be still” (vs. 13, 14). The Lord “made the wheels of the chariots come off so that they had difficulty driving” (v. 25). The Egyptians caught the message: “Let’s get away from the Israelites! The Lord is fighting for them against Egypt” (v. 25). The Israelites also caught the message and reacted the way they always should have reacted throughout their history: “when the Israelites saw the great power the Lord displayed . . . they put their trust in Him” (v. 31).

Exodus 23: God revealed his plans for the conquest of Canaan. A long quotation will confirm the clarity of God’s plan: “See, I am sending an angel ahead of you to guard you along the way and to bring you to the place I have prepared. . . . *If you listen carefully to what he says and do all that I say*, I will be an enemy to your enemies and will oppose those who oppose you. My angel will go ahead of you and bring you into the land of the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hivites and Jebusites, and I will wipe them out. . . . I will send my terror ahead of you and throw into confusion every nation you encounter. I will make all your enemies turn their backs and run. I will send the hornet ahead of you to drive the Hivites, Canaanites and Hittites out of your way. Little by little I will drive them out before you” (Exodus 23:20, 22, 23, 27, 28, 30). The only “action” God expected from the Israelites: “You must demolish them [the gods of the Amorites, etc.]” “and break their sacred stones to pieces” (v. 24). And the Israelites gave God their decision of trust: “Everything the Lord has said we will do” (24:3b).

Deuteronomy 1: Here we have a confirmation of God’s intent in a book beginning with a reminder of the past history of Israel: “The Lord your God, who is going before you, will fight for you, as he did for you in Egypt” (v. 30).

Ellen White confirms this in *Patriarchs and Prophets*: “The Lord had never commanded them to ‘go up and fight’. It was not his purpose that they should gain the land by warfare, but by strict obedience to his commands” (392).

From these texts we can conclude that from the beginning of the history of the Israelites the following principle was established, supported by God’s “mighty acts”: If the Israelites allowed God to take charge of the adversaries, the only “action” required of God’s people would be to trust and obey.

Further Demonstrations of God’s Battle Strategy

Gideon (1211–1171 B.C.). Facing the threat of the Midianite army, Gideon gathered together 32,000 men (Judges 7:3b). God reduced the number to three hundred (v. 7) with only trumpets, empty jars, and torches as weapons (v. 16). How did the battle turn out?

“When the three hundred trumpets sounded, the Lord caused the men throughout the camp to turn on each other with their swords. The army fled . . .” (v. 22) without any armed intervention by Gideon’s soldiers. It is true that the “Israelites . . . pursued the Midianites” (v. 23) and “men of Ephraim killed Oreb and Zeeb” (v. 25). Gideon also killed Zebah and Zalmunna, taking the

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

ornaments off their camel's necks (8:21) and requesting an "earring from the share of the plunder" from each of the Israelites (v. 24). The truth that these were Gideon's and the people's human initiatives and not according to God's plan is confirmed by the tragic ending of the story: "Gideon made the gold into an ephod, which he placed in Ophrah, his town. All Israel prostituted themselves by worshiping it there, and it became a snare to Gideon and his family" (v. 27).

Jehoshaphat (872–848 B.C.) Facing a threatening army, the pious and trustful king declared to his people: "Do not be afraid . . . For the battle is not yours but God's" (2 Chron 20:15b). "You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions, stand firm and see the deliverance the Lord will give you" (v. 17). The king took a clear stand: "Have faith in the Lord your God" (v. 20c). The army consisted of only a choir (v. 21)! "As they began to sing and praise, the Lord set ambushes . . ." (v. 22). The result: "The men of Ammon and Moab rose up against the men from Mount Seir to destroy and annihilate them. After they finished slaughtering the men from Seir, they helped to destroy one another" (v. 23).

Hezekiah (729–686 B.C.) The king was known among his very adversaries as one who trusted in the Lord (2 Kgs 18:22; 19:10). Sennacherib attempted to destabilize the people's trust in God (2 Kings 18:29, 30), but it was useless. The result: "That night the angel of the Lord went out and put to death a hundred and eighty-five thousand men in the Assyrian camp" (19:35) without any intervention from Israel!

The conclusion is that God promised that if Israel trusted in Him, He would deliver them, and they would not have to do anything. In reality, throughout Israel's history, when the leaders and the people trusted the Lord, He delivered them. However, God was not responsible for the other situations where Israel interferes.

When the Israelites Ignored God's Plan

Wars apparently permitted by God. I will bring just one example: Israel's first battle against the Amalekites; but we shall spend some time on this episode, because it is typical and some explanations are available.

The Bible text is very sobering: "The Amalekites came and attacked the Israelites at Rephidim. Moses said to Joshua, 'Choose some of our men and go out to fight the Amalekites'" (Exodus 17:8, 9a). Let's look at the background: Ten times in the ten plagues the almighty hand of God had been revealed, and the people of Israel had only recently left Egypt. They had once again witnessed the almighty hand of God in the spectacular destruction of the Egyptian army in the Red Sea. One would think that they would trust the Lord forever!

Three days later, "the people grumbled against Moses" (Exod 15:24) instead of trusting the One who had just recently accomplished such fantastic miracles. But right away "the Lord showed (Moses) a piece of wood. (Moses) threw it into the water, and the water became sweet" (v. 25). And instead of

WINANDY: GOD AND WAR IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

being offended, as should have been the case, God brought them to Elim “where there were twelve springs and seventy palm trees, and they camped there near the water” (15:27)!

How magnificent of God! One would think that this time the Israelites would trust their kind heavenly Father for the rest of their lives! A few days later, however, on their way to Sinai, “the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron . . . You have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death” (Exod 16:3).

Again, instead of being offended, God, with His usual graciousness, immediately provided a delicious biscuit which was “white like coriander seed and which tasted like wafers made with honey”—manna (16:31). And because they had grumbled about not having any more “pots of meat” as in Egypt (16:3), the Lord offered them quails, which “covered the camp” (v.13) for dinner. We can imagine that the creator certainly did not enjoy doing that, but what wouldn’t He consent to do to win back His dissatisfied children? We shall not spend time discussing the new, abusive disregard for God’s program seen when “some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather [manna]” (16:27), despite the command of the Lord to “rest” (v.30) on the Sabbath. However, I cannot help but quote a penetrating comment of Ellen White from *The Story of Redemption* which will explain the circumstances of the confrontation with the Amalekites:

They [the people of Israel] had not really suffered the pangs of hunger. They had food for the present, but they feared for the future. They could not see how the host of Israel was to subsist, in their long travels through the wilderness, upon the simple food they then had, and in their unbelief they saw their children famishing. The Lord was willing that they should be brought short in their food, and that they should meet with difficulties, that their hearts should turn to Him who had hitherto helped them, that they might believe in Him. He was ready to be to them a present help. If, in their want, they would call upon Him, He would manifest to them tokens of His love and continual care . . . After this sure promise from God, it was criminal unbelief in them to anticipate that they and their children might die with hunger! (127)

Note the three elements of the next sentence (numbers are mine): “[1] Because of their unbelief, [2] God suffered their enemies to make war with them, [3] that He might manifest to His people from whence cometh their strength” (133). If I were going to state the preceding statement positively, I would say: (1) if they had trusted God, (2) He would have prevented their enemies from making war with them, and (3) He would have in this way manifested to His people from whence cometh their strength. Following this “criminal unbelief” (127) and their “cruel murmurings” (132), the Israelites deserved to be left to themselves. But, God condescended to help them in the very battle that their unbelief towards Him had provoked: “As long as Moses

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning” (Exodus 17:11).

The Story of Redemption explains that this act of Moses, reaching up his hands towards God, “was to teach Israel that while they made God their trust and laid hold upon His strength . . . He would fight for them and subdue their enemies” (133).

With this illumination of the text, we could paraphrase Exod 17:8, 9 in the following way: Because of the criminal unbelief and the constant cruel murmurings of the people, God permitted the Amalekites to attack the Israelites at Rephidim. God did not order Joshua to organize the battle; but Moses, as leader of the Israelites, had to take in hand the situation in which they had put themselves.

Joshua was designated as the head of the army. With the miraculous intervention of God, he was able to overcome the Amalekite army “with the sword” (Exod 17:13). This way of obtaining a victory was totally opposed to God’s plan, since He had promised to do the fighting Himself for the deliverance of His people. In fact, we can imagine the sorrow of this same Joshua when he had to confess in his own writing at the end of his career, “The citizens of Jericho fought against you, as did also the Amorites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hittites, Girgashites, Hivites and Jebusites, but I [God] gave them into your hands . . . You did not do it with your own sword . . .” (Josh 23:11, 12).

Wars God Ordered

Let’s look at a specific example of a war God ordered, Judges 1:1, 2a: “After the death of Joshua, the Israelites asked the Lord, ‘Who will be the first to go up and fight for us against the Canaanites?’” God ordered Judah to be the first to “attack” the Canaanites.

How can we explain this order of God to make war? Let us again make an effort to look at the context. In his farewell speech (Josh 23), the old leader reminded them: “You yourselves have seen everything the Lord your God has done to all these nations for your sake; it was the Lord your God who fought for you.” “[T]he nations I [God] conquered” (v. 4). “The Lord your God himself will drive them out of your way. He will push them out before you and you will take possession of the land” (v. 5). The only contribution the people had to make was: “obey all that is written in the Book of the Law” (v. 6); “do not associate with these nations” (v. 7); “hold fast to the Lord” (v. 8); “love the Lord” (v. 11).

Assembling “all the tribes of Israel at Shechem,” Joshua had the people renew the covenant (Josh 24). The patriarch insisted on the action of God: “I [God] sent the hornet ahead of you, which drove them out before you—also the Amorite kings. You did not do it with your own sword and bow” (v. 12).

But Joshua died (Judg 2:8), and there came “another generation who knew neither the Lord nor what he had done for Israel” (v. 10). (At least they

WINANDY: GOD AND WAR IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

pretended not to know the Lord; although they had been systematically informed and instructed!) They did not “listen to the voice” is the literal translation, or according to the NIV, they “disobeyed” God (2:2). But, strangely enough, they “asked the Lord, ‘Who will be the first to go up and fight for us against the Canaanites?’” (1:1).

What should God’s reaction have been? We would expect Him to say, “You act as if you do not know me. You do not even listen to my voice. You know perfectly well that I promised to take care of the conquest and that you wouldn’t have to fight at all. Joshua and your fathers reminded you of my miraculous interventions, and now you ask, ‘Who will be the first [among us] to . . . fight!’ Are you making fun of me? You offend me! I am going to abandon you!”

But amazingly, “the Lord answered . . .” (1:2) Before we continue reading, let us stop here a moment and reflect on this first verb. Even when His people broke the relationship, God maintained it as long as He could, consenting to answer a partner who had not even listened to Him in the past. This was the first surprise.

The second surprise: God conformed to the project of the Israelites and—although it completely opposed His project—He ordered a war.

We may react to this in several ways. We might say, “You see, God did take the initiative to order wars.” Or we might say, “God was not consistent. One time He said He would do the fighting and another time He said Judah should do it.” Or we might say, “Shouldn’t we try to understand God?”

God goes as far as possible to reach His children where they were. ‘Even if you do not listen,’ He seems to say, ‘and you ask for the exact opposite of my plan, I shall answer and accompany you in your undertaking. Judah is to go!’” What’s more, we read: “when Judah attacked, the Lord gave the Canaanites and Perizzites into their hands.” (Judg 1:4).

If you were afraid of being misunderstood, you certainly wouldn’t have done that, would you? But God did it. This is the God of the Old Testament. What condescension on God’s part to our level of thinking!

May I illustrate my point with a modern story, realizing the limitations of the illustration? My wife, Gisela, was studying voice at the Music Conservatory in Basel, Switzerland. Realizing the perversity of the opera—with its gorgeous music, beautiful voices, and grand orchestras which present immorality, crimes, and lies—she opted for oratorios and *lieder* [songs]. Her teacher, being an opera prima donna, suggested that the best way to observe the application of her technique would be for the students to attend the concerts where she was performing. With a little embarrassment, Gisela told her father she would attend the concerts exclusively for “professional” reasons.

Her highly moral preacher-father was perplexed. But he felt that if he would forbid his eighteen year old daughter, who was in a critical stage of personality development, to attend the opera, it might break the fine relationship of loving

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

trust they had developed through the years. And besides, she would go anyway! So he not only let her go, but also gave her the money for the tickets.

One evening, after attending a couple of concerts, as she was listening to and watching another glorious opera performance filled with adultery, her eyes turned to the ceiling, from which a huge candelabra was hanging. Suddenly the thought flashed into her mind: What if the chain holding the candelabra would break and the candelabra would fall and kill me? Would people (and the Lord) have to say, ‘She died willfully contemplating adultery in the opera house?’”

At intermission time, pretending she was not feeling well, she rushed home. Approaching the house, she was surprised to see light in her father’s study, because he was usually absent every night of the week, either holding evangelistic meetings or giving Bible studies. But that night he was at home.

As she entered the house her father met her and asked if the performance was already finished. She answered no and explained her abrupt decision to leave the opera house, never to return again.

“We are glad you came to this decision all by yourself, Gisela,” her father said. “Each time you went to the opera, I cancelled the scheduled Bible study and your mother and I prayed for you.”

Could we suggest that God acted the same way toward His children? When they insisted on going their own way in life in general—or in wars in particular—He let them go, sometimes even adding His blessing! Unexpected from a pure and holy God? Or wise pedagogy in the face of stubbornness and pride! And so often He did win them back by maintaining His love relationship with them and allowing the free choice of His people.

Coming back to our Israelites, we find that unfortunately they overdid it. Having caught Adoni-Bezek, they “cut off his thumbs and big toes” (Judg 1:6). This, of course, was not according to God’s plan. What a disgraceful testimony of the so-called “people of God”!

Incidentally, the book of Judges should not be considered as the ideal book of God’s philosophy! The last sentence in the book, a sober definition of this period in Israel’s history, declares: “In those days . . . everyone did as he saw fit” (21:25b). An atheistic anarchy!

But at the very center of the book—could it be the central message ?—we read the following statement: “and the Lord was sorrowful because of Israel’s misery” (my translation of Judges 10:16c). What a God!

Conclusion

The ideal plan of God: The Lord will fight for you. Just trust and obey, and He will deliver you.

The fulfillment in history: When the leaders and the people trusted God, He delivered them.

WINANDY: GOD AND WAR IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

When God's plan was not respected: God, as far as possible, "accompanied" His wayward children in the hope of winning them back, even when they made a decision that was the opposite of His will.

What does this teach us about the character of God? In considering the attitude of God in these intricate problems of war, my admiration of Him has increased immensely. In coming down to the level of His people, He has left us an example of a Master Teacher which is fathomless. And thus He extends His love to its extremity in order to reach His erring people, as low as they are, and bring them back to His caring guidance.

Yes, what a risk, and so easily misunderstood! And how often He has been misunderstood! Instead of being shocked, let us bow in wonder before this most gracious and flexible God. This is the God of the Old Testament! How fortunate that He is also your God and mine, accompanying us on our wayward, spiritual journey!

What a God!

The Apotelesmatic Principle: Origin and Application

Roberto Ouro
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In 1980, Dr. Desmond Ford, professor of theology at Avondale College in Australia, presented a 700 page manuscript to theologians, professors, pastors, and administrators of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church meeting at Glacier View Camp in Colorado. This document has had wide consequences in the church.

Ford called into question a set of fundamental teachings of the Adventist church, including the pre-advent investigative judgment beginning in 1844, the antitypical day of atonement, several aspects of the theology of the sanctuary, and especially the historicist method of interpreting the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation.

In his study of the prophecies of Daniel, Ford claims the pre-advent investigative judgment beginning in 1844, as taught by Seventh-day Adventists, cannot be supported in an exhaustive and precise study of the biblical text. To establish his presuppositions, Ford adopted what he calls the apotelesmatic principle of prophetic interpretation as the correct approach to solving this supposed problem. Ford indicates:

It seems to this writer that the apotelesmatic principle is the very key we need to authenticate our denominational appropriation of Dan 8:14 to our own time and work. *By apotelesmatic principle we mean dual fulfillment or more.*¹

He writes later:

The answer to this problem is also the answer to our other key problems in the area of the sanctuary. It can be given in a single phrase—the apotelesmatic principle. This principle affirms that a

¹Desmond Ford, *Daniel 8:14, the Day of Atonement, and the Investigative Judgment* (Glacier View Manuscript, 1980), 345 [emphasis not added].

OURO: THE APOTELESMATIC PRINCIPLE

prophecy fulfilled or fulfilled in part, or unfulfilled at the appointed time, may have a later, recurring, or consummated fulfillment.²

Thus, Ford considers the apotelesmatic principle the fundamental methodological principle to solve the supposed problems in two essential beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church: the pre-advent investigative judgment and the theology of the sanctuary.

Ford, uses this hermeneutical principle to accept various reinterpretations and applications of descriptions and of prophetic symbols. As the *modus operandi* of his principle, Ford states the following axiom:

Once the principle is grasped we will readily understand why many excellent scholars can be listed under each separate school of interpreters: preterism, historicism, futurism, idealism. All are right in what they affirm and wrong in what they deny.³

Ford stated this axiom for the first time in his thesis submitted to Manchester University, England, in 1972. It is stated as follows: “Here again, as is so often the case, the heresies prove ‘true in what they affirm, but false in what they deny’”.⁴ The same thought recurs in his commentary on Daniel published in 1978. There it occurs in a discussion of the different schools of prophetic interpretation:

It must be said that each of the systems is right in what it affirms and wrong in what it denies. Preterism is right when it says that prophecy has something to say to the people living at the time of the prophecy, but it is wrong when it asserts that that “something” is the whole intent of the visions of the seer. Futurism is right when it affirms that the final crisis, the impending conflict awaiting the world, is a central focus of prophecy, but it is wrong when it denies that the prophetic pictures have meaning for prior crises. Idealism is right in affirming that prophets symbolically illustrate the principles governing the great controversy between good and evil. It is wrong in denying that specific events are foretold. The very nature of apocalyptic was concerned with those events in history which foreshadowed the coming of the kingdom of God. Historicists are right in looking for the prophetic scroll to be gradually unrolled, having meaning for its first and last readers and those in between. But they are wrong if they minimize the stress on the future climactic struggle that the prophetic word emphasizes . . . If the apotelesmatic principle was more widely understood, some differences between systems would be automatically resolved.⁵

²Ibid., 485.

