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The Editor's Page

Ed Christian

With this double issue—the third in six months—*JATS* is at last back on schedule. I look forward to returning to a more sedate lifestyle and biannual publication. Editing nearly ninety articles in a year in addition to teaching full-time meant putting aside reading, splitting firewood, weeding the garden, and other such luxuries.

The focus of this issue is Eschatology, the theme of the 1999 fall conferences of both the Evangelical Theological Society and the Adventist Theological Society. We are pleased to offer you a foretaste of Norman Gulley's *magnum opus*, his systematic theology. Printed here is the fourth chapter of the second book of this work in progress. Richard Davidson has contributed an important piece on "Cosmic Metanarrative." Be sure to read William Shea's surprising article on the cultic calendar in Revelation.

A number of the articles deal with eschatology in Old Testament books not generally seen as prophetic, and these make a substantial contribution to our understanding of Daniel and Revelation. Lael Caesar's article is especially useful in revealing the relationship between "blameless" Job and the character of Revelation's 144,000.

Finally, this issue is dedicated to the memory of our late brother and colleague C. Mervyn Maxwell, who devoted much of his life to studying and writing about eschatology and the return of Christ. The first fifty pages offer ten tributes from friends, relatives, and students.

Maxwell's most recent contribution to *JATS* was a life sketch of Gerhard Hasel published six years ago. However, he played an important role in the genesis of the Adventist Theological Society. He also served as Associate Editor of *JATS* for the first three issues. He will be missed.

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C. Mervyn Maxwell: An Academic Life Sketch

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C. Mervyn Maxwell's intellectual life and academic contributions, no less than his personal life, exemplified the original denotation of conservative: "having the power or tendency to conserve, to keep from loss, decay, waste, or injury." Maxwell found his lifework, not in theological innovation, but in preserving and articulating the time-honored truths of the past, especially those of the early Seventh-day Adventists. This article will first offer a brief sketch of Maxwell's academic career as a framework for subsequent consideration of his major publications and theological emphases.

Academic Career

C. Mervyn Maxwell (1925-1999) graduated from Mountain View Union Academy, Mountain View, California, and enrolled in Pacific Union College in 1942.¹ His vocational dream at that time was to be an academy science teacher, but he was already feeling some conviction of a call to the ministry. He later recalled his choice of majors: theology "to satisfy my conscience," science "to satisfy myself," and "pre-med to satisfy mother."² Eventually theology won out, and after graduation in 1946 (and marriage to Pauline Weitz in 1947), he spent four years in pastoral ministry in northern California. Upon ordination in 1950, he attended the SDA Theological Seminary in Washington, DC. During that year he produced two early pieces of academic writing, a term paper on "Divine Providence and Predestination," and a thesis on the historical backgrounds of

¹[Biographical Information (form)], C[Cyril] Mervyn Maxwell, typescript, 1987, Center for Adventist Research (CAR), Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

²C. Mervyn Maxwell, "Beside Still Waters," in *God's Hand in My Life*, comp. Lawrence T. Geraty (Nashville: Southern Publishing, 1977), 49.

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1260-day period of apocalyptic prophecy.³ Receiving the M.A. in 1951, he returned to southeastern California for another five years of pastoral and evangelistic ministry.

In 1956 he began class work in New Testament and early church history for a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago. From 1959 to 1968 he taught religion at Union College, Lincoln, Nebraska, defending his dissertation on “Chrysostom’s Homilies Against the Jews: An English Translation,” in 1966.⁴ It would be romantic to speculate that his interest in the early church Fathers had something to do with his first name, Cyril, but the factual explanation is that the topic reflected his interest in the history and theology of the change of the Sabbath. Two years after the completion of the doctorate Maxwell accepted an appointment to chair the church history department at the SDA Theological Seminary, now at Andrews University, a position he held until his retirement in 1988. As chair of the church history department he was directly involved in launching Adventist Studies, a new area of concentration in the Seminary Ph.D. program, in 1986, as well as teaching classes in church history and historical theology.