³Ibid., 505.

⁴D. Ford, *The Abomination of Desolation in Biblical Eschatology* (Doctoral Dissertation, Manchester University, 1972), 74.

⁵D. Ford, *Daniel* (Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1978), 68-69 [emphasis on the original].

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

The purpose of this article, is to show the lack of validity of both the apotelesmatic principle and Ford's axiom, explicitly or implicitly, because with both presuppositions the author affirms that what is affirmed in all prophetic interpretations of the four most important schools of biblical hermeneutics—preterist, historicist, futurist, or idealist—is correct, which is a logical and theological contradiction. Since the models of prophetic interpretation are so distinct and dissimilar in their origin, development, and conclusions, their affirmations cannot all be valid and correct at the same time. What is more, *this principle and its axiom cannot be falsified or verified by applying a scientific methodology to the study of the prophetic interpretation.* We will try to demonstrate what was just said in a precise and exact way.

(I do not mean to suggest that there are not elements of truth in each of these interpretations. For example, the messages to the seven churches were meaningful to the churches that received them, point to periods of church history, may apply in an idealist manner to a specific congregation today, and may have a future significance as well, so far as we know. That is very far from saying, however, that everything affirmed by the preterists about the identity of the beast is true, or everything affirmed by the futurists about the 1,260 days and the rebuilding of Jerusalem is accurate. Does Ford truly mean what he says, or is his axiom a deliberate hyperbole? If he means it, he is wrong. If not, he is imprecise.)

The Philosophy of History in Greece and Rome

According to William H. Shea, the apotelesmatic principle was originally used in Classical Greek for making astrological predications based upon the reading of horoscopes. By the time of the early Church Fathers, however, it had merely become a synonym for prophecy.⁶ We think that besides this origin in classical Greek, this hermeneutical principle can be placed more accurately in the Greek conception of history, especially in the Platonic philosophy of history. Our hypothesis is as follows: *The apotelesmatic principle has its philosophic origin in the Platonic conception of history based on the idea of recurring historic cycles.*

The disciplines of history and philosophy originated in Greece. The starting point of historical study is found in the work of Herodotus of Halicarnassus or Thurii (484-425 B.C.), called the "Father of history" since the time of Cicero. Herodotus is the author of *Historias* (446 B.C.), where not only does he christen history forever, but he also tries to make a precise study of past events and offers a critique of the handling of testimonies and a more scientific explanation of them. However, in spite of Herodotus' good intentions, a part of what he said can be considered false.

⁶W. H. Shea, "The Apotelesmatic Principle: Philosophy, Practice, and Purpose" (unpublished MS., 1981), 1.

OURO: THE APOTELESMATIC PRINCIPLE

However, in Herodotus, and also in Thucydides, supposedly a more strict and intricate historian, there is an important absence of the sense of time, and the usage of chronology is inadequate. Heraclitus emphasized the changing nature of the universe, repeating that war is the father of all things, which means that transformation will consist in the movement from one stage to another in a strained but harmonic succession of opposites. It is also possible, in his opinion, that the world comes from fire and returns to fire, *in successive cycles*, for all eternity.

In several of Plato's works (427-347 B.C.)—*Timeus*, *The Republic*, *The Laws*, *The Sophist*, *The Politician*—there are references to *cosmic cycles*, an idea the Greeks must have borrowed from Indian, Babylonian, and Egyptian traditions. These books also include his observations of nature and of periodical catastrophes. Plato often mentioned the great catastrophes that devastated the world periodically—fires, floods, earthquakes—and had provoked the vanishing of many other civilizations. (It is important to bear in mind the model of prophetic interpretation used in ancient Israel—particularly how it valued historical time—the day-year principle, for example—in a completely different way from that of the ancient Near East, especially Mesopotamian, Babylonian and Canaanite).

Likewise, the stoics considered the concepts of “eternal return,” “cosmic cycles,” and “cyclic events” very significant. In general, the hypothesis prevailed among Greek thinkers that there exists an *analogy* between the phases of civilization and the phases of the physical universe, and between the human race and the individual human being. These thinkers supposed that civilizations followed one another by virtue of their own laws, and at the same time, within a common universal law. In the Greek way of thinking, this concept of cycles, and its applications to the history of humankind, was the natural corollary of a sensational astronomic discovery made in the Babylonian world between the 8th and the 6th centuries B.C. The discovery consisted in the verification or the simple affirmation of a great cycle of cosmic months and years that made the solar year seem insignificant by contrast. The minds fond of this idea projected their periodicity patterns to all events.

Greeks knew how to look and see. Their visual-spatial dimension was notoriously superior to their audio-time dimension. This science of observation (the *theoria*) was born in Greece as a result of a purely contemplative attitude, besides it being the right place for the development of theater (a way of seeing) and spatial-visual arts. Among the Greeks the spatial nature won over temporal history. And the fact that it is repeated suggested a cyclic idea of events.

Among the Romans, the idea of fatality and relentless fate appears in Cicero, and the circular conception of historical time that seems predominant among Romans as well as the Greeks is quite clearly affirmed by Plutarch.⁷

⁷For an exhaustive analysis of this subject, see J. L. García Venturini, *Filosofía de la Historia*

The Philosophy of History in Israel and the Ancient Near East

Israel constituted in ancient times a culture with very special characteristics, similar to neither the ancient Near East [ANE] people nor the Greco-Romans. Hebrew thought has a different attitude regarding historical time, and it is characterized by a certain way of thinking and living.

There is a clear and distinctive contrast between Greek and Hebrew thought. Greek thought states that reality is static, unchangeable, and immovable. On the contrary, for the Hebrews reality consists in action and movement. The Greeks were interested in contemplation; the Hebrews were interested in action. For the Greeks, movement was not the final reality. For the Hebrews, true reality was action and movement; inactivity and immobility were not reality at all.⁸

The Hebrews' dynamic approach to reality is expressed in their interest in history. Their God acts in history, and these actions in history are the center of Israel's religion. The Hebrews' interest in history corresponds with their perspective of time. Time was real for them. Greek philosophy was interested in an unchangeable and static reality that did not pay attention to action in history. Greek history was similar to anecdote or tragedy. They did not see in historical processes a Supreme Power but a destiny or a necessity. The Greeks considered history to be unchangeable, static and immovable. Therefore, in their refined philosophical thoughts, their perspective of time was *cyclic*.⁹

A general agreement exists among researchers that history acquired a singular meaning among the Hebrews. For Ernest Renan, the author of the book of *Daniel* is the "true creator of philosophy of history."¹⁰ Therefore, from Israel springs a powerful deliberation about history and, for the first time, specific historical material. In Israel a historical-philosophical reflection developed which was completely original because of its prophetic sense.

The prophets, are well known for their work in the philosophy of history, and this is of great importance for our subject matter. They were in charge of predicting the future and were prominent as philosophers of history, though a kind of backward history. The prophets were those who reflected on historical time as it was constituted by significant events and as it emerged from the past and was projected towards the future. In this way any kind of cyclic conception (a basic characteristic, as we have just seen, of the philosophy of history in Greece and Rome) and complete denial of history is surpassed, because of the assumed existence of time with a determined direction and sense. *History, for Hebrew*

(Madrid: Gredos, 1972), 47-59; L. Dujovne, *La Filosofía de la Historia en la Antigüedad y en la Edad Media* (Buenos Aires: Galatea, 1958), 67-147.

⁸For an analysis of Hebrew thought compared with Greek, see T. Boman, *Hebrew Thought Compared with Greek* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), especially 27-73 for a study of static and dynamic thought.

⁹See J. Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1961), 11.

¹⁰E. Renan, *La Vie de Jésus* (Paris, 1861), 49.

OURO: THE APOTELESMATIC PRINCIPLE

prophets, is spread out in linear time, not cyclic time. That is why for them the idea of the future always suggests something new, original, and unknown.

Yahweh is the center of every prophecy. Since before time, He is Lord of time and center of time. Amongst the prophets, Daniel stands out. He is convinced that history is not an unconnected succession of events with no relation between them, but on the contrary, an orderly succession, a unit with sense, sense that in the long run aims at the establishment of the Kingdom of God.

If there is a standard mark by which the Hebrew people could be known, it was hearing and listening to God's Word. In this way, the people of Israel *heard*, while the people of Greece *saw*. While other people were better placed in space (Greeks), the Hebrews were placed by God in time, since the beginning (Gn 1:1). God was in the beginning, and God will be in the end, while being present during the journey.¹¹

The Philosophy of History in the Christianity

It could be said that if ANE people lived holding onto the past, and the Greeks held an untemporal present, Christianity, based on Hebrew thought, emphasizes future history. The promise of Hebrew-Christian thought is *forever*, that is the reason why time is decisive in the future. Christianity reaffirms that history is linear and progressive. Hope and waiting give sense to history and meaning to time. That is to say, history is comprehensible only in prophetic dimension. God and man become coprotagonists in human life.

To Christianity the reaffirmation of linear time, as well as the universalization of the promise. For example, Agustine of Hippo was worried about the subject of time. He was completely against an "eternal return" to cyclic events; in his opinion time has a single direction and sense and is completely irreversible.¹²

From what we have described, we think that our hypothesis, initially stated, about the philosophical origin of the apotelesmatic principle in the Greek conception of history (especially Plato's conception), which is based on the idea of recurring historic cycles, starts to solidly and accurately confirm itself based on the analysis of philosophical conceptions of history which are clearly different from the Hebrew conception.

Greek Philosophy of History, Apotelesmatic Principle, and Modern Prophetic Interpretation

In this part we will try to establish a connection between Greek philosophy in history, the apotelesmatic principle, and modern prophetic interpretation. We will find that Ford's principle and all the presuppositions and theological

¹¹García Venturini, 37-46.

¹²Ibid., 60-70.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

applications that surround it are strongly influenced by the historical-critical method of biblical study.

In Ford's opinion, the apotelesmatic principle is a term that explains the concept that a prophecy can have more than one application in time. Ford points out that this should not be thought of as implying a double sense of prophecy, but rather the same sense in recurring situations.¹³

The principle of double or multiple fulfillments of prophecies was developed especially in the 19th century,¹⁴ as we can verify in the following reference:

The same prophecies frequently have a double meaning, and refer to different events, the one near, the other remote; the one temporal, the other spiritual or perhaps eternal. The prophets thus having several events in view, their expressions may be partly applicable to one, and partly to another, and it is not always easy to mark the transitions. What has not been fulfilled in the first, we must apply to the second; and what has already been fulfilled, may often be considered as typical of what remains to be accomplished . . . Thus it is evident that many prophecies must be taken in a double sense, in order to understand their full import; and this twofold application of them, by our Lord and his apostles, is a full authority for us to consider and apply them in a similar way.¹⁵

The Critical Context. Next we are going to consider some of the authors of the biblical hermeneutics and modern theology in which Ford is based, men who quote, support, and defend the apotelesmatic principle: they are C. F. Keil, B. Ramm, L. Berkhof, P. Beyerhaus, G. E. Ladd, among others.

C. F. Keil is coauthor of a fundamental *Old Testament Commentary*, together with F. Delitzsch. In his commentary on Daniel (a key book in the Bible for the prophetic interpretation), an erudite commentary by one of the greatest biblical German scholars of the Old Testament in the second half of the 19th century, he talks about the apotelesmatic principle—actually he gives it that name—and he defines and backs it as the fundamental principle of prophetic interpretation and historical critique in the 19th century, demonstrates the theological origin of this hermeneutic principle in the historical critique of the Bible, and relates its origin in the Greek philosophy of history with to its

¹³Ford, *Daniel*, 49.

¹⁴For a brief but recent perspective about roots of prophetic interpretation in the 19th century, see I. S. Rennie, "Nineteenth-Century Roots of Contemporary Prophetic Interpretation," in C. E. Armerding & W. W. Gasque (eds.), *A Guide to Biblical Prophecy* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1989), 41-59. On page 70, referring to the principles or guides of prophetic interpretation, C. E. Armerding says: "*Together with the question of multiple fulfillment*, a student of prophecy should expect an indirect fulfillment by a correspondence of historical events" [emphasis added].

¹⁵T. H. Horne, *An Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures* (Boston, 1868), 2:641-43 [emphasis in the original]. Note that this is a critical study of the Bible. This point is very important in relation to our position of the origin of apotelesmatic principle, from the theological viewpoint of a historical critique of the Scriptures.

OURO: THE APOTELESMATIC PRINCIPLE

theological origin. This important author in the rationalist critique of 19th century says the following:

If the prophets before the captivity, therefore, connect the deliverance of Israel from Babylon and their return to Canaan immediately with the setting up of the kingdom of God in its glory, without giving any indication that between the end of the Babylonish exile and the appearance of the Messiah a long period would intervene, this uniting together of the two events is not to be explained only from the perspective and *apotelesmatic* character of the prophecy, but has its foundation in the very nature of the thing itself . . . The prophetic perspective, by virtue of which the inward eye of the seer beholds only the elevated summits of historical events as they unfold themselves, and not the valleys of the common incidents of history which lie between these heights, is indeed peculiar to prophecy in general, and accounts for the circumstance that the prophecies as a rule give no fixed dates, and *apotelesmatically* bind together the points of history which open the way to the end, with the end itself.¹⁶

Other authors also use the concept of the apotelesmatic principle when they refer to this principle of prophetic interpretation, such as Way, Gillet, and Brinsmead, who say the following in an unpublished article:

As the eleventh and twelfth chapters of Daniel expand the prophecy of chapter eight, we should expect to find that the passages dealing with the antichrist power in these last two chapters would parallel the passages in the chapter they are illuminating. That being the case, we find that many of the differences in interpretation have not been contradictions, but merely the different applications of this *apotelesmatic* prophecy. It will depend entirely upon our focal point as to whether we see antichrist as Antiochus Epiphanes, pagan Rome, or papal Rome in either of its two phases. Once again, only the consummative manifestation of the antichrist will fill out the details of this *apotelesmatic* prophecy.¹⁷

We must point out the important and significant fact that there are other authors who do not use the name apotelesmatic principle directly to refer to this hermeneutic principle, but they accept and assume the apotelesmatic principle with its concept that prophecies can have multiple or double fulfillment; in other words, a germinant fulfillment before the complete fulfillment. The following are some examples.

B. Ramm, another author of a critical perspective, talks about the possibility of *multiple fulfillment*:

¹⁶Carl F. Keil, Daniel, in C. F. Keil & F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986 [rpr.]), 9:9-10 [emphasis added].

¹⁷R. Way, E. Gillet & B. Brinsmead, "The Consummation," (unpublished MS.), 24 [emphasis added].

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

There is a difference between 'multiple sense' and 'multiple fulfillment'. Misunderstanding has arisen due to the failure to distinguish double fulfillment . . . Beecher affirms, if the Scriptures had many meanings interpretation would be equivocal, but manifold fulfillment of the generic prophecy preserves the one sense of Scripture. Both promises and threats work themselves out over a period of time and therefore may pass through several fulfillments. Or one may view the same event from more than one perspective.¹⁸

Berkhof says in relation with this:

The fulfillment of some of the most important prophecies is germinant, i.e., they are fulfilled by installments, each fulfillment being a pledge of that which is to follow. Hence while it is a mistake to speak of a double or treble sense of prophecy, it is perfectly correct to speak of a two or threefold fulfillment. It is quite evident, e.g., that Joel's prophecy in 2:28-32 was not completely fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. Notice also the predictions respecting the coming of the Son of Man in Matt. 24.¹⁹

Peter Beyerhaus states:

The prophetic texts constitute a peculiar literary species. They very seldom convey an unequivocal message that can be collected from their plain wording. Rather we have to distinguish carefully between the historic application at the time of the author, the employment of metaphorical imagery, sometimes taken from the contemporary world of religions, and the really prophetic prediction that sometimes even finds its fulfillment in different events at different stages of salvation history.²⁰

G. E. Ladd talks about the way the biblical passages about 'Kingdom' belong to the pattern of promise, fulfillment, and consummation. That is to say, according to Ford, Ladd is saying that the first coming of Jesus attested the veracity of the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies, but the second coming testifies its completion.²¹

In reference to the prophetic interpretation system, Merrill C. Tenney concurs:

The final conclusion on the chronological methods of interpretation is that all contain some elements of truth, and that

¹⁸B. Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: Wilde, 1956), 233-34 [emphasis added].

¹⁹L. Berkhof, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1950), 153 [emphasis in the original].

²⁰P. Beyerhaus, "The Perils of Prophecy," in *Christianity Today* (February 16, 1973), 58, quoted in Ford, *Daniel*, 49 [emphasis added].

²¹G. E. Ladd, "Unity and Variety in New Testament Faith," in *Christianity Today* (November 19, 1965), 21-24, quoted in Ford, *Daniel*, 58n.

OURO: THE APOTELESMATIC PRINCIPLE

all are in a measure overstrained.²²

This is a similar affirmation to the Ford axiom that was indicated earlier, though less hyperbolic, and in this declaration by Tenney Ford's intention becomes clearer and more understandable.

Ford quotes English philosopher Francis Bacon to show that the apotelesmatic principle is not a new idea, and that this principle was already in Bacon's thoughts centuries ago, when he talked about a "germinant fulfillment."²³

Joseph Angus also quotes Lord Francis Bacon in the following reference concerning divine prophecies:

But here we must allow that latitude which is peculiar and familiar to divine prophecies, which have their completion not only at stated times, but in succession, as participating of the nature of their author, "with whom a thousand years are but as one day," and therefore are not fulfilled punctually at once, but have a growing accomplishment through many ages, though the height or fulness of them may refer to a single age or moment.²⁴

Both references to Bacon are very interesting, especially that by Ford, since it was precisely this empiricist English philosopher who said that every truth is found inductively. He rendered the establishment of man as the measure of all things methodologically feasible. At the same time, the Holy Scriptures were excluded as the source of truth. Consistent with his outlook, he completely separated the realm of reason and science from that of faith and religion and defined faith as *sacrificium intellectus*, the surrender of the attempt to understand.²⁵ Francis Bacon (1561-1626) was one of the founders of empiricism, a paradigm 17th century English philosophical, and his philosophical system constituted one of the fundamental bases on which the modern historical criticism of the Bible was developed. This obvious fact more clearly places the grounds on which the apotelesmatic principle is used out of a theological-biblical context and into a philosophical context, especially in the origin of the historical criticism of the Bible.²⁶

The last author that we are going to quote is J. S. Baxter, who presents an extraordinarily significant and clarifying declaration in relation to historical philosophy. After referring to the value which he gives to the idealist and

²²Merril C. Tenney, *Interpreting Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 146 [emphasis added].

²³D. Ford, *Daniel*, 69, quoting to F. Bacon, *Advancement of Learning*, 2:60.

²⁴F. Bacon, *Advancement of Learning*, Book II, quoted by J. Angus, *The Bible Hand-Book* (London: The Religious Tract Society, n.d.), 290 [emphasis added].

²⁵Quoted in E. Linnemann, *Historical Criticism of the Bible: Methodology or Ideology?* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), 28-29.

²⁶For an analysis of philosophical empiricism, see C. G. Hempel, *Filosofia de la Ciencia Natural* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1993).

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

preterist prophetic interpretation systems, he says the following:

With the *Historicists* [emphasis on the original] I can see recurrent correspondences and fulfilments *all* [emphasis added] through the present age, inasmuch as “*history repeats itself*,” [emphasis added] and God has overruled events to adumbrate and lead onward to the *ultimate* [emphasis in original] fulfillment.²⁷

Baxter precisely establishes within the historicist system his perspective that history repeats itself, expressing his circular or cyclic view of history that again goes back to our hypothesis and the origin of apotelesmatic principle in the Greek philosophy of history.

We conclude this analysis with an especially revealing sentence by Ford which leads us toward the origin and source of his apotelesmatic principle. He writes:

Some commentators link this *principle* [apotelesmatic principle] with the *spiral view of history* implied by Ec 1:9, 10.²⁸

We definitely think that this Ford comment confirms and proves our hypothesis that the philosophical origin of the apotelesmatic principle is Greek philosophy in history, especially the repeated historical cycles of Platonist philosophy. As we just mentioned, Ford uses this principle as a basis for his spiral and cyclic view of history. As a result, his apotelesmatic principle concurs with a cyclic philosophical conception of history inconsistent with the Hebrew-Christian conception, thought, and philosophy of history that supports a linear view of time and prophetic interpretation. We submit that an external principle of biblical interpretation, extracted from the Greek philosophical and prophetic perspective and artificially transplanted into the completely different Hebrew perspective of history and prophetic interpretation, is an invalid tool unlikely to lead to a correct understanding of the Word of God.

All that has been previously stated leads us to the following conclusion:

If Ford’s apotelesmatic principle is invalid, as we believe we have shown, the logical and evident conclusion is that his whole system and structure of prophetic interpretation crumbles like a castle made of cards, where the apotelesmatic principle “joker” is the sustaining factor and the presuppositional grounds of his theological system by which he explain his whole prophetic system, starting with the 1844 beginning of the pre-advent investigative judgement, the day of the antitypical atonement, diverse aspects of the theology of the sanctuary, and especially his hermeneutic of prophetic interpretation.

²⁷J. S. Baxter, *Explore the Book* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, n.d.), 6:340.

²⁸Ford, *Daniel*, 58n [emphasis added]. Continuing, he quotes Ellen White: “God’s work is the same in all time, although there are different degrees of development” [Ellen White, *The Story of Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1958), 373], seeking to establish a link between the apotelesmatic principle with its spiral or circular view of history in Ellen White, an idea and belief that, as we will see later, is completely opposite to her thought.

OURO: THE APOTELESMATIC PRINCIPLE

The Theological Application of the Apotelesmatic Principle

We have shown that the idea that prophecies may have more than one fulfillment is not a new contribution to prophetic interpretation. What is new is Ford's wholesale application of this idea. The common approach to some of the Old Testament prophecies is that they had a primary fulfillment in the times of ancient Israel and a secondary fulfillment in Christ, the Church, or the New Earth. For example, Adventist interpreters have seen a dual application of the little horn of Daniel 8 in both pagan and papal Rome. It should be noted carefully, however, that this is virtually the only clearly dual application of the apocalyptic symbols of Daniel that such interpreters have adopted. These apotelesmatic reapplications of the little horn in Daniel 8 are relatively restricted, however, compared to what Ford does with Dan 8:14.²⁹ In Ford's prophetic interpretation system, the little horn of Daniel 8 is not only pagan and papal Rome but also Antiochus Epiphanes and a final Antichrist just before Christ comes, and probably also a revived Antichrist at the end of the millennium.

Since the beginning the Seventh-day Adventist Church has accepted and applied the historicist method of prophetic interpretation to explain apocalyptic symbols. The historicist method accepts that the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation are to find fulfillment in historical time—in the period between the prophet Daniel and the final establishment of God's Kingdom. The day-year principle (a symbolic or prophetic day equals a literal year) is an essential part of this method, provided that the symbolic times can be explained and we can locate the aforesaid events throughout the historical periods.

Jesus himself used the historicist method to interpret Daniel when he announced: "The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand" (Mark 1:15). This verse alludes to the prophetic fulfillment of the 70 weeks prophecy of Daniel (Dan 9:24-27) that predicts the appearance of the Messiah.

The protestant reformers (from whose roots we spring) used the historicist method, as well. Through this method they concluded that the Papacy was the center of various Daniel and Revelation prophecies. By following this system, the Seventh-day Adventist Church pioneers arrived at an understanding of our own time, the ministry of Christ in the Heavenly Sanctuary, and our mission as God's people. Our comprehension of Daniel and Revelation has become our distinctive mark in illuminating the biblical truths that we teach as a church.³³

One of the main problems we have found with Ford's application of the apotelesmatic principle is the lack of coherence and internal consistency. If it is indeed a fundamental principle of interpretation and a scientific methodology, then it should apply to prophetic texts throughout the Bible. Ford applies the

²⁹See Ford, *Daniel 8:14*, 356, 420, 422.

³³*Ibid.*; Holbrook, 338, 341-43, 426, 435-36. For the biblical foundation and use in Jewish literature of the day-year principle, see W. H. Shea, *Selected Studies on Prophetic Interpretation* (Lincoln, NE: College View Printers, 1982), 56-93.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

apotelesmatic principle to Daniel but not to Christ's apocalyptic prophecy in Mark 13. What is more, he uses it only in selected portions of Daniel. In his commentary on this book, Ford does not apply it to Daniel 2 or 7, but he does apply it to Daniel 8, 9 and 11.³⁴ We will look at some examples of these problems.

Daniel 7. For the four beasts and the little horn of Daniel 7, Ford has followed the traditional historicist Adventist interpretation of: (1) Babylon, (2) Medo-Persia, (3) Greece, (4) pagan Rome, and (5) papal Rome. He has combined it, however, with aspects of the preterist interpretation, stressing the importance of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. The preterist interpretation of these symbols is that they represent: (1) Babylon, (2) Media, (3) Persia, (4) Greece, and (5) Antiochus IV Epiphanes. (This school of interpretation, which is the dominant scholarly view on this subject at the present time, also holds that Daniel was written in the second century B.C.)³⁵

Since Ford accepts both of these interpretations (preterist and historicist) for the little horn in Daniel 8, he could just as well have applied the apotelesmatic principle to the little horn in Daniel 7, but he did not. Thus his application of this principle, as Shea points out, is very arbitrary. What it finally proves is that it is not a principle at all.³⁶

Daniel 9. In the preface to his interpretation of the prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27, Ford has noted that preterism, "by far the most prominent school today, because of its dating of the book in Maccabean times, sees in these verses a description of events that transpired in connection with Antiochus Epiphanes and his attack on the Jewish faith."³⁷

In his evaluation of this point of view, however, Ford rejects it: "The evidence is overwhelming that the New Testament teaches that 9:24-27 was *not* accomplished in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes."³⁸

Furthermore, Ford applies the Messianic prophecy of Dan 9:24-27 to Jesus' time in the first century and to what will be accomplished at the end of the age. He rejects the preterist interpretation that applies these events to Antiochus IV Epiphanes, and he rejects the dispensationalist (or futurist) interpretation that splits off the 70th week and transfers it down to the end of time. Since this is something Ford denies, and the interpreters are right in what they affirm and wrong in what they deny, Ford is inconsistent in disagreeing with their rule.³⁹

Thus, Ford defends a syncretist method of prophetic interpretation, mixing aspects of the preterist, futurist, idealist, and historicist methods. This leads, however, to an easily observable internal incoherence and inconsistency, so

³⁴Ford, *Daniel*, 84-101, 138-59, 160-238, 252-77.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 138-59.

³⁶See Shea, "Apotelesmatic Principle," 10-12.

³⁷Ford, *Daniel*, 199.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 207 [emphasis in the original].

³⁹*Ibid.*, 225-38.

OURO: THE APOTELESMATIC PRINCIPLE

evident that it precludes consideration of the apotelesmatic principle as a universal principle of prophetic interpretation, useful in a methodologically scientific approach to the study and interpretation of the biblical text.

Ellen White and the Apotelesmatic Principle

Ford has attempted to show that Ellen White made similar apotelesmatic applications in her comments on such prophecies. Let's see if this is true in general and especially in the book of Daniel.⁴⁰

1. Ford quotes White as saying, "God's work is the same in all time, although there are different degrees of development,"⁴¹ then explains, "History and prophecy thus illustrate each other."⁴² However, in context, it is clear that White is not talking about prophecy here at all, but about progressive revelation:

God's work is the same in all time, although there are different degrees of development and different manifestations of His power, to meet the wants of men in the different ages. Beginning with the first gospel promise, and coming down through the patriarchal and Jewish ages, and even to the present time, there has been *a gradual unfolding of the purposes of God in the plan of redemption.*⁴³

2. Ford is correct in noting that Ellen White applies Joel 2:28 first to Pentecost and secondly to the latter rain.⁴⁴ This symbolism for the Holy Spirit's falling is drawn from the two rainy seasons of Palestine, in the fall and the spring, which are distinct from one another. He does not point out, though, that in *The Great Controversy*, Ellen White is not suggesting that there are two fulfillments for the early rain and two for the latter rain, but rather she sees just one fulfillment for each.

As the "former rain" was given, in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at the opening of the gospel, to cause the springing up of the precious seed, so the "latter rain" will be given at its close for the ripening of the harvest.⁴⁵

As Shea indicates, Ellen White is not here using the apotelesmatic principle, which would require two or more former rains and two or more latter rains.⁴⁶

3. Ford claims that Ellen White applied Mal 4:5-6 first to John the Baptist, and secondly to the Advent movement.⁴⁷ She does writes that as a prophet, John

⁴⁰See Shea, "Apotelesmatic Principle," 21-35.

⁴¹White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 373.

⁴²Ford, *Daniel 8:14*, 493.

⁴³White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 373 [emphasis added].

⁴⁴Ford, *Daniel 8:14*, 538, quotes Ellen White, *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1950), 611.

⁴⁵White, *Great Controversy*, 611.

⁴⁶Shea, "Apotelesmatic Principle," 24-25.

⁴⁷Ford, *Daniel 8:14*, 533, quotes Ellen White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA:

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

was “to return the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; 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.”⁴⁸

Saying that John “was a representative of those who are to prepare a people before our Lord’s second coming,” however, is quite different from making an apotelesmatic application of this prophecy to the Advent movement.

4. Ford claims that Ellen White applies 2 Thes 2 to both Paul’s day and to the final counterfeit by Satan when he appears as Christ.⁴⁹ Unfortunately for Ford, in the passage he quotes, Ellen White does not apply the prophecy of 2 Thes 2 to the final appearance of Satan. She quotes other texts such as Rev 1:13-15; Acts 8:10; Matt 24:24-27, 31; 25:31; Rev 1:7; and 1 Thes 4:16-17. Therefore, Ellen White simply did not apply 2 Thes 2 to this scene as Ford says she did.

5. Ford claims that Ellen White applied Rev 7:1-4, the shaking, first to the years immediately following 1844⁵⁰ and later to the future.⁵¹ This simply is not what Ellen White says in *Early Writings*: She writes, “The mighty shaking *has commenced and will go on*, and all will be shaken out who are not willing to take a bold and unyielding stand for the truth and to sacrifice for God and His cause.”⁵² The shaking, thus, is one continuous event, not a several distinct events.

6. Ford claims that Ellen White first applied Rev 14:6-8, the first angel’s message, to the Millerite movement⁵³ and later applied it to the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s message till the end of time.⁵⁴ The second angel’s message, he writes, was applied first to the midnight cry of 1844 and the fall of Protestant churches and second to the loud cry and the fall of all churches throughout the world.⁵⁵ Here Ford wants to change this continuum in Ellen White’s thought and in the interpretation of the Church into separate and independent poles of prophetic fulfillment. The first angel’s message began with the Millerite movement and it has *continued* on in its proclamation by the Adventist Church. The fulfillment of the second angel’s message among the churches began with their rejection of the judgment hour message of the first angel and its fulfillment will continue on until its climax before the coming of Christ.⁵⁶

7. Ford claims that Ellen White applies the prophecy of Dan 8:13 to AD

Pacific Press, 1940), 79-80.

⁴⁸White, *Desire of Ages*, 79-80 [emphasis added].

⁴⁹Ford, *Daniel 8:14*, 484, 533-34, quotes Ellen White, *Great Controversy*, 624ff.

⁵⁰Ellen White, *Early Writings* (Washington: Review & Herald, 1945), 50.

⁵¹Ford, *Daniel 8:14*, 537, quotes Ellen White, *5 Testimonies*, 80-82.

⁵²White, *Early Writings*, 50 [emphasis added].

⁵³*Ibid.*, 232-37.

⁵⁴White, *Great Controversy*, 450, 453, 425.

⁵⁵Ford, *Daniel 8:14*, 538, quotes Ellen White, *Great Controversy*, 389-90.

⁵⁶Shea, “Apotelesmatic Principle”, 29.

OURO: THE APOTELESMATIC PRINCIPLE

70, the Middle Ages, and the fulfillment of the last crisis sketched in Revelation 13⁵⁷ However, he does not supply any quotation from Ellen White where she makes such an application.

8. Ford claims that this being the case, it is not strange to find that Ellen White also used Dan 8:14 eschatologically as pointing not only to 1844, but also to “the final purification of the universe from sin and sinners.”⁵⁸ Neither of the references cited by Ford, however, says this.⁵⁹ Therefore, the application of the cleansing of the sanctuary in Dn 8:14 to the cleansing of the earth when it is made over new again is Ford’s apotelesmatic application, not Ellen White’s.

9. Ford claims that Ellen White makes an apotelesmatic application of the language of Dan 9:24 to the future consummation of all things in the following passage:⁶⁰

Through union with Christ, through acceptance of His righteousness by faith, we may be qualified to work the works of God, to be colaborers with Christ. If you are willing to drift along with the current of evil, and do not cooperate with the Heavenly agencies in restraining transgression in your family, and in the church, in order that everlasting righteousness may be brought in, you do not have faith. Faith works by love and purifies the soul. Through faith the Holy Spirit works in the heart to create holiness therein.⁶¹

This is simply a *homiletical* use of biblical phraseology. There is no basis in this passage for saying, as Ford does, that she indicated thereby that this prophecy should be applied apotelesmatically to the “consummation of all things.”

10. Finally, in referring to Ellen White’s supposed apotelesmatic use of Daniel 11, Ford states: “Later prophets have not hesitated to apply Daniel’s words to more than one occasion. The most recent illustration is Ellen White in Letter 103, 1904.”⁶²

We have no time to lose. Troublous times are before us. The world is stirred with the Spirit of war. Soon the scenes of trouble spoken of in the prophecies will take place. The prophecy in the eleventh [chapter] of Daniel has nearly reached its complete fulfillment. Much of history that has taken place in fulfillment of this prophecy will be repeated.⁶³

What Ellen White is referring to here is that the troublous times and

⁵⁷Ford, *Daniel 8:14*, 534.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 536, 539 [emphasis in the original].

⁵⁹White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 372; *Great Controversy*, 720-37.

⁶⁰Ford, *Daniel 8:14*, 503, quotes Ellen White, *Selected Messages* (Washington: Review & Herald, 1958), 1:374.

⁶¹White, *Selected Messages*, 1:374.

⁶²Ford, *Daniel 8:14*, 492.

⁶³Ellen White, *Letter 103*, 1904, 4-5.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

persecution suffered by the church of God in fulfillment of Dan 11:33-35 will occur again in fulfillment of Dan 12:1-2. But saying that troublous times and persecution will occur again is different from saying that verses 33-35 will be fulfilled again apotelesmatically at the end of time when there are other verses later in the prophecy which refer to those conditions.

We have considered ten examples Ford gives to support his claim that Ellen White has carried out apotelesmatic reapplications of prophecies, indicating a principle of repeated fulfillment. However, none of them confirm what Ford tries to demonstrate. Specifically, Ford has tried to find support in Ellen White quotations for using the apotelesmatic principle in Dan 8:13, Dan 8:14, Dan 9:24, Dan 11, and Dan 12:2, but none of these references show the so called repeated and apotelesmatic application supposed and defended by Ford.

Conclusion

The conclusion of this article is that there is no evidence that Ford is correct in his assertion that the doctrine of the pre-advent investigative judgment beginning in 1844, several aspects of theology of the sanctuary, the antitypical atonement day, the historicist method of the prophetic interpretation, and the day-year principle cannot be supported on the basis of an exhaustive and precise hermeneutics and exegetics of the Bible text. The apotelesmatic principle does not solve the supposed problem that exists in Adventist theology, as that problem does not exist but has been imagined by Ford himself. Finally, the philosophical and theological origin of the apotelesmatic principle in an irrelevant and distinctly Greek model rather than in a model of biblical conception and thought (Hebrew-Christian) invalidates it and renders all the presuppositions and conclusions of Ford's theological interpretation unsustainable.

The Prophetic Significance of Stephen

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The historic-messianic interpretation of the seventy weeks¹ of Dan 9:24-27 had to wait a very long time for an exegetical defense of the event which closes the prophecy. Up until the end of the eighteenth century—following the tradition of most Church Fathers and Reformers²—many authors simply said that the 70th week, which had started with the baptism of Jesus, came to an end when the gospel started being preached to the Gentiles. The only hint in the prophecy for this conclusion was the introductory phrase, “Seventy weeks are cut off for your people and your holy city” (v. 24), which was assumed to mean the end of all Jewish privileges.³

This interpretation received sounder scriptural support when Stephen was introduced into that prophetic scenario. The first person to do this seems to have been the Irish scholar William Hales. In 1799, Hales published an anonymous volume in which he said that the last of the seventy weeks had ended “*about* A.D. 34 (*about* the martyrdom of Stephen).”⁴ Nearly ten years later, in the first edition of his *A New Analysis of Chronology*, he was less hesitant in saying that

¹ J. Barton Payne, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), 383-389, points out that there are basically four different kinds of interpretation of Dan 9:24-27: the liberal, the traditional, the dispensational, and the symbolical. The traditional, also known as the historic-messianic interpretation, is characterized by applying to this prophecy the year-day principle and by holding that “this entire passage is Messianic in nature, and the Messiah is the leading character . . . the great *terminus ad quem*” of the central part of the prophecy, i.e. the 69 weeks (Edward J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949], 209).