Publications

Books. A brief survey of Maxwell’s publications reveals that he had diverse and wide-ranging interests. His fascination with the natural sciences, especially biology and astronomy, revealed itself in his first published book, “Man, What a God!” This inspirational work reveled in the glory of God as reflected in the vastness of the universe, the intricate ordering of life forms, and the incredible mathematical odds against their occurrence by chance.⁵ A second popular book was *Look at It This Way*, compiled from four years of authoring a monthly question and answer column for youth.⁶

But academic controversies were brewing at the seminary in the 1970s; one involved different views on the question of the possibility of human character perfection. Edward Heppenstall vigorously objected to M. L. Andreasen’s concepts, which Maxwell, with some minor caveats, accepted. Hans K. La Rondelle had recently done a dissertation on the topic,⁷ and Herbert Douglass, an associate editor of the *Adventist Review*, had also written on the topic. Someone

³ C. Mervyn Maxwell, “Divine Providence and Predestination” (Term paper, SDA Theological Seminary, 1951), 27 pp.; idem, “An Exegetical and Historical Examination of the Beginning of the 1260 Days of Prophecy with Special Attention Given to A.D. 538 and 1798 as Initial and Terminal Dates” (Thesis, SDA Theological Seminary, 1951).

⁴ Maxwell, “Chrysostom’s Homilies Against the Jews: An English Translation” (PhD. diss., University of Chicago, 1966).

⁵ Maxwell, *Man, What a God!* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1970).

⁶ Maxwell, *Look at It This Way*, “Questions and Answers Selected from Mervyn Maxwell’s Column in *Signs of the Times Magazine*” (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1972).

⁷ Hans K. La Rondelle, *Perfection and Perfectionism: A Dogmatic-Ethical Study of Biblical Perfection and Phenomenal Perfectionism* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews UP, 1971), published version of a Th.D. diss., Free University of Amsterdam.

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at Southern Publishing conceived the idea of a symposium showcasing four perspectives under the title *Perfection: The Impossible Possibility*.⁸ Maxwell's section will be discussed further below.

His first seventeen years of teaching SDA church history he distilled in 1976 as *Tell It to the World: The Story of Seventh-day Adventists*. The book blended theological developments with historical narratives, reflecting the story-telling flavor of his classroom presentations. Very popular, the book has gone through several editions in English and been translated into German, Korean, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish. Four years later Maxwell authored another version of SDA church history, this one aimed at a younger readership. *Moving Out* was profusely illustrated as a textbook for twelfth-grade religion classes.⁹

About the time *Tell It to the World* appeared, Pacific Press was planning a new commentary on Daniel and Revelation, and Maxwell accepted the task. The two volumes (318 pages on Daniel and 573 pages on Revelation) were eventually published as *God Cares*, and translated into several languages, including Chinese, German, Korean, Portuguese, and Spanish. Three thousand copies of volume 1, shipped into Communist China, were confiscated at the border and never seen again.¹⁰

Meanwhile, the church was feeling the tremors of an impending theological earthquake, and even before the appearance of *God Cares*, vol. 1, an excerpt was published under the title, *God and His Sanctuary*,¹¹ an early response to the sanctuary debates of the eighties. Also in the eighties, Maxwell contributed significant chapters, "Sanctuary and Atonement in SDA Theology: An Historical Survey," and "The Investigative Judgment: Its Early Development," to Biblical Research Institute volumes.¹² Maxwell's final book-length publication on

⁸ Herbert E Douglass, Edward Heppenstall, Hans K. La Rondelle, and C. Mervyn Maxwell, *Perfection: The Impossible Possibility* (Nashville: Southern Pub., 1975).

⁹ Maxwell, *Tell It to the World: The Story of Seventh-day Adventists* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1976); rev ed., 1977; 2d rev. ed, 1982; Portuguese: *Historio do Adventismo*, trans. G. Brito (Santo Andre, Brazil: Casa Publicadora Brasileira, 1982); Spanish: *Dilo al Mundo* (Pacific Press, 1990); German, *Sagt es der ganzen Welt* (1997); Korean, and Russian. [C. Mervyn Maxwell], *Moving Out: Breakthrough with God's Church*, unit 4 [12th grade], ed. Joe Engelkemier (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1980).

¹⁰ Maxwell, *God Cares: The Message of Daniel for You and Your Family* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1981); idem, *God Cares: The Message of Revelation for You and Your Family* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1985). Translation information and the anecdote about the Chinese edition were provided by Stanley M. Maxwell, interview with author, September 28, 2000.

¹¹ Maxwell, *God and His Sanctuary: What Daniel Can Tell Us about 1844, the Cleansing of the Sanctuary, and What Jesus Is Now Doing in the Heavenly Sanctuary* (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1980).