² For an exhaustive study of prophetic interpretation from the early Church Fathers until modern times, see LeRoy Edwin Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, 4 vols. (Washington: Review & Herald, 1948).

³ See E. B. Pusey, *Daniel the Prophet* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1855), 193.

⁴ [William Hales], *The Inspector, or Select Literary Intelligence* (London: J. White, 1799), 207 (emphasis supplied). Hales identifies himself as the author of this volume in his *Dissertations on the Principal Prophecies* (London: C. J. G. & F. Rivington, 1808), ix.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

the prophecy “ended with the martyrdom of Stephen.”⁵ Finally, in the second and more definitive edition of this work, he not only confirmed his position but also elaborated a bit more. This edition did much to popularize his chronology among some prophetic writers of the next two centuries. Based on biblical, historical and astronomical evidence, he dated the crucifixion at A.D. 31, in the middle of the 70th week.⁶ The baptism, therefore, which had occurred in A.D. 27, was the event that marked the beginning of “the first half of the Passion Week of years,” whose remaining half “ended with the martyrdom of Stephen, in the seventh, or last year of the week.”⁷ Then he added:

For it is remarkable, that the year after, A.D. 35, began a new Era in the Church, namely, the conversion of Saul, or Paul, the apostle, by the personal appearance of Christ to him on the road to Damascus, when he received his mission to the Gentiles, after the Jewish Sanhedrin had formally rejected Christ by persecuting His disciples.⁸

During the next one hundred fifty years, however, the simple statement that the stoning of Stephen and consequently the conversion of Paul marked the end of the seventy weeks in A.D. 34 were accepted as fact. Hales, indeed, did not establish any single exegetical connection between Stephen and Dan 9:24-27, and those who came after him limited themselves to only reproducing the same argument, apparently unconcerned with demonstrating why Stephen’s death suffices as evidence for the end of that prophetic period. The only reason given was the traditional one that after his death, the gospel was taken to the Gentiles.⁹

⁵ William Hales, *A New Analysis of Chronology* (London: By the author, 1809-1812), 564.

⁶ Under the influence of James Ussher, whose work *Annales Veteris Testamenti* (London: Ex Officina J. Flesher, 1650-1654) had been the standard for biblical chronology for nearly two hundred years, there were many scholars who placed the crucifixion at the end of the last week in A.D. 33, perhaps because Jesus’ death seemed much more relevant than anything else in closing the prophecy.

⁷ William Hales, *A New Analysis of Chronology and Geography, History and Prophecy*, 4 vols., 2nd ed. (London: C. J. G. & F. Rivington, 1830), 1:94-95.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 1:100.

⁹ See, for example, Carl A. Auberlen, *The Prophecies of Daniel and The Revelations of St. John* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1856), 140; J. N. Andrews, *The Sanctuary and Twenty-Three Hundred Years*, 2nd ed. (Battle Creek: Steam Press, 1872), 27; Uriah Smith, *Daniel and the Revelation* (Battle Creek: Review and Herald, 1903), 204-205; Philip Mauro, *The Seventy Weeks and the Great Tribulation* (Boston: Scripture Truth Depot, 1923), 112; George M. Price, *The Greatest of the Prophets* (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1955), 257; J. Barton Payne, *The Imminent Appearing of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 149; Charles Boutflower, *In and Around the Book of Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1963), 210; Robert M. Gurney, *God in Control* (Worthing: H. E. Walter, 1980), 115-119.

PAROSCHI: THE PROPHETIC SIGNIFICANCE OF STEPHEN

When one talks about fulfillment of prophecy, however, the mere choosing of a particular event does not necessarily make the date correct,¹⁰ no matter how important the event is. Without any hint in Dan 9:24-27 and Acts 6-7 that Stephen closes the 70th week, Harold W. Hoehner's conclusion that this interpretation "is pure speculation" would be correct.¹¹ Because of this, in the 1980s William H. Shea tried to develop this theme in order to explain in a more convincing way the following questions: "What was so significant about the stoning of Stephen? Why was his martyrdom more important than that suffered by others at that time?"¹² Then, for the first time, the exegetical connections between Stephen and the seventy weeks prophecy began appearing.¹³

Shea's starting point is the expression "to seal up vision and prophet," one of the six infinitival phrases which summarize what would happen by the end of the seventy weeks (Dan 9:24). According to him, the verb "to seal up" (*hatam*) may be understood here as either to validate or authenticate, to close up (until a later opening), or to bring to an end. The usual practice has been to apply this verb in one of the first two meanings. Shea, however, argues that this interpretation would only make sense if the second object to the infinitive ("to seal up") were "prophecy," which is not the case. The two objects are "vision" (*hazôn*) and "prophet" (*nabî#*), which suggest the third interpretation ("to bring to an end").

In his opinion, this third interpretation—to bring to an end—is preferred here for three reasons. First, occurring without the article, "prophet" might have in this passage a collective or corporate meaning, and the idea of bringing to an end would make perfect sense if it referred to prophets as persons instead of to their words. Second, the verb *hatam* also occurs three phrases earlier in this same verse with the clear idea of bringing to an end ("to put an end to sin"). Third, this interpretation fits the immediate context better because the text says that seventy weeks were decreed for Daniel's people and his holy city. Therefore, Shea concludes, "'vision' and 'prophet' are to come to an end by the time this prophetic period closes," and "since the final events of this prophecy appear to extend half a prophetic week or three and one-half years beyond the death of

¹⁰ Perhaps because of this Young, 220, declares about the seventy weeks: "No important event is singled out as marking the termination." And Pusey, 193, says that the end of the prophecy "probably" marks the time when "the gospel embraced the world." Then he adds: "We have not the chronological data to fix it."

¹¹ Harold W. Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977), 126.

¹² William H. Shea, "Daniel and the Judgment," a manuscript on the sanctuary and the judgment doctrine, Andrews University, July 1980, 366.

¹³ Shea's thesis was finally published in "The Prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27," in *70 Weeks, Leviticus, Nature of Prophecy, Daniel & Revelation Committee Series*, vol. 3, ed. Frank B. Holbrook (Washington: Biblical Research Institute, 1986), 75-118.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

the Messiah, we must look to the NT for an answer.” For him, Stephen fulfils the requisites for that answer.¹⁴

The purpose of this paper, however, is not only to show how Shea connects Stephen with the prophecy, but also to go a step further, developing some of the points of that connection and also exploring the role performed by Stephen in the context of the early church, which certainly makes his prophetic significance even stronger. However, because of space limitations, this paper focuses only on Stephen himself, his ministry, and his significance to the closing of the seventy weeks. This means that neither the other events and respective dates of the prophecy¹⁵ nor the chronological validity of A.D. 34 itself as the year of Stephen’s death will be discussed here.¹⁶

Regarding the organization of the material, priority is given to Stephen’s account as it appears in the book of Acts. The first section, therefore, rebuilds the historical and theological settings of Stephen: i.e., who Stephen was, how he became a preacher, what his theology was, and the changes that occurred in the apostolic church immediately after and as a result of his death. The following section then introduces the exegetical reasons why Stephen seems to fit as the end of the 70th week by analyzing the moment of his trial, namely the true nature of his speech and vision and its theological meaning relating to God’s covenant with Israel. At the end, a summary of the previous sections and a tentative conclusion follow.

Stephen as a Preacher

Stephen has been described as one of the most “ambiguous” figures in the biblical account of the apostolic church.¹⁷ There has been much discussion among scholars about his identity, his background, his theology, his influence on Paul and the mission to the Gentiles, his role in the theology and structure of Acts, and so on.¹⁸ Luke’s account of Stephen in Acts 6-7 gives rise to numerous and diverse questions which are even more relevant when one attempts to connect his death with the seventy weeks prophecy. Because of this, this section

¹⁴ Shea, “The Prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27,” 80; cf. “Daniel and Judgment,” 73-75.

¹⁵ For the most recent and exhaustive analysis of the seventy weeks chronology, see Brempong Owusu-Antwi, *The Chronology of Daniel 9:24-27*, Adventist Theological Society Dissertation Series, vol. 2 (Berrien Springs: ATS Publications, 1995).

¹⁶ The dating of Stephen’s death is entirely dependent on that of Paul’s conversion, and the dating of Paul’s conversion has been the object of a lot of discussion among the scholars, who have postulated any date from A.D. 32 to 36, including of course A.D. 34, which represents exactly a median and a mean among the others suggested. For a recent and thorough discussion on Paul’s chronology, see Rainer Riesner, *Paul’s Early Period* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 3-227.

¹⁷ Martin H. Scharlemann, *Stephen: A Singular Saint*, *Analecta Biblica*, no. 34 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1968), 1. See also Marcel Simon, *St. Stephen and The Hellenists* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1958), 1-4.

¹⁸ See Günter Wagner, ed., *An Exegetical Bibliography of the New Testament: Luke and Acts* (Macon: Mercer University, 1985), 397-416.

PAROSCHI: THE PROPHETIC SIGNIFICANCE OF STEPHEN

attempts to identify three basic elements about Stephen, namely, his community, his theology, and the influence of his theology on early church history.

His Community. Stephen appears for the first time in the context of the first dissension experienced by the early church. The problem was related to the supply of food being given to the Hellenists' widows in Jerusalem (Acts 6:1). The term "Hellenists" simply means people who spoke Greek as their mother language. In this case, it refers to Jews who had been born in Greco-Roman lands, had moved to Jerusalem, and then become Christians.¹⁹ Stephen was one of them (6:5).²⁰ The "Hebrews," the other segment of the church, which the Hellenists complained against, were Aramaic-speaking Palestinian Jews who formed the original nucleus of the Christian community in Jerusalem. The Twelve belonged to this group (6:2).

The fact that the church was divided into two distinct groups in such an early period does not imply necessarily, as has been suggested, two virtually separate communities with different religious and doctrinal features.²¹ Martin Hengel argues that the only reason for the separation was the language, which "necessarily and quickly" led the Aramaic- and Greek-speaking Christians to adopt separate worship services, just as in the Jewish synagogues (cf. Acts 6:9).²² But it is also "inherently probable," as I. Howard Marshall says, that the Aramaic-speaking group was "more radical in its attitudes to Judaism" than the other group, which had gone much further than the latter in its interpretation of the gospel.²³

Although Marshall reiterates that this difference should not be exaggerated,²⁴ it is not impossible that behind the problem involving the Hellenists'

¹⁹ The term "Hellenists" also appears in Acts 9:29 and 11:20 (for the textual problem of this passage, see Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. [Stuttgart: United Bible Society, 1994], 340-342), and, according to the context, in each one of these passages it must refer to a different group. If in 6:1 the Hellenists are Greek-speaking Jewish Christians, in 9:29 they are only Greek-speaking Jews, and in 11:20, Greek-speaking Gentiles of whatever race who lived in Antioch. For a thorough analysis of the term "Hellenist," see Martin Hengel, *Between Jesus and Paul* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 1-11.

²⁰ For the thesis introduced by Abram Spiro, "Stephen's Samaritan Background," in Johannes Munck, *The Acts of the Apostles*, The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1967), 285-300, that Stephen was a Samaritan, see F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 120.

²¹ Simon, 12-14, who interprets the word "Hellenist" as "Hellenism," declares that the Hellenists in Acts are people who "under the influence and contamination of Greek thought, strayed from the ways of strict Pharisaic orthodoxy and could therefore be labeled as 'paganizing.'" He also states that this idea is not totally clear in the context simply because Luke "could not, or did not want to, see that something more was implied in the word."

²² Hengel, 14-16. Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 62, even suggests that the Hellenists must have lived together in their own district or quarter in Jerusalem, where they had their synagogues and guesthouses.

²³ I. Howard Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles*, The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1982), 125, 128.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 125.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

widows there were also some theological concerns.²⁵ There was within Judaism a historical tendency to consider those under the influence of the Greek culture religiously liberal (cf. 1 Macc 1:10–15; 2 Macc 4:7–20).²⁶ The Hellenists had no roots in the Palestinian Hebrew traditions. Most of them were not able to read the Hebrew Scriptures, and they did not attend the Hebrew synagogues. Proselytes, inferior to Hebrews born and bred, would naturally associate more with the Hellenists (cf. Acts 6:5). What is more, their embracing of Greek customs and their intense previous contact with Gentiles in their native countries would certainly feed the suspicion that they were lax in their observance of the law. Whatever the precise facts, the subsequent events—i.e. the election of the Seven, the judgment and death of Stephen, and the persecution that came thereafter—indicate that theological differences played an important role in that dissension and that the Hellenists’ complaint, as James D. G. Dunn says, was only the symptom of a deeper problem.²⁷

His Theology. The apostles’ solution for the Hellenists’ complaint was to choose seven men from the Hellenistic community itself to assume the duty of serving their poor.²⁸ As Hengel suggests, the choice may have fallen on those who were already the leaders of the Hellenistic Christians.²⁹ In this case, their election simply meant the recognition of their leadership, especially Stephens’, the first name on the list (cf. 6:5).

This idea is confirmed by the activity they performed immediately after their election, which does not fit the traditional understanding that they were deacons. In fact, they are never referred to as “deacons” (*diakonoí*) in the book of Acts,³⁰ and the same verb used to describe what they should supposedly do in 6:2 (*diakonéō*) is also used for the preaching of the word by the Twelve in 6:4. It

²⁵ Cf. Jürgen Becker, *Paul: Apostle to the Gentiles* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993), 63, 454; Clayton K. Harrop, “Stephen and Paul,” in *With Steadfast Purpose*, ed. Naymond H. Keathley (Waco: Baylor U, 1990), 182; Hengel, 1-29, 48-64; Martin Hengel, *Earliest Christianity* (London: SCM, 1986), 71-80; Seyoon Kim, *The Origin of Paul’s Gospel*, 2nd ed. (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1984), 44-50; William Manson, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1951), 27, 28.

²⁶ Cf. Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews* 12.5.1-5. On the controversies during the time of Herod, see *The Antiquities of the Jews* 15.8.1-5.

²⁷ James D. G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Valley Forge: Trinity, 1990), 269.

²⁸ The conclusion that the “Seven” were also Hellenists is based on the following evidence: the problem was related to the Hellenists’ widows (6:1); all seven had Greek names (6:5); Stephen’s opposition came from a Hellenistic synagogue (6:9); the persecution which followed Stephen’s death did not affect the apostles (8:14).

²⁹ Hengel, *Between Jesus and Paul*, 13.

³⁰ In the NT, the Seven are not mentioned outside the book of Acts. None of them, including Stephen and Philip, are named by the Apostolic Fathers. Even when the latter comment on the office of deacons, they quote the Pastoral Epistles instead of tracing this institution back to the time of the Seven. The first specific reference to them as deacons in later church literature seems to be Irenaeus’ remark that Stephen was both the first deacon and the first martyr (*Against Heresies* III, 12, 10; IV, 15, 1).

PAROSCHI: THE PROPHETIC SIGNIFICANCE OF STEPHEN

is also noteworthy that when Luke wishes to distinguish Philip from his namesake, the apostle, he does not call him “Philip the deacon,” but “Philip the evangelist” (21:8). This helps explain why the Seven appear as preachers and doers of wonders and signs immediately after their election (6:8-10; 8:4-8, 26-40). Their preaching must have been powerful, for it is reported that not only “the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly” (6:7), but also that their activity called forth a strong opposition from the Jews (6:9).

But what exactly did Stephen preach? Probably the charges made against him give some clue. He was accused of speaking “blasphemous words against Moses and God” (6:11). Some people were secretly induced to say: “This man incessantly speaks against this holy place and the Law; for we have heard him say that this Nazarene, Jesus, will destroy this place and alter the customs which Moses handed down to us” (6:13-14). Based on the reference to “false witnesses” (6:11), however, P. Double argues that Luke intends to indicate that the charges against Stephen were not true.³¹ But the charges in fact could not be totally false. It is possible that Stephen had said something which had been twisted by his opponents, just as the charges made against Jesus (Mark 14:58) appear to have some foundation in fact.”³²

According to those witnesses, the words spoken by Stephen suggested that Jesus Himself would destroy the temple and alter the Mosaic tradition. Jesus in fact had said: “I will destroy this temple made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands” (Mark 14:58). The Fourth Gospel gives the immediate application of these words as referring to Jesus’ bodily resurrection (John 2:19-21). Stephen, however, seems to have applied them, or part of them, to the temple itself in order to emphasize that it had lost its cultic meaning. His words “the Most High does not dwell in *houses* made by *human* hands” (Acts 7:48) could be interpreted not only as a protest against the idolatrous relationship that Israel maintained with the temple,³³ but also as a statement of the definitive end of the entire ceremonial system, for the temple was never intended to become a permanent institution,³⁴ except in its doxological function (see Isa 2:1-4). It is noteworthy that the only biblical reference that there were many conversions—even among the priests—appears in the context of Stephen’s preaching (cf. 6:7).

Stephen’s words, however, may still have what Marshall calls an “unspoken implication,” which is that God does dwell in a temple not made by hands.³⁵ In light of the book of Hebrews, such an implication is not a surprise. In He-

³¹ P. Double, “The Son of Man Saying in Stephen’s Witnessing: Acts 6:8--8:2,” *NTS* 31 (1985): 71-72.

³² Harrop, 183. See also Marshall, 128; Scharlemann, 13.

³³ So Gerhard A. Krodel, *Acts*, Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986), 150-151.

³⁴ Manson, 34.

³⁵ Marshall, 146.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

brews there is the same emphasis that the temple of Jerusalem had already lost its meaning and function as a place of expiation (Heb 8:7, 13; 10:1-2), and for this reason it had been replaced by another temple, a superior temple not “made with hands” (9:24; cf. 8:1-2).³⁶

The apostles and other Aramaic-speaking Jewish Christians of Jerusalem, as devout Jews, were probably not yet ready to follow the Hellenists’ understanding of this particular issue. They were still somewhat attached to some of the temple services and even to some ceremonial aspects of the law (cf. Acts 3:1; 21:17–26; Gal 2:11-14). Martin Hengel declares that “they remained more deeply rooted in the religious tradition of Palestine, which from the time of the Maccabees inevitably regarded any attack on Torah and Temple as sacrilege.”³⁷ Stephen, however, as well the other Hellenistic Christians, may have quickly understood that the mission of Christ involved the abrogation of the whole temple order and its being superseded by a new edifice not made by hands. The fact that they had been born abroad, had lived closer to the Gentiles, and spoke another language could have made them both more flexible in their religious traditions than the Hebrews and at the same time more open to the gospel and its worldwide dimension.³⁸ The gospel meant the end of all the ceremonial laws, including the sacrificial cultus. These external and visible symbols of Jewish particularism were not compatible with the universality of the Christian message of an already accomplished salvation.

His Influence. Finally, it should be noted that only the Hellenistic Christians were scattered from Jerusalem in the persecution against the church after Stephen’s death. The apostles were able to stay there (cf. Acts 8:1, 14), as were the other Hebrew Christians (cf. 11:1, 18, 22).³⁹ This persecution, however, had a positive influence on the church’s missionary activity. “Those who had been scattered went about preaching the word” (8:4; cf. 8:5-8; 11:19-21). The Hellenists, therefore, “became the real founders of the mission to the Gentiles, in which circumcision and observation of the ritual law were no longer required.”⁴⁰

³⁶ In fact, the similarities between Stephen’s speech and Hebrews are not limited to this point. Manson, 36, lists many others, including: the attitude to the Jewish cultus and law; the sense of the divine call to God’s people being called to “go out”; the ever-shifting scenes in Israel’s life, and the ever-renewed homelessness of the faithful; God’s word as “living”; the allusion to Joshua in connection with the promise of God’s “rest”; the idea of the “angels” being the ordainers of God’s law; and the directing of the eyes to heaven and to Jesus. C. Spicq, *L’Épître aux Hébreux*, 2 vols. (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1952), 1:202-203, adds some others: predilection for the same OT characters as heroes and saints; condemnation of the desert generation of Israelites; typological use of the OT; construction of the tabernacle along the lines of a heavenly model; and the citation of Scripture as “God said” or “Moses said.” William L. Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, 1991), cxlvii, states: “The writer of Hebrews was a profound theologian who appears to have received his theological and spiritual formation within the Hellenistic wing of the church.”

³⁷ Hengel, *Earliest Christianity*, 73.

³⁸ Cf. Dunn, 272.

³⁹ Marshall, 151.

⁴⁰ Hengel, *Between Jesus and Paul*, 13. See also Hengel, *Earliest Christianity*, 76-80.

PAROSCHI: THE PROPHETIC SIGNIFICANCE OF STEPHEN

Furthermore, it is not mere coincidence that Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, is introduced by Luke at the exact moment of Stephen's death (cf. 7:58). It is generally agreed that Paul attended the Hellenistic synagogue referred to in Acts 6:9, and so was one of Stephen's opponents.⁴¹ Paul describes himself prior to his conversion as a "Pharisee" (Phil 3:5) and "extremely zealous" for the Mosaic law and ancestral tradition (Gal 1:14). As such, he could hardly bear an attack upon the law and the temple cult, two of the three pillars upon which, according to Pirke Aboth 1:2, the world rests (the last being good works). To him, Stephen and the other Hellenistic Christians had proved themselves apostates. Because of this, he persecuted them (Phil 3:6). A little later, however, he was being accused of preaching the same theology which he had attempted to destroy (cf. Acts 21:21). This fact has caused Hengel to state that the Hellenists of Jerusalem were "the real bridge between Jesus and Paul."⁴²

But in addition to the theological similarities,⁴³ an apparently meaningless event helps to clarify the intimate connection between Paul and the Hellenists. When he returned from his third missionary journey, Paul arrived at Jerusalem and found lodging with a person called "Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple" (Acts 21:16).⁴⁴ Being "an early disciple," his conversion probably went back to the first years of the Jerusalem church.⁴⁵ Being from Cyprus, he was certainly a Hellenist, and therefore may have taken part in the episodes of Acts 6-8.⁴⁶ Considering that most of Paul's eight companions on that part of the trip were uncircumcised (cf. 20:4), Jon Paulien points out that a Hebrew Christian would hardly be prepared to "gladly" (21:17) lodge them. But as a Hellenist, it would not be a problem for Mnason.⁴⁷ Whatever the case, the fact that in Caesarea they had stayed in the house of Philip, "who was one of the seven" (21:8), is sufficient to show the proximity between Paul and the Hellenists.

So the martyrdom of Stephen occupies a position of extreme importance in the history of the apostolic church. It was the last event which took place while the actions were still confined to Jerusalem and the Christians still lived practically as Jews. At the same time, it was the event which first involved Paul and which initiated the Christian message being taken to the Gentile world. One can agree with J. C. O'Neill that "so much significance is attached to one event," but his conclusion that "Luke is schematizing the history and attributing to one

⁴¹ See Dennis Gaertner, *Acts*, 2nd ed. (Joplin: College Press, 1995), 123.

⁴² Hengel, *Between Jesus and Paul*, 29.

⁴³ J. Christiaan Beker, *Paul the Apostle* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 341, states categorically that Paul inherited his theology about Jesus from the Hellenistic Christians whom he had persecuted. See also Manson, 42-44.

⁴⁴ For the textual problem involved in this passage, see Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971), 607.

⁴⁵ Bruce, 402.

⁴⁶ Munck, 209, suggests that Mnason may have been among the Cypriots who left Jerusalem after Stephen's stoning and preached the gospel directly to the Greeks of Antioch (Acts 11:19-20).

⁴⁷ Jon Paulien, "Mnason," *ABD* (1992), 4:882.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

cause what probably should be attributed to many,"⁴⁸ is speculative and devoid of evidence. The best alternative, therefore, is to take Luke's narrative as it stands and acknowledge the significance of Stephen in the development of the apostolic church.

As much significance as he had, however, it does not suffice to make him the fulfillment of the seventy weeks. But if the phrase "to seal up vision and prophet" (Dan 9:24) applies to the end of that prophetic period and means to bring to an end the prophetic ministry on behalf of Daniel's people, and if Stephen matches these criteria chronologically as well as historically, then his role in early church history may be added to the picture to strengthen even more his prophetic significance. This is the subject of the following section.

Stephen as a Prophet

The question we face now is: was Stephen a prophet? If so, then we must also ask: does he match the criteria required by Dan 9:24-27 for the end of the seventy weeks period? Based on Acts 7:52, F. F. Bruce states that "Stephen placed himself in the prophetic succession by attacking" the Jews on the same point that the Old Testament prophets had, i.e. "Israel's perverted notions of the true worship of God."⁴⁹ Shea argues that the vision Stephen had at the end of his trial (7:55-56) made him "by definition" a prophet, since "it is to prophets that God gives visions of Himself like this."⁵⁰ That being so, Shea concludes, "he may have had the shortest ministry of any prophet known in the Bible," for he was stoned shortly thereafter.⁵¹ However, it is not the length of a prophetic ministry that makes it important, but the historical moment of such ministry and the message communicated. Because of this, this section focuses on the structure and meaning of Stephen's speech and the real object of his vision.

His Speech. The significance of Stephen's speech before the Sanhedrin (Acts 7:2-53) can be noted, firstly, from its length. It is the longest speech in the book of Acts, and this fact by itself has been sufficient to retain the attention of many scholars.⁵² Moreover, this speech has also been described as "perhaps [the most] perplexing address in Acts,"⁵³ because of its complexity and the problems of interpretation it raises.⁵⁴ One of the problems is related to the nature of this

⁴⁸ J. C. O'Neill, *The Theology of Acts in Its Historical Setting* (London: SPCK, 1961), 72.

⁴⁹ Bruce, 152. Luke T. Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Pagina Sacra Series, vol. 5 (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1992), 112, also says that because Stephen is described as "full of the Spirit and wisdom" (6:3) and because he worked "great wonders and signs among the people" (6:8), he was a prophet, "and like the prophets before him, he generates a divided response."

⁵⁰ Shea, "The Prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27," 81.

⁵¹ Shea, "Daniel and the Judgment", 367.

⁵² Marshall, 131, declares: "If length is anything to go by, Stephen's speech is one of the most important sections of Acts."

⁵³ Marion L. Soards, *The Speeches in Acts* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1994), 58.

⁵⁴ See Simon, 39-77; Scharlemann, 22-89; Simon Légasse, *Stephanos* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1992), 17-94.

PAROSCHI: THE PROPHETIC SIGNIFICANCE OF STEPHEN

speech, and in this particular issue the interpretation provided by Shea is very insightful. According to him, Stephen's speech "should be understood in connection with the covenant of the OT,"⁵⁵ that is, the way in which the covenant between God and Israel was formulated and the way the prophets used that formulation.

Shea's interpretation is grounded principally on an important study published in 1954 by George E. Mendenhall,⁵⁶ who identified the structure of the Sinai covenant with the suzerainty treaty utilized by the Hittite kings in 1450-1200 B.C.,⁵⁷ a period which corresponds exactly to the beginnings of the people of Israel. The Hittite king was the great king or suzerain who had under his control a number of vassals, from whom he expected faithfulness and strict obedience. The covenant, which was designated by the expression "oaths and bonds," had basically six elements: (1) the preamble, which identified the suzerain, (2) the prologue, which described the previous relations between the suzerain and the vassal, (3) the stipulations or obligations imposed upon the vassal, (4) provision for deposit in the temple and periodic public reading, (5) the witnesses to the covenant, and (6) the blessings and curses which would come to the vassal as a result of his obedience or disobedience.⁵⁸

Although Mendenhall states that "only two" biblical covenants fall into this pattern, Exod 20-23 and Josh 24,⁵⁹ Shea has successfully demonstrated that Deut, 1 Sam 12, and Mic 6 can also be organized along this same structure.⁶⁰ And for him, the value of this identification is in the fact that it shows that "when the prophets came as reformers to call Israel back to the Sinai covenant relationship, they did so by applying the covenant formulary to situations current in their times."⁶¹ In doing so, Shea argues, the prophets sometimes used the Hebrew word *rîb*, whose best translation is probably "covenant lawsuit," to express the idea of God bringing before a court an action against His people because of

⁵⁵ Shea, "The Prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27," 81.

⁵⁶ George E. Mendenhall, "Covenant Forms in Israelite Tradition," *BA* 17 (1954): 50-76.

⁵⁷ Up until that time, there was no agreement among scholars concerning the origin of the OT covenant concept. Some assigned it to the work of Moses (so W. O. E. Oesterley and Theodore H. Robinson, *Hebrew Religion, Its Origin and Development* [London: SPCK, 1937], 156-159), while others thought it had been developed by the prophets during the eighth and the seventh centuries (so Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Israel* [Edinburgh: A. & C. Black, 1885], 417).

⁵⁸ Mendenhall, 58, stresses that the Hittite covenant form was not so rigid. There could be variation in the order of the elements as well in the wording. Occasionally, one or another of the elements could be lacking.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁶⁰ See Shea, "Daniel and the Judgment," 369-371. In his formulation, Shea does not include the fourth item of the Hittite covenant structure, though Mendenhall (p. 64), probably referring to texts like Deut 31:24-29, declares that "the tradition of the deposit of the law in the ark of the covenant is certainly connected with the covenant customs of pre-Mosaic times."

⁶¹ Shea, "The Prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27," 81.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

their violation of the covenant.⁶² In Mic 6:1-2, for example, which parallels the preamble and the witnesses sections of the original covenant, the word *rîb* occurs three times:

Hear what the Lord says: Arise, plead your case [*rîb*] before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice. Hear, you mountains, the controversy [*rîb*] of the Lord, and you enduring foundations of the earth; for the Lord has a controversy [*rîb*] with His people, and He will contend with Israel.

Next (vs. 3-5), in the corresponding prologue, the prophet reminds the people of God's mighty acts on their behalf in the past. The stipulations and violations are listed in the following verses (vs. 6-12), which culminate with the curses (vs. 13-16).⁶³

According to Shea, this Old Testament background is necessary for a better evaluation of Stephen's speech in Acts 7. Without that background in mind, he writes, "this speech might seem to be a strange, perhaps even boring, sermon in that he droned on and on and on about the history of Israel." But in light of the use of the covenant formulary and specially the *rîb* pattern in the Old Testament, the speech "takes on a deep meaning." What Stephen did in Acts 7:2-50 was to parallel the prologue section of the original covenant in the same way the Old Testament prophets did when they brought God's *rîb* against Israel.⁶⁴

His Verdict. The prophetic mission carried out by Stephen in his trial also clarifies his attitude regarding the charges leveled against him. Some scholars have referred to his speech in terms of a defense or apology,⁶⁵ but he actually made no effort to defend himself, in contrast to Peter's case some time earlier (cf. Acts 4:8-12). In this sense G. A. Kennedy is right when he says that Ste-

⁶² The word *rîb* also appears in the covenant lawsuit of Hosea (4:1). Malachi (3:5) and Ezekiel (5:8) use a different word, *mispāt*, which means "judgment." For additional discussion on the covenant lawsuit, see Herbert B. Huffmon, "The Covenant Lawsuit in the Prophets," *JBL* 78 (1959): 285-295; Julien Harvey, "Le 'Rîb-Pattern,' Réquisitoire Prophétique Sur la Rupture de l'Alliance," *Biblica* 43 (1962): 172-196; James Limburg, "The Root byr and the Prophetic Lawsuit Speeches," *JBL* 88 (1969): 291-304; Kirsten Nielsen, *Yahweh as Prosecutor and Judge, JSOT Supplement Series 9* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1978).

⁶³ Shea, "Daniel and the Judgement," 370-371.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 371. The solution that many scholars have found for the apparently unnecessary length of the speech is to speculate that Luke had expanded the original speech by combining different traditions (see Krodel, 137-140).

⁶⁵ So J. Cantinat, *L'Église de la Pentecôte* (Paris: MAME, 1969), 105; Cecil J. Cadoux, *The Early Church and the World* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1955), 109; Delbert Wiens, *Stephen's Sermon* (Ashfield: BIBAL Press, 1995), 11. Although Wiens uses the word "apology," because for him "this speech is a reasoned defense of his cause by an advocate," he states that the expression "prophetic proclamation" would be even better.

PAROSCHI: THE PROPHETIC SIGNIFICANCE OF STEPHEN

phen's speech is rhetorically incomplete,⁶⁶ for instead of refuting the falseness of the charges, it in fact consists of a message of accusation and condemnation. Simon Légasse describes Stephen's attitude in terms of "an inversion of roles," that is, from accused he became an accuser,⁶⁷ for after his long recital of Israel's history, he announced his verdict:

You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did. Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? They killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become; you who received the law as ordained by angels, and *yet* did not keep it (Acts 7:51-53).

The tone of these words is clearly climactic⁶⁸ and must be understood as an explicit statement of condemnation. By killing the Messiah, those people were not only identifying themselves as sons of their "fathers" but also completing the great amount of rebellion and iniquity initiated by them,⁶⁹ or to use the biblical language, "they had filled up the measure of their fathers."⁷⁰ If their fathers were guilty of slaying the prophets, they were even more so for murdering Jesus. As Marshall says, they had gone to the limit of Israel's opposition to God.⁷¹

Gerd Lündemann rightly points out that "the call to repentance" which features in other speeches in Acts is missing here.⁷² It seems, therefore, that what Stephen was bringing to the Jewish leaders was not only another of God's covenant lawsuits, but the final one,⁷³ as if their time for repentance had definitively come to an end and they were found guilty. They had failed in keeping the covenant (cf. v. 53), and because of this they were no longer the people of the covenant. The change of the pronoun from "our" (vs. 11, 19, 38, 44, 45) to "your fathers" (v. 51) perhaps means more than a simple breakage in Stephen's solidarity with his audience, as Gehard A. Krodel suggests.⁷⁴ It may also imply the definitive end of the covenant relationship between God and Israel as a na-

⁶⁶ G. A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation* (Chapel Hill: U North Carolina P, 1984), 121-122.

⁶⁷ Légasse, 23.

⁶⁸ There is no doubt that the aorist *egénesthe* (v. 52) must be classified as culminative. The adverb *nūn* reinforces this idea.

⁶⁹ Floyd V. Filson, *Pioneers of the Primitive Church* (New York: Abingdon, 1940), 75.

⁷⁰ Bruce, 152.

⁷¹ Marshall, 147.

⁷² Gerd Lündemann, *Early Christianity According to the Traditions in Acts* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 88.

⁷³ Shea, "Daniel and Judgement," 372.

⁷⁴ Krodel, 151-152.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

tion. The reference to Jesus in 7:52 makes it implicit that now the true covenant people were those who believed in Him and followed Him.⁷⁵ In other words, the people who belonged to God's covenant were no longer defined by ethnic or political terms as Israel had been, but in terms of discipleship to Jesus Christ (cf. 11:26).⁷⁶

His Vision. The conclusion above may appear somewhat radical, but as a matter of fact it is confirmed by the vision of Jesus that Stephen had next. When he finished speaking, "being full of the Holy Spirit" (7:55), he said: "Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God" (vs. 56).

First of all, it should be noted that this vision is a clear reference to the Messiah's exaltation referred to in Ps 110:1.⁷⁷ In this passage, there is no question that the "Lord" to whom God said "sit thou on my right hand" was believed to be the Messiah. It is confirmed by the well-known incident recorded in Mark 12:35-37 (cf. Matt 22:41-46; Luke 20:41-44). David could not be, for he had not ascended to heaven; he still lay buried in his tomb (cf. Acts 2:29, 34). Thus, this passage could only point to the Messiah, and according to the apostles it had found its fulfillment in Jesus of Nazareth (cf. vs. 34-36).

But Stephen's vision also consists of a reference to the heavenly court mentioned in Dan 7:9-14. In his vision, Stephen referred to Jesus as "the Son of man," and this title goes back to its original usage in Daniel,⁷⁸ where the context is clearly of judgment.⁷⁹ It is important to note, however, that Jesus Himself had already used the same title in connection with the idea of His exaltation. Before the same Sanhedrin He had said: "From now on the Son of man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God" (Luke 22:69), and this statement in particular may be the key to understand Stephen's vision. By combining the idea of His exaltation with the allusion to the heavenly court, Jesus may in fact have implied that He was now standing in judgment before the Jewish leaders, but "the time was coming when He would be judge as they stood before Him."⁸⁰ In this sense

⁷⁵ See Wiens, 223.