¹² "Sanctuary and Atonement in SDA Theology: An Historical Survey," and "The Investigative Judgment: Its Early Development," chapters XXIII and XIV in *The Sanctuary and the Atonement: Biblical, Historical, and Theological Studies*, ed. Arnold V. Wallenkampf and W. Richard Leshar (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1981), 516-544, 545-581. "The Investigative Judgment: Its Early Development" was adapted, with the addition of an Editorial Synopsis, in *Doctrine of the*

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the sanctuary was *Magnificent Disappointment: What Really Happened in 1844 and Its Meaning for Today*.¹³ He also wrote a chapter on the early development of Adventist Sabbath theology for *The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, edited by his church history department colleague, Kenneth A. Strand.¹⁴

Periodical Articles. After the completion of his dissertation, Maxwell kept up a steady stream of articles that continued literally until the day of his death. A partial listing includes about 200 articles: 18 in *Signs of the Times* (plus 60 appearances of a monthly column for youth, 1969-73), 8 in *Liberty* (plus 48 question-and-answer columns, 1966-1973), 26 in *Adventists Affirm*, 6 in the *Lake Union Herald*, 5 in the *Adventist Review*, 5 in the *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 4 in *These Times*, 3 in *Ministry*, 2 in the *Journal of Adventist Education*, 3 in the *Australasian Record*, and some reprints elsewhere.¹⁵ He also authored scholarly book reviews.¹⁶

Other published and unpublished works. In addition to published books, chapters, and articles, the Center for Adventist Research at Andrews University holds a variety of unpublished materials, including class handouts and course anthologies, occasional papers, speeches, and sermons. These show the priority Maxwell placed on teaching; the volume of his class handouts, syllabi, and anthologies over the years at least approximates the volume of his published writings.

Academic Interests and Theological Emphases

From the written products of Maxwell's forty years of college and university teaching, one can note at least eight particular categories of interest: Science and religion, church history, interpretation of Daniel and Revelation, religious liberty, perfection and perfectionism, doctrine of the sanctuary, and contemporary issues in Adventism.

Science and religion. Maxwell's lifelong fascination with science has been noted above. Among his emphases were the beauty of nature as a witness to the magnificence of God, creation vs. evolution, and the ongoing advances in sci-

Sanctuary: A Historical Survey, ed. Frank B. Holbrook (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1989).

¹³ Maxwell, *Magnificent Disappointment: What Really Happened in 1844 and Its Meaning for Today* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1994; reprint Berrien Springs, MI: Stanley M Maxwell, 2000). For information about reprint editions, see <www.maxwellsgiftsandbooks.com>.

¹⁴ Maxwell, "Joseph Bates and Seventh-day Adventist Theology," in *The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, ed. Kenneth A. Strand (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1982), 352-362.

¹⁵ Lynn Eisele compiled a partial listing of some 65 articles in SDA publications through 1996, specifically excluding articles for children and youth ("C. Mervyn Maxwell-Thematic Contributions to the Doctrine of the Sanctuary in the SDA Church" [term paper, Andrews University, 1977], 52-55). Extending the period to the present, I found some fifteen more, plus the columns for *Liberty* and *Signs of the Times*.

¹⁶ See, e.g., Maxwell, review of *Saints and Sinners: Men and Ideas in the Early Church*, by Kurt Aland, *Church History* 41 (1972): 110; Maxwell, review of *Movement of Destiny*, by LeRoy E. Froom, *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 10 (1972): 119-122.

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ence and technology.¹⁷ He was an avid reader of *Scientific American*,¹⁸ and his sermons and publications often included illustrations drawn from science. He loved to work on computer and was one of the first in the seminary to acquire and use page-making and desktop-publishing software.

Church History. Within his academic discipline, some of the themes Maxwell found especially absorbing included the relation between prophecy and history, the movements of apostasy and Reformation, and the history of Sabbath and Sunday. While most of his published writings were in Adventist journals and magazines, he read widely in scholarly literature related to his field.¹⁹ He taught seminary courses in Early Church History, History of Sabbath and Sunday, Development of Prophetic Interpretation, History of the SDA Church, Development of SDA Theology, and others offered on an occasional basis. In these courses, church history blended with historical theology and often overlapped a third area, the subject of Maxwell