⁷⁶ For the meaning of the term "Christians" in Acts 11:26, see Robert Maddox, *The Purpose of Luke-Acts* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1982), 31.

⁷⁷ Haenchen, 292.

⁷⁸ See Scharlemann, 15.

⁷⁹ Arthur J. Ferch, *The Son of Man in Daniel Seven*, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series, vol. 6 (Berrien Springs: Andrews UP, 1979), 148, argues that the role of the Son of man in Dan 7:9-14 is not of Judge who takes His seat alongside God. According to him, what this passage depicts is a scene of investiture, in which the Son of man receives "domination, glory and kingdom" (pp. 172-174, 183). There is no question, however, that in the latter Judaism, as well in the NT, the Son of man comes to perform a judicial function (see I Enoch 62:2-3; 69:26-29; Matt 25:31-46).

⁸⁰ Herschel H. Hobbs, *An Exposition of the Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1966), 322. See also I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 850; C. F. Evans, *Saint Luke*, TPI New Testament Commentaries (London: SCM, 1990), 837; Norval Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, The

PAROSCHI: THE PROPHETIC SIGNIFICANCE OF STEPHEN

Stephen's vision could indicate that this time had arrived, for he saw Jesus "standing" (*estōta*) at God's right hand instead of "seated" (*kathémenos*) as Jesus Himself had said He would be.

This verbal change has divided scholars, and at least five different interpretations have been proposed. C. H. Dodd, for example, denies that the participle *estōta* has any special meaning. According to him, it means quite generally "to be situated" without necessarily any suggestion of an upright attitude.⁸¹ William Kelly, in turn, says that Jesus was standing because "He had not taken definitely His seat" yet, i.e., that was a transitional period in which Jesus "was still giving the Jews a final opportunity."⁸² H. P. Owen, on the other hand, proposes that what Stephen received was a kind of proleptic vision of "the glory of the *parousía*." For him, Jesus was standing in preparation for His second advent.⁸³ Marshall thinks that Jesus was standing to welcome the dying Stephen into His presence. In his opinion, the implication of the vision is that "as Jesus was raised from the dead, so too His followers will be."⁸⁴ A slightly different idea is given by Bruce, who believes that Jesus was standing at God's right hand as Stephen's witness. Stephen had confessed Jesus before men, and now he saw Jesus confessing him before God.⁸⁵

But although Kelly's interpretation may hardly be accepted because of its clear dispensational formulary,⁸⁶ the idea that Jesus was standing to judge Israel cannot be totally rejected. It should be noted, first, that the entire context of Stephen's speech actually establishes the fact that it was not Stephen who was being judged by the leaders of Israel, but Israel was being judged by God by means of Stephen's prophetic ministry. Stephen addressed the Sanhedrin not as a defendant, but as a prophet who brought God's final *rîb* against those people. Because of this, he finished his speech with a strong statement of condemnation. They had failed in keeping the covenant; therefore they were no longer the people of the covenant.

New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 587; Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 2:1800.

⁸¹ C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures* (London: Nisbet, 1952), 35. See also Gustaf Dalman, *The Words of Jesus* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1909), 311.

⁸² William Kelly, *An Exposition of the Acts of the Apostles*, 3rd ed. (London: G. Morrish, 1952), 102-103. John N. Darby, *The Collected Writings* 28, ed. William Kelly (Oak Park: Bible Truth, n.d.), 283, declares: "He does not sit as it were till Israel has formally rejected the testimony, when the cry of Stephen reached His ear. He took His place, sitting down until His enemies are made His footstool, after their refusal to hear the Holy Ghost's testimony. Stephen being received to Christ in heaven, Israel as Israel must wait outside."

⁸³ H. P. Owen, "Stephen's Vision in Acts vii.55-6," *NTS* 1 (1954): 224-226.

⁸⁴ Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 149.

⁸⁵ Bruce, 156.

⁸⁶ For a recent discussion of dispensationalism, see Keith A. Mathison, *Dispensationalism: Rightly Dividing the People of God?* (Phillipsburg: P&R, 1995). See also Hans K. LaRondelle, *The Israel of God in Prophecy* (Berrien Springs: Andrews UP, 1983).

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

It is important to note that some time earlier, Peter had said to the same audience that Jesus had been exalted by God “to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins” (Acts 5:31). Commenting on this passage, Krodel declares that through the apostolic proclamation God was offering “a second chance to Jerusalem and its leaders.” If the opportunity were accepted, then repentance and forgiveness would be received as God’s gift, mediated by the same Jesus they had killed.⁸⁷ Now, however, Jesus did not seem to be waiting for their repentance anymore. It was a time of judgment. In addition to this, it is noteworthy that there are some texts in the Bible where God rises in order to judge (cf. Job 19:25; Isa 3:13; Dan 12:1).⁸⁸ What Stephen saw in vision, therefore, could be Jesus rising to pronounce His judgment

The second point that should be noted is that the covenant which God had with Israel was not in itself synonymous of salvation, but a provision by which God’s salvation could be taken to the entire world (cf. Gen 12:1-3).⁸⁹ In other words, the covenant must chiefly be understood in terms of mission. So to state that the Jews are no longer the people of the covenant does not mean that God has rejected them, as sometimes has been suggested⁹⁰ (cf. Rom 11:1–10), but only that God has chosen another people to execute His missionary plan. It should be remembered that God’s covenant with Israel was established on a corporate basis—i.e., it involved the entire nation as an entity.⁹¹ To speak about the end of the covenant with Israel, therefore, does not imply the end of God’s interest in the Jews as individuals. Because of this, the gospel was still preached to them even after Stephen’s death (cf. Acts 28:17-28).⁹² But the privilege of being “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own

⁸⁷ Krodel, 128.

⁸⁸ George W. E. Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism*, Harvard Theological Studies 26 (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1972), 27, identifies Dan 12:1-3 as a “description of a judgment scene.” And for him, one of the constitutive elements in this scene is exactly the standing position of Michael (see also p. 12). Gordon E. Christo, “The Eschatological Judgment in Job 19:21-29, An Exegetical Study,” Andrews University Seminary Ph.D. Dissertation (Berrien Springs: Andrews U, 1992), 129-134, provides an interesting analysis of the juridical connotation of the word *qum* (“to take to stand”), which occurs in Job 19:25, and then concludes: “Whether to accuse or to defend against accusation, whether as a witness (either for or against), or whether as a judge to pronounce the verdict, the individual had to stand in order to speak.”

⁸⁹ Willem VanGemeren, *The Progress of Redemption* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1995), 107, 129, defines God’s covenant with Israel as a “sovereign administration of grace and promise,” by which God elected Israel for Himself and conferred to them a series of privileges, such as the multiplication of their seed, the gift of the land, and His own presence in blessing and protection, in order to enable them to be the channel for His blessing to the nations.

⁹⁰ See, for example, Jack T. Sanders, *The Jews in Luke-Acts* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 80-83, 297-299, 317.

⁹¹ VanGemeren, 158-159.

⁹² Cf., for a critique on Sanders’ position (cf. p. 28 n. 4 above) see James D. G. Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways* (London: SCM Press/Philadelphia: Trinity P International, 1991), 149-151.

PAROSCHI: THE PROPHETIC SIGNIFICANCE OF STEPHEN

possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Pet 2:9) was no longer exclusively theirs.⁹³ The people of the covenant now were no longer defined by bloodline, but by faith in Jesus Christ (Gal 3:26-29; cf. Rom 11:25-32).⁹⁴ Thus, the ministry of Stephen, his speech and his vision, seems to be an appropriate explanation and fulfillment of the prophecy that “seventy weeks are cut off for your people and your holy city” (Dan 9:24). Shea concludes:

Stephen was the last true prophet whom God called to that office to speak particularly to the people of His election. When their leaders stoned him they silenced the voice of the last in a long line of their prophets. His death brought an end to the function of the prophetic office on their behalf as a people. The vision that he saw just before he died was the last vision that a prophet who ministered especially to them was to see.⁹⁵

Conclusion

In light of the previous sections, the traditional interpretation that the seventy weeks of Dan 9:24-27 reached their fulfillment with the stoning of Stephen seems to be much more than a mere possibility. Although Hale’s choice of this event was based more on a chronological coincidence than on an exegetical conviction, it does not mean that he was wrong; neither were those who for one hundred and fifty years used the same argument without attempting to justify it exegetically. The fact is that if understood as bringing to an end the prophetic ministry on behalf of Israel (“your people and your holy city”), as argued by Shea, the phrase “to seal up the vision and the prophet” finds a plausible fulfillment in Stephen. First because the role he played in early church history—which although quite brief, was decisive and significant—can hardly be exaggerated. Stephen literally represented the beginning of Christianity as a universal religion, though it cost him his own life. His death was unjust and violent. The stones silenced his voice, but they were not able to change the course of history. On the contrary, “a young man named Saul” (Acts 7:58), also a Hellenist, who observed and apparently approved the execution, in the end became the great continuer of the work began by Stephen.⁹⁶

Without question, Stephen was more than a deacon as this term is understood today. He was a preacher, and because of his Hellenistic background, he

⁹³ See Gurney, 116-119.

⁹⁴ See Dunn, 248-251.

⁹⁵ Shea, “Daniel and the Judgment,” 372-373.

⁹⁶ In an interesting passage, Martin Luther, *Lecture on Psalm One Hundred Eighteen, Luther’s Works*, Amer. Ed. (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1955-1976), 11:412, describes the conversion of Paul as the “vengeance” of Stephen, for Paul stopped being what he was and became what Stephen himself was.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

“seems to have been the first Christian to realize that Christianity meant the end of Jewish privilege, and the first to open the way for a mission to the Gentiles.”⁹⁷ Norman J. Bull declares:

The stoning of Stephen began a new stage in the history of the infant Church. Up till then Christianity had been a sect of Judaism. Christians had lived as Jews, by the Jewish law. They could still be regarded as forming a separate synagogue, as many groups of Jews did. Now there was a distinct change. No longer could Christian Jews be regarded as orthodox Jews; they were a distinctive and heretical sect. No longer was the Jewish law the heart of their religion. The preaching of such men as Stephen set them apart.⁹⁸

The prophetic significance of Stephen, however, is not only related to the definitive separation of the church from traditional Judaism, and her orientation towards the Gentiles. To the Christians Stephen was a preacher and even a reformer,⁹⁹ and to the Jews he was a prophet, the last prophet called by God to speak directly to Israel as the covenant people. As such, his message was a message of condemnation. They had broken the covenant, and because of this God called him to bring His final *rīb* against them. At the exact moment in which Stephen was condemning them on earth, Jesus was judging them in His heavenly court. Stephen’s vision, therefore, was not a vision of a martyr close to death, but a vision of a prophet performing his mission. So the Jews’ privileges as the covenant people came to an end. The final seventy weeks that God had given for His people were finished; the prophetic ministry on their behalf were also finished, and they were now no longer the people of the covenant. By faith in Jesus Christ, however, they could still retake their status and mission, but no longer as a nation.

Israel’s last hope as a nation ceased to exist with Stephen. The stones that the Jewish leaders threw at him forever sealed their fate. But Stephen did not die without first revealing a nobility of character typical of a true martyr. In the last moment, he still prayed: “Lord, do not hold this sin against them!” (Acts 7:60). These words, however, were much more than a prayer. They were the genuine expression of God’s will in relation to those people. For Israel, the time was finished, yet there is still hope for the Israelites on an individual basis. “If they

⁹⁷ G. B. Caird, *The Apostolic Age* (London: Gerald Duckworth, 1955), 86.

⁹⁸ Norman J. Bull, *The Rise of the Church* (London: Heinemann, 1967), 49-50.

⁹⁹ Filson, 52, describes the movement led by Stephen as “almost a revolution” in the early Christian church.

PAROSCHI: THE PROPHETIC SIGNIFICANCE OF STEPHEN

do not continue in their unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again” (Rom 11:23).¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ I am grateful to Dr. Richard M. Davidson for his kindness in reading this paper, and for some helpful suggestions, though responsibility for the conclusions reached rests with the author.

The Great Controversy Over Me

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[A briefer version of this personal testimony was given at a plenary session of the Jerusalem Bible Conference. This version was the inaugural presentation at the first formal meeting of the first chapter of the Collegiate Adventist Theological Society (CATS), Southern Adventist University, November 1998. It is offered with both embarrassment and rejoicing, but in hope that it might bring someone else into the arms of the Bridegroom.]

God's Battle to Win Back Occupied Territory

I'm here to tell you about the great controversy over me. I am a battlefield, and Christ and Satan are waging war over me. The war has gone on all my life for this little plot of ground, infinitely precious to both sides. You are a battlefield, too. We all are. But tonight I want to tell you about the great controversy over me, in hope that you will learn something about the great controversy over you and decide to do your part to make certain that Christ wins this war.

How did we each become a battlefield? We find the answer in Rev. 12:9 [NASB]: "And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him."

But God has a plan, God has a strategy which He is using in the war against the evil one, as He reveals in Isaiah 14:26-28 [NASB]: God says, "This is *the plan devised against the whole earth*; and this is the hand that is stretched out against all the nations. For *the LORD of hosts has planned, and who can frustrate [it]? And as for His stretched-out hand, who can turn it back?*"

Picture it this way. When you are born you belong to God, but by the time you are old enough to make responsible decisions, the field belongs to Satan. He rules over you. But God sends in spies, drops propaganda from airplanes, broadcasts by underground radio stations, sends in paratroopers behind enemy lines, sends in saboteurs, trying to stymie the enemy plans, trying to maintain a presence in the occupied territory, trying to awaken dissatisfaction with the enemy

occupation. If you respond, eventually God tries a full-scale assault, a Normandy invasion. If you are like most people, this happens many times, until Christ establishes a beachhead. Then His troops drive inland, fighting pitched battles at times over some cherished sin, at other times rolling through without contest. If you cooperate, God gains more and more ground until you finally surrender yourself to Him completely and He takes full possession of you and rebuilds you and uses you for His own ends, makes you a member of His resistance movement.

Although you now belong to God, although you are now "born again," this is not the end of the battle. Satan too sends in saboteurs, trying to regain parts of your mind. He too has his propaganda machine, and he too mounts attacks. If your loyalty wavers, if you flirt with the enemy, Satan may even recapture large parts of your attention and allegiance. He may hold it for years. But you are still God's territory now, even if reoccupied for a time, and Christ has paid too great a price to ever give you up for good unless you absolutely insist. However, whether or not you live in a state of constant enemy assault or in a state of victory or relative peace is up to you. God's troops are ready and willing to protect you, but they need your permission.

The Enemy Takes Control

Let me tell you about me as battlefield. I'm a preacher's kid, descended from five generations of Adventist pastors. I had wonderful parents, a happy home, and on the surface I was a pretty nice boy, sensitive and shy, a good student, and I never got into trouble.

On the surface. But below the surface two growing thunderclouds took up ever more of my thoughts: lust and rock music. When I was about ten, living near Pacific Union College in California, I found a *Playboy* magazine hidden under a big rock, and the photos were so breathlessly exciting that I nearly passed out. After that thoughts of sex consumed me. I was forbidden to listen to what my mother called "jazz," but whenever possible I would sneak my family's little transistor radio out of the house and go for long walks in the forest, memorizing the hit parade, from "All You Need Is Love" to "Let's Spend the Night Together." This may sound relatively harmless, but the enforced secrecy, the sense of shame that made me hide what I really was, separated me from my family, and because my family was tied together, in my mind, with God, it also separated me from God. By the time I was thirteen there was little room for anything else in my head—rock music and sex filled me up.

At fourteen I was living in Denver and attending Mile High Academy. I began riding my bicycle to the movie theater—the admission was only sixty cents. Because I felt I had to keep it secret, I became an accomplished liar. I checked out sexy James Bond novels from the city library and smuggled them into my bedroom, then read them late at night under the covers. The summer before I started ninth grade I earned my tuition money by mowing lawns with a man in his late

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

twenties who had attended Mile High Academy. He regaled me with stories of his sexual escapades and bought me vodka and wine—my introduction to alcohol. Meanwhile, I became so contentious that I made my whole family miserable.

By sixteen I was attending X-rated movies—a newly legal phenomenon. A friend and I had started a rock band, and we practiced our electric guitars together one night a week—covers of “Sympathy for the Devil” and “Born to Be Wild.” Shortly after my birthday I began smoking marijuana—four of us would smoke one joint during lunch, then I would giggle all the way through world history class. A month later, though, I was kicked out of Mile High and sent to a boarding school, Campion Academy.

I loved Campion because I felt little need to be secretive. I had my first girlfriends there and experimented with things which were to me quite exciting, though Bill Clinton might consider them innocent. I also began studying Hinduism and Bah’ai. My dorm walls were covered with posters. I had no access to marijuana, but I once purchased some hashish and ate so much of it that I was unconscious for several hours.

The King’s Attack Rebuffed

But something else was happening. God wanted me. He was dropping propaganda leaflets from the airplanes, sending in the saboteurs. It was a need for God which led me to study other religions. But I also had a couple Bible teachers who raised thought-provoking questions. I was a junior in academy. God was preparing a major attack.

Someone had given me a paperback copy of *The Great Controversy*, and it had sat on my shelf unread for months. One afternoon something made me pick it up, and within minutes I was hooked. I skipped meals. I skipped school. I skipped work. I read *The Great Controversy*, cover to cover, in three days and three nights, barely stopping to sleep now and then. By the time I was done God had not won the war, but He had won the battle. I decided that God had called me. I know this sounds amazing, but now, at seventeen, I decided that God had called me to share the gospel with the hippies in Denver. After all, I was cool. I had smoked dope. I knew about rock’n’roll. I could reach them.

I called my dad and told him I had dropped out of school and asked him to come pick me up. I still can’t believe that he did.

But my plan to witness to the hippies and my new excitement over *The Great Controversy* fizzled in a day. I was too shy to tell even my parents about this, much less the hippies. God nearly captured me, but there was no one to disciple me, to help me grow in God by studying His Word, and I didn’t understand what it meant to surrender to God. The evil one’s power over me through my bad habits held God at bay. The day after I got home I went to see a couple movies, and that was the end of my religious experience. I decided I had made a mistake, gotten carried away by my emotions. Actually, I had fallen in love with

an end-time scenario, not with my Savior. Jesus might say I was seed fallen in rocky soil, springing quickly from shallow roots and withering in the hot sun.

Instead of witnessing I got a job, and the next year I returned to Mile High Academy and graduated. As I worked as an operating room technician on the 3-11 shift during that time, I was always "too tired" to go to church. Sabbath afternoon, though, I usually borrowed my dad's car to "go for a ride in the mountains." Instead I went to a movie. I hated the lies, but they were a part of me. I didn't want to hurt my parents, but I didn't want to change. So I lied.

The Enemy Fortifies His Strongholds

I entered Union College in the fall of 1972, bringing with me my electric guitars, a couple hundred rock'n'roll records, and shelves of books on philosophy and psychology and eastern religions. In Christian Beliefs I had to read the Bible a little—something I'd never really done before. In the New Testament I discovered a handful of texts which, taken out of context, suggested that everyone will be saved, a teaching called "universalism." I seized on this good news, wrote a paper about it (which my teacher did not refute), and shared it with my friends.

Of course, universalism leaves one with no incentive to moral action—being good or doing right doesn't matter at all. It's wrong, but it lets one live a jolly life. I had my first sexual experience that year, a dream come true, but I found that like the little scroll of Revelation, though sweet in the mouth, it was sour in the stomach. Still, I was addicted to lust, and it filled my mind. The legal drinking age in Nebraska was nineteen, so second semester my friends and I often went out drinking on Saturday nights.

My sophomore year I transferred to La Sierra to study photography. My teacher and I would shoot nudes together, willing college girls. I was his lab instructor, which meant that I had a key. I never went to church. Instead, I often spent all day Sabbath in the photo lab. Other weekends my girlfriend and I spent in a motel near the beach. My understanding was that this was quite common at La Sierra, though not universal. I kept two gallons of liquor in a box in my dorm room. I studied hard, but my life felt empty.

To fill my required religion credit that year, I took a course in Existentialism taught by my French professor. I read Camus and Sartre in French, and by the end of the quarter I considered myself an atheist. So much for religion class. If there was any concerted attempt to explain what was inadequate about the ideas of these writers, I don't remember it. For me, atheism was like a solitary walk on a sunny winter day: cold, clear, and very lonely. I felt detached from humanity, but superior to it.

The next year I went to Rwanda to work in a hospital. There I saw death and poverty and suffering firsthand. I worked hard to save lives and heal the sick. What I saw should have brought me to my knees, should have brought me to God. But I didn't know God. I witnessed to no one. I prayed for no one. I went to church because it was expected, but I didn't worship.

D-day! The King Wins a Beachhead

Then one day, when my time in Africa was nearly over, I cut myself with a scalpel while taking a liver biopsy from a boy who had just died of hepatitis. I knew I was in trouble. A month later my own liver was being biopsied at Loma Linda Medical Center. The report was grim. Sixty percent of my liver was gone, but there was not yet any scarring. There was no treatment at that time. The doctor told me that if I hadn't begun to improve within four weeks, I probably wouldn't make it. He sent me back to the little apartment I had borrowed from friends who were on vacation.

For twenty-seven days there was no improvement. I lay around the apartment in pain, unable to eat, yellow as a banana. On the twenty-eighth day I prayed: "God, I don't know if you're there. I don't know if you care. But if you are there, do whatever you think best. There's nothing I can do."

It was D-day; God was beginning the Normandy invasion. The next morning I awoke feeling weak as a kitten, but my systems were working again, I didn't hurt, and I was famished. God had healed me. This led me to believe in God again. I no longer felt icy and detached inside, but as if I had a place in God's world, as it I belonged. I decided to return to Union College. But I still believed in universal salvation, I still didn't read the Bible, I still didn't go to church or have any Christian friends. My last two years of college were a whirl of serious study and Saturday night dates and drinking. I got out of taking Bible classes by taking courses in philosophy and contemporary Christian thought. In the battle over me, God had captured and held parts of me, but I still belonged to the evil one for the most part.

In 1976 my grandfather died, and God used this psychologically vulnerable time to launch a sortie. My grandfather left me his copy of many of Ellen White's books and a set of the SDA Bible Commentaries. Now God had a substantial foothold on my bookshelves, but He couldn't force me to read the books.

Enemy Propaganda Sows Doubt

Meanwhile, Satan counterattacked a few months later by leading me to Ron Numbers' book *Prophets of Health*, which led me to doubt Ellen White's spiritual gifts. (Of course, I hadn't actually read her work in five years, and all I'd read was *The Great Controversy*, but I hadn't doubted her power.) Numbers' book led me to the then relatively new journal *Spectrum*, and I spent days in the library devouring back issues. *Spectrum* has published many useful articles over the years and provided a forum for the unofficial airing of church problems which needed to be corrected. For me, however, who believed in God but didn't know Him, who loved to criticize church problems but didn't care enough to get involved and correct them from within, *Spectrum* supplied valuable ammunition against God's attempts to liberate me and made me a thoroughgoing skeptic.

In 1977 I returned to La Sierra to get an M.A. in English. I immersed myself in literature, eighty hours a week. It was my God; I thought it could provide the answer to the world's problems. One day I had lunch with my cousin Dwayne, a missionary on furlough from Africa. He asked me a question which was so offensive I never forgot it. He said, "How does your study of literature fit into a life of service to God?" I didn't have a good answer. I was insulted that Dwayne should even think service to God should be part of my plans. This question would someday help to change my life, though. Meanwhile, I enjoyed or suffered through a series of affairs and was drunk nearly every night for two years. In the daytime I studied and taught at La Sierra.

Enemy Troops Pushed Back; Major Cities Recaptured

I went on to the University of Nebraska to work on a Ph.D. in English. Again, I found my religion in my literature and spent my evenings drunk. (Why? I wonder. Was I covering over the emptiness inside or anesthetizing the still, small voice of the Holy Spirit?) After two years I was given a Fulbright Scholarship to study for a year at Oxford. There I was so lonely that God was able to lead my thoughts back to a sweet, beautiful Christian girl I had met in my first graduate class at La Sierra but hadn't dated long because she was so conservative that she didn't even go to movies. Now, though, I realized that she was what I really wanted and needed in a wife. More than that, she represented my loneliness for God's presence, a presence so rarely allowed in my life.

I didn't deserve her. I wasn't an appropriate match for her. I hadn't even seen her in two years. But I spent all my money on a plane ticket, flew to California at Christmas time, and proposed to her. What could she have been thinking of? She accepted. But God was using her to win an important battle. She agreed to marry me if I would go to church with her. She was worth it. Now God could place me where I could hear His Word preached.

But I didn't think I needed to go to church when we weren't together. That wasn't part of the deal. Back in Oxford in January, after I'd been up all night because of the jet lag, an audible voice awakened me at 7 a.m., commanding, "Get up—it's time for church." I ignored it. The voice came again. I looked around. The room was silent. I went back to sleep. The voice said, "I gave you Margaret. Now get up." Feeling rather like young Samuel, and rather dazed by the force and honor of this call, I walked the three miles to the Seventh-day Adventist Church and came home to a long lost church family. A month later I preached my first sermon, on the parable of the Prodigal Son and its application in my own life. But I still didn't read the Bible, and I continued to enjoy a pint of beer when I could afford it.

When I returned to Nebraska, my dissertation nearly finished, I taught at both the University of Nebraska and at Union College, and in December I got married. My gratitude for my lovely wife and our worships together made me spiritually vulnerable again. A few weeks later I began reading *Steps to Christ* in

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

the bathtub every morning. In a major offensive, God's troops were pushing inland, capturing miles of countryside and major cities. This beautiful little book opened to me God's call for commitment and holiness, and I embraced it. One night I awoke impressed that I didn't need alcohol in my life, and if I got rid of what I had in the house, God would free me from my desire for it. My wife went into the kitchen the next morning to find half a dozen quart bottles upended in the sink.

A few weeks later, I awoke in the night feeling completely free from the desire for rock music, a freedom I hadn't felt in over fifteen years. I sensed that God was holding open a door for me, and if I walked through immediately I would be free. If I didn't, the door would slam shut. It was 3 a.m. before I finished boxing up over three hundred record albums, much loved classics, filled with memories. But I had no regrets. Now, another fifteen years later, I can say that except for a nostalgic period of a couple months a decade ago, I've had no interest in rock music and it has not filled my head, though I could still recall many of the songs if I were to try. The worst thing about rock'n'roll, for me, was not the beat, the music, the lyrics, problematic as those were. The worst thing was that they constituted a barrier, a wall of sound which kept me from hearing God's "still, small voice."

I still wasn't reading the Bible, though, and reading only Mrs. White's works left me unbalanced. My new witness to the goodness of God was seen by my students at Union College as trying to cram religion down their throats. This, combined with being a young teacher eager to require work of the highest possible caliber, led to terrible student evaluations. This was discouraging, and it made me question what God was doing in my life. It's strange and sad how easily good news becomes bad news. God calls us to bear witness for what He has done to us and to preach the Word, but that doesn't mean that many will be ready yet to hear it. Our witness and His Word are the principle ways in which He reveals Himself to the world, but He does not call us to legislate for Him. He wants to woo and win, not force. Forced love is rape, and God does not rape—He seduces us until we give ourselves willingly to our heavenly Bridegroom. College rules are necessary to maintain order, but they are not themselves Christianity, and keeping the rules does not make students Christians.

Lack of Partisan Support Aids Enemy Counter-attack

Union College invited my wife and I to spend a year in Beijing as exchange professors. We had a wonderful time. We attended the Chinese church nearly every Sabbath, even though we didn't understand the language, and we did some research and made some contacts with Chinese Adventists, but I was too shy in my faith to share the gospel. Successful testimony breeds confidence and zeal, but my attempts at testimony had led only to bad student evaluations, and now I feared being expelled from China if I spoke out openly about my faith, such as it was. Meanwhile, American friends of ours, an English teacher and a robotics

CHRISTIAN: THE GREAT CONTROVERSY OVER ME

engineer, brought forty Chinese people to Christ in two years, mostly students and teachers. Would that I had been as zealous.

I had expected that Adventist schools would be eager to hire a young Ph.D. with a year of mission service under his belt, but the best I could come up with was a part-time temporary position at La Sierra. We attended church at Loma Linda, and I was soon team-teaching a Sabbath School class with several theology professors. I know there are thousands of wonderful, faithful Adventists in Loma Linda, my relatives and in-laws among them, but when I use the pejorative terms "Loma Linda Adventists" or "*Spectrum* Adventists" I am thinking of that class (many members of which are listed among *Spectrum's* contributors). I was one of them. These classes were invigorating, the high point of my week. We were highly educated, superior, snide. We had inside information about church problems and leaders. We knew all the arguments against Ellen White and a short earth chronology and in favor of Desmond Ford. The names of liberal theologians such as Niebuhr and Bülmann and Tillich were as often heard as the name of Jesus. We never opened a Bible except to criticize it. The class is still active. I last visited it a couple years ago. On that day an ex-Adventist pastor, now pastoring a liberal Sunday-keeping church, had been asked to speak on why he left Adventism and how he had found fulfillment in his new church. His audience nodded knowingly, perhaps longingly. It wasn't God I was hearing in that Sabbath School class.

Meanwhile, La Sierra had no work for me during the spring quarter, and I responded by turning again to alcohol. My wife was pregnant and working on her doctorate, and I was writing scholarly articles and applying for teaching positions.

The best I could do to support my family was a part-time teaching position at the University of Nebraska. Fortunately, God eventually provided part-time teaching for my wife, as well, so we could make ends meet. Fellowship with church friends was very important during this year, but again the emphasis was on criticizing the church rather than on knowing God, and today many of these friends are divorced. God could have provided peace and comfort during this year when I applied to a hundred schools around the country for a permanent position, but instead I took to drowning my depression in a bar on the way home from work.

King Retakes Most of Country; Cities Under Siege

Finally, in 1986, God provided a good position at Kutztown University, a state school with 8,000 students in a beautiful rural Pennsylvania setting, and a couple years later my wife also got a good teaching job not far away. I attended church weekly, preached on occasion, taught Sabbath School, read the Bible a little now and then, loved God, and felt assured of heaven. We were part of a small group which met every other week and provided wonderful fellowship. It was during one of these group meetings that my two-year-old daughter took a

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

bad fall and was paralyzed from the waist down. I held her in my arms and cried out to God in a silent prayer so loud it ripped a hole in the universe, and God healed her, striking deep into enemy territory and setting up camp. I still got tipsy several nights a week, but no longer actually drunk. Life was good. I believed myself to be where God wanted me to be, doing what God wanted me to do.

One problem which had never ceased to plague me since my childhood, though, was lust. Even when I was at my closest to God, sex was never far from my mind. Whenever I talked with a woman under fifty, I was thinking about what it would be like to have sex with her. Some of you are in this position right now. You're slaves to your lust. You can't help it. And while you are, God can't win or hold the battlefield. I wasn't committing adultery with these women in the flesh, but I was in my heart. It wasn't that I didn't love my wife. It was simply an addiction I had to a way of thinking, and I thought about it all the time. Indeed, I thought this was normal for most men. I'd never known anything different.

Do you know what the worst thing was about my actions? God had put me at Kutztown for a purpose, but because I was afraid of being shown up as a hypocrite, I kept my mouth shut. I frequently taught religious poems and talked about their meanings. I sometimes confessed to my students, in an embarrassed sort of way, that I was a Christian, but I hid what light I had under a bushel.

Fifth Column Surrenders All Cities to King; Victory!

Finally, after years of going to church and gradually coming closer to God, I decided that I really ought to do something for Him. Perhaps I could develop and teach a course in Bible stories for the English department. After all, I had grown up hearing my mother read Uncle Arthur's Bible stories every night, and I still remembered them. This would be an easy class to teach. I was an expert. So I wrote a proposal, and in about a year the course was accepted and added to the bulletin.

The first class was packed with eager students. To my surprise, some of them knew something about the Bible, and when my memory of details was wrong, they raised their hands and corrected me. This was embarrassing, and I decided I'd better start reading the stories in the Bible, and also reading the surrounding chapters so I'd know the context. My approach to the Scriptures was in accord with my liberal theological reading—it was generally skeptical, except of course that I defended the Sabbath. I was turning to historical-critical scholars for background information on the stories and soaking up their opinions as generally accepted truth. One day a girl raised her hand and said, "Who are you to say that some stories in the Bible are true and some are not? Where did you get that authority?" I didn't know what to say. The girl put into words the unspoken feeling of the class. I knew I was losing the class's interest and sympathy.

CHRISTIAN: THE GREAT CONTROVERSY OVER ME

My reading, though, was having an effect on me. For years I had read the Bible to criticize it and explain away the miracles. Now I was reading it to learn, reading three to five hours a day, and it was changing me. Too many of us judge God's Word, instead of letting the Word judge us. Now I was being judged, and I was being found wanting. I began reading through Paul's letters, and I was shocked. For years I had claimed "righteousness by faith" and avoided anything that might be considered "works." Now I found that nearly every time Paul mentioned "faith," it was in the context of a call to faithfulness (for example, Ephesians 4:17-5:12). I found that Christians aren't free to act as they please. They are children of God, strangers in a strange land, ambassadors. If they act as they please, they won't be believed. If we fail to walk with God, the worst effect may be that we keep others from seeing the image of God when they look at us, and in so doing we may thus keep them from ever accepting Christ as their Savior.

Now God's Word was transforming me, but it wasn't enough. God was pressing the battle hard, but the field still belonged to the evil one.

I signed up to attend a Men's Spiritual Retreat at Blue Mountain Academy, six years ago, not because I wanted to go but because I promised a student of mine that I'd go if he would go. The student never showed up, but I did. The speaker was Ron Clouzet, from Southern Adventist University. We began with forty-five minutes of prayer. I had never experienced such a thing before: one sentence prayers from all over the audience, men confessing their sins, other men lifting them up to God and supporting them, little hymns and choruses. It was wonderful. I had had a migraine headache that day, but in the course of the prayer it disappeared. Now I almost never get them.

Then Ron spoke, quietly, honestly, setting out the secret sins men don't talk about, calling us to give them up. It was as if he were reading my heart. I realized just how small and unimportant I was, that my own pretense at righteousness was like filthy rags. It was then that I surrendered completely, offering God both everything good and everything bad about me. I didn't ask God to take away my sins, my addictions. I gave God my sins—they became His sins, paid for on the cross—and I told Him to do whatever He wanted with them, and if they were left in my life, they would belong to Him, and if He wanted them gone, he would have to make it possible.

A peace and joy I had never known filled me. The battle was won. The battlefield belonged to the Lord. Another thing filled me: the knowledge that God was willing to give me victory over lust, that night. The door was open. I was so excited that I rushed home. I'm ashamed to say this, but I had several pornographic videos at home which I sometimes watched while my wife was asleep, and I sensed that this was the door I had to walk through. I marched into the house, found the tapes, and carried them out to the garbage can. I was free!

Facing the world without lust turned out to be a wonderful sensation. For the first time in over two decades I could see women as Jesus saw them instead of as body parts. I could see their suffering, their need of salvation. I realized

how the lust in my heart had kept me from a completely honest relationship with my wife, and a new intimacy began between us. I wanted to praise God from the rooftops.

Instead, in class the next Monday I testified to my students what God had done with me. When I had surrendered all I had been born again, transformed. I apologized for my doubts and thanked them for their faithfulness in the face of my skepticism. My students were electrified, and the mood of the class shifted. It has been great ever since.

King's Troops Strengthen Fortifications, Train Civilians

I decided that I would believe the Bible alone, prove all things by the Word. I would test every Adventist belief by the Word and reject anything unbiblical. The more I studied, however, the better acquainted I got with the Bible, the more amazed I was by the soundness of Adventist doctrine. Somehow the pioneers had discovered the grains of truth among the mountains of church doctrines taught through the centuries, even when no other church interpreted the text correctly. Also, however, I realized that most of the Adventist theologians I knew seemed to doubt the Bible, approach it skeptically. They didn't seem to be on fire for God, either. They had been my friends, but they no longer had anything to offer me. My food and drink was now the Word.

Satan tried to attack by leading me into a study of charismatic ideas. I finally realized, however, that my thirst for God was being replaced by a thirst for spiritual "power," and again I turned back to the Word.

In my biblical studies, I was leaving prophecy for last. I'd read Daniel and Revelation through several times, and I was still confused. I'd read a number of different interpretations by scholars from various denominations, but none seemed entirely convincing.

I heard of a Bible conference in Philadelphia, sponsored by the Adventist Theological Society, on the book of Daniel. I had heard nothing but bad about the society from publications such as *Spectrum* and *Adventist Today*. The Adventist Theological Society was that notorious group that made members sign a membership affirmation that they believed the whole Bible was the Word of God, that they believed in creation, in Ellen White's prophetic gift, and more. Ridiculous! But of course now I believed these things, too, and I no longer trusted these publications now that I had discovered the joy of living in Christ. What is more, I had a couple friends who would be speaking, so I decided to go.

What I heard amazed me. Here was a group of scholars who seemed to know and love God—gentle people, loving people. Furthermore, their scholarship on Daniel was excellent, the best I'd ever heard, convincing and enlightening. And like me they believed ALL Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and they were willing to be judged by the Word rather than judging it. These were scholars I could respect. These were people I wanted as friends.

CHRISTIAN: THE GREAT CONTROVERSY OVER ME

The same semester I attended my first ATS conference I began the approval process for two new courses at my university: Old Testament Literature and New Testament Literature. These are both now approved and are offered alternate semesters. They are for more advanced students and study themes and ideas rather than stories. My Bible story class is offered every semester.

Every Bible class I've taught at my state university has been full. Essentially, I'm giving Bible studies to seventy students from many denominations for three hours a week. The students are so excited to have a teacher who really believes in the Word and teaches it as truth meant to change lives. And lives are changed. At the end of the semester many students write about what God has done for them during the class. As I read these papers I'm so grateful to God for His mercy, for not giving up on me, for using me to do His will.

Whole Country Joins King to Rebuff Enemy Sorties

Here's the thing: since I've surrendered to God I've been open to His guidance and teaching, which mostly occurs as He leads me through the Word. Since I've surrendered to God, He's been able to use me, and dozens of students come to my office for spiritual counseling and Bible study and prayer.

God has won the great controversy over me. This doesn't mean I'm beyond sin. The minute I take my eyes off of Jesus temptation grows strong, but as long as my eyes are on Him, I'm safe. I still sin. God is still teaching me. I gave up alcohol six years ago, but I gave up caffeine and unclean meats only three years ago, when I finally understood from the Bible why I should. I still find my thoughts turning to sin on occasion, but when I do God starts nudging and whispering, and soon I'm back on my knees.

Our strength is in the Word. Not in denominational publications, not in church, not even in prayer apart from the Word (because we can mistake our own desires as God's word to us, as I did for years). When we read chapters and books of the Bible with open hearts, God uses them to communicate with us, to change us, to use us for His purposes.

It's so exciting to be part of a cause bigger than yourself. It's so fulfilling to be a little soldier on a big battlefield, doing the King's will. If you want to see the raw power of God, let God use you to bring someone to Christ. Lead him through the sinner's prayer and watch his life change before your eyes. There's nothing like it. It's the best addiction of all.

Your Role In the War Effort: "I Want You!"

I've heard some experts say, "If we want to reach students with the gospel, we have to meet them where they are. We have to say what they want to hear. Just teach them about how to have Jesus as a friend who always accepts them, wherever they are, whatever they do. Just tell them to love. If we ask too much of them, they'll turn away. Give them something relevant. Tell them truth depends on the circumstances."

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

I say *no!* We don't have to compromise the truth to reach students; we have to *stop compromising!* We don't have to smooth over the gospel to make it palatable to sensitive tastes, we have to present the Word of God as it is, "sharper than any two-edged sword" and "able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Heb. 4:12).

God isn't offering you a Sunday School picnic in 1911, He's offering you an important part in a cause much bigger than you are, a desperate cause, a matter of life and death. He's offering you a role in the last battle. He's offering you a place on His Search & Rescue team.

He's not offering you silk sheets and fast cars. He's offering you raw fear, life in the trenches, persecution, perhaps death at an early age. Thomas Gray wrote, "The paths of glory lead but to the grave," but this path of glory leads to eternal life, not only for you, but for everyone else you can recruit for God's service.

I'm not talking about demanding "a piece of the pie." I'm not talking about serving on some boring committee, or being elected to some church office, or getting to fold up the cloth covering the communion table, or getting ordained to receive a good salary and someday retire in California or Florida.

I'm talking about putting on "the whole armor of God" and going into battle. From where you are now! The few. The brave. The chosen. The *chosen!* That can be you! "Chosen" means ordained by God, set apart for a holy purpose. Chosen for *holy war!* War first against our own worldly flesh. As Paul writes, "we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (II Cor. 10:5). Then war against the world, the flesh, and the devil. For a great cause! For a desperate battle! For the Lord of Hosts!

We can't do it with real swords, "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Eph. 6:12).

If you want to put on "the whole armor of God," you first have to be willing to take off your own filthy rags, your own pathetic attempts at righteousness. The only way you can be fully armed is in the armor of Christ's righteousness. Here's a paradox: the only way you can be a *victor* is to *surrender!* You yourself can't do it. If you want to be transformed into a child of God, if you want to be born again, you have to be willing to surrender everything you are to God, not only everything bad but everything good. You have to be willing to say, "God, I can't do this—you'll have to do it for me if you want me."

Then, when you hear a little voice telling you, "You don't need that habit anymore," and you feel inside you the possibility that you can be free, that God is giving you a brief window of opportunity, then say goodbye to that habit, right away, and you'll be free! God will lead you, whether step by step or by leaps and bounds, into the freedom you've longed for but have never managed to find. You'll experience the power He's been longing to give you. Then, when

CHRISTIAN: THE GREAT CONTROVERSY OVER ME

you're free, you'll have something to praise God about, you'll have something to share. By sharing, you will be able to draw others to Christ, and you'll know the excitement and fulfillment of witnessing. It's like gulping pure oxygen after you've been running. The power of God is so heady that you'll want to roar with joy.

JATS Index: 1990–1998

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Volume 1, Number 1 (Spring 1990)

Articles:

“The Crisis of the Authority of the Bible as the Word of God,” Gerhard F. Hasel

“The Authority of Scripture: A Personal Pilgrimage,” Richard M. Davidson

“Toward Understanding the Atonement,” Norman R. Gulley

“Blood Is a Symbol,” Leslie Hardinge

Sermons:

“The Power of the Word,” Francis Wernick

“How to Pick Real Seventh-day Adventists Out of a Bushel of Christians,” C. Mervyn Maxwell

“Keepers of the Springs,” Cyril Miller

“His Workmanship,” Joel Tompkins

Features:

“Greetings!” Jack J. Blanco

“New, Yet Historic,” Gordon Hyde

“Why I’m Glad for the ATS,” Jacob J. Nortey

“Biblical Theology Without Apology,” Leo Van Dolson

Volume 1, Number 2 (Autumn 1990)

Articles:

“The Status of the Fetus in Mosaic Law,” Ron du Preež

“The Battle for Biblical Eschatology in the End Time,” Norman R. Gulley

“The Book of Daniel Confirmed by the Dead Sea Scrolls,” Gerhard F. Hasel

“Homosexual Activity: Does Romans 1 Condone or Condemn It?” R. M. Springett

“Balanced Preaching: Avoiding the Extremes of Legalism and Licentiousness,” C. Raymond Holmes

Sermons:

“Christ, the Key to Theology,” D. A. Delafield

“Seven Encouraging Things,” C. Mervyn Maxwell

Features:

“The President’s Page,” Gerhard F. Hasel

“The Past President’s Page,” Jack J. Blanco

“*The Last Days*, by Ellen G. White,” Leo R. Van Dolson

Volume 2, Number 1 (Spring 1991)

Articles:

"The Totality of Scripture *versus* Modernistic Limitations," Gerhard F. Hasel

"The Role of the Centrist Theologian in the Church," E. Edward Zinke

"Another Look at Adventist Hermeneutics," George W. Reid

"Adventist Doctrines and Progressive Revelation," P. Gerard Damsteegt

"In Confirmation of the Sanctuary Message," Richard M. Davidson

"When Did the Seventy Weeks of Daniel 9:24 Begin?" William H. Shea

"In Confirmation of Prophetic Interpretation," C. Mervyn Maxwell

Sermons:

"A Trojan Horse Within the Church," Enoch de Oliveira

"Toward an Understanding of the Prophetic Office," Kenneth H. Wood

"How to Survive the Coming Sunday-law Crisis," Norman R. Gulley

"The Role of the Law in Salvation," Lewis R. Walton

"Christ-centered Pulpits for Christ-centered People," Mervyn A. Warren

Features:

"The President's Page," Gerhard F. Hasel

"Greetings," Robert S. Folkenberg

"Like the Leaves of Autumn," Leo R. Van Dolson

Volume 2, Number 2 (Autumn 1991)

Articles:

"The Good News of Yom Kippur," Richard M. Davidson

"The Time of the End and the Last Days," Hans K. LaRondelle

"Daniel's Pre-advent Judgment in its Biblical Context," Norman R. Gulley

"Historicist Interpretation: Its Present Relevance," Jack J. Blanco

"Adventist Identity and Evangelical Criticism," C. Raymond Holmes

"Clean and Unclean Meats in Leviticus 11: Still Relevant?" Gerhard F. Hasel

"Liberation Theology," Atilio R. Dupertuis

"A Theology of the Sabbath," E. Edward Zinke

"Thomas Kuhn's Concept of Paradigm and Paradigm Change," Frank M. Hasel

"The Bible and Alcoholic Beverages," Samuele Bacchicchi

Sermon:

"Ellen G. White's Role in Ministering to God's Remnant," Paul A. Gordon

Features:

"The President's Page," Gerhard F. Hasel

"Readers' Responses," Leo R. Van Dolson

Volume 3, Number 1 (Spring 1992)

Articles:

"Salvation and Forgiveness," Richard M. Davidson

"Salvation and the Atonement," Hans K. La Rondelle

"A Love Affair with the Law," Siegfried H. A. Roeske

"A Look at the Larger View of Calvary," Norman R. Gulley
"Salvation and the Sanctuary," George W. Reid
"Progressive Creationism and Biblical Revelation," John T. Baldwin
"Israel in Bible Prophecy," Gerhard F. Hasel

Sermon:

"Heralds of Hope (Titus 2:11-15)," C. Raymond Holmes

Features:

"The President's Page," C. Raymond Holmes

"The Past President's Page," Gerhard F. Hasel.

Volume 3, Number 2 (Autumn 1992)

Articles:

"Salvation and the Adventist Faith and Mission," Mario Veloso

"Salvation in Scripture," Gerhard F. Hasel

"Salvation by Sacrificial Substitution," Angel Manuel Rodriguez

"Salvation and Obedience," Jack J. Blanco

"Health and Salvation," Mervyn G. Hardinge

"The Pilgrimage of a Believer," E. Edward Zinke

"Pauline Cosmology: Relic or Relevant?" Bruce Norman

Sermon:

"What Is the Gospel? (Galatians 1:6-10)," C. Raymond Holmes

Features:

"The President's Page," C. Raymond Holmes

"The Forerunner," Leo R. Van Dolson

Volume 4, Number 1 (Spring 1993)

Articles:

"The Role of SDA Education in the Formation of Adventist Lifestyle," George H. Akers

"The Origin of the Biblical Sabbath and the Historical-Critical Method: A Methodological Test Case," Gerhard F. Hasel

"Presuppositions: The Key to the Formulation of Biblical Doctrine," Bruce Norman

"Dispensational Biblical Interpretation: Its Past and Present Hermeneutical Systems," Norman R. Gulley

"John the Baptizer and Jesus Christ: When Symbol Meets Substance," Mervyn A. Warren

"Living with Moral Issues," Miroslav M. Kis

"Thinking About Thinking: An Assessment of Certain Presuppositions Underlying Some Adventist Lifestyle Issues," Ron du Preez

"Contemporary Culture and Christian Lifestyle: A Clash of Worldviews," Samuel Koranteng-Pipim

"Early Adventist Timesettings and Their Implications for Today," P. Gerard Damsteegt

Features:

"The President's Page," C. Raymond Holmes

Volume 4, Number 2 (Autumn 1993)

Articles:

"The Theologian as Conscience for the Church," George W. Reid

"Faith and Theology," Jack J. Blanco

"Scripture and Theology," Gerhard F. Hasel

"Interpreting Scripture: An Hermeneutical Decalogue," Richard M. Davidson

"Ellen White on Theology, Its Methods, and the Use of Scripture," P. Gerard Damsteegt

"The Influence of Philosophical and Scientific World Views on the Development of Theology," Norman R. Gulley

"Historicization and Christian Theological Method," John T. Baldwin

"Theology and the Role of Reason," Frank M. Hasel

"The Word of God in Christian Ethics," Miroslav M. Kis

"A Brief History of Adventist Hermeneutics," C. Mervyn Maxwell

Sermon:

"Divine Love, the Delay of the Advent, and the Mission of the Church," Mark A. Finley

Features:

"The President's Address," C. Raymond Holmes

Volume 5, Number 1 (Spring 1994)

Articles

"By What Authority?" C. Raymond Holmes

"New Testament Use of the Old Testament," Richard M. Davidson

"Inspiration and the Imprecatory Psalms," Angel M. Rodriguez

"Divine Inspiration and the Canon of the Bible," Gerhard F. Hasel

"Revelation/Inspiration, Church, and Culture," Jack J. Blanco

"Inspiration, the Natural Sciences, and a Window of Opportunity," John T. Baldwin

"The Inspiration of Scripture in the Writings of Ellen G. White," P. Gerard Damsteegt

"History of Inspiration in the Adventist Church (1844-1915)," Alberto R. Timm

"The Effects of Adam's Sin on the Human Race," Norman R. Gulley

"Endnotes: Music as Ecumenical Force," Wolfgang H. M. Stefani

Volume 5, Number 2 (Autumn 1994)

Articles:

"Historical-Critical and Evangelical Theology," Eta Linnemann

"Saved by Grace and Living by Race: The Religion Called Racism," Samuel Koranteng-Pipim

"The Battle Against the Sabbath and its End-time Importance," Norman R. Gulley

"Deceptive Views on the Second Coming," Jack J. Blanco

"Christ's Inauguration as King-Priest," Frank B. Holbrook

Features:

"The President's Page: Tribute in Honor of Gerhard F. Hasel," E. Edward Zinke

"The Past President's Address '94," C. Raymond Holmes

Volume 6, Number 1 (Spring 1995)

Articles

"The Resurrection of Jesus: Myth or Historical Reality?" Gerhard F. Hasel

Tributes to Gerhard F. Hasel:

"Life Sketch," C. Mervyn Maxwell

"Memorial Service Message," Randall W. Younker

"Funeral Sermon," Richard M. Davidson

From Friends in the Theological Community:

Gleason L. Archer; Walter C. Kaiser; Elmer A. Martens; Willem A. VanGemeren

From Student Friends:

Hermann V. A. Kuma; Samuel Koranteng-Pipim; Ganoune Diop

By Church Associates and Colleagues:

John T. Baldwin; Robert H. Carter; Norman R. Gulley; Gordon M. Hyde

By Church Officers and ATS:

Robert S. Folkenberg; Robert J. Kloosterhuis; C. Raymond Holmes; Jack J. Blanco; E. Edward Zinke

Volume 6, Number 2 (Autumn 1995)

Articles:

"Science and Theology," Martin F. Hanna

"Biblical Interpretation and Moral Authority," Miroslav M. Kis

"Conscience," Elden M. Chalmers,"

"A Critical Analysis of Ethics Based on the Concept of Dominion in Genesis 1:26-28," Stephen Bauer

Sermons:

"Just Say the Word," Jay Gallimore

"Taste and See," Philip G. Samaan

Features:

"The President's Page," E. Edward Zinke

Volume 7, Number 1 (Spring 1996)

Articles:

- "Nabonidus Chronicle: New Readings and the Identity of Darius the Mede,"
William H. Shea
- "Cultic Motifs and Themes in the Book of Daniel," Winfried Vogel
- "The Prayers of Daniel," Paul Birch Petersen
- "The Priest-King Role of the Messiah," Alberto Treiyer
- "A Linguistic Analysis of Daniel 8:11, 12," Martin Pröbstle
- "The Meaning of Nisdaq in Daniel 8:14," Richard M. Davidson
- "Adventist Interpretation of Daniel 10–12: A Diagnosis and Prescription," Donn
Leatherman
- "Daniel's 'Time of the End,'" Gerhard Pfandl

Volume 7, Number 2 (Autumn 1996)

Articles:

- "The Church in the Light of Scripture," Jack J. Blanco
- "Is the Adventist Faith Legalistic?" Aecio E. Caïrus
- "Ellen White, Lifestyle, and Scripture Interpretation," P. Gerard Damsteegt
- "The Authority of the Bible," Ganoune Diop
- "The Remnant Concept as Defined by Amos," Ganoune Diop
- "The Cosmic Controversy," Norman R. Gulley
- "Good News About the Time of Trouble," Norman R. Gulley
- "What Is an Adventist? Someone Who Upholds Creation," Marco T. Terreros
- "Ellen G. White: Side Issues or Central Message?" Alberto R. Timm
- "Man and Knowledge: The Search for Truth," Winfried Vogel

Volume 8, Numbers 1–2 (Spring–Autumn 1997)

Revelation and Eschatology

Articles:

- "Worship in the Book of Revelation," C. Raymond Holmes
- "The Remnant Church," Gerhard Pfandl
- "Revelation's Throne Scenes," Norman R. Gulley
- "Jesus Christ in the Midst of His People: A Study of Rev 1:9–3:22," Ganoune
Diop
- "Revelation 4 and 5: Judgment or Inauguration?" Norman R. Gulley
- "The Trumpets in their Contexts," Hans K. LaRondelle
- "Thoughts on the 144,000," Loron Wade
- "Revelation 9:15 and the Limits of Greek Syntax," Tarsee Li
- "Is the Angel of Revelation 10 a Divine Being," Jim Hiner, Jr.
- "The Christian Coalition and the End Game," Norman R. Gulley
- "The 'Fall of Babylon' Motif in Jeremiah and Revelation," Kenneth Mulzac
- "The Millennium and the Judgment," Peter M. van Bemmelen

- "The Restoration of the Primordial World of Gen 1-3 in Rev 21-22," Bruce Norman
- "Preaching Revelation to the Secular Mind," Bruce Norman
- "Judgment as Covenant Review," Roy Gane
- "History and Eschatology in the Book of Daniel," William H. Shea
- "Exegesis of Matt 24:21-35: 'This Generation'," Paul J. Ray
- "Apocalypse Not Yet," Roy Gane
- "Apocalypse Now," Roy Gane
- "Channeled Apocalyptic: Intercepted Dispatches or Disinformation?" Ed Christian

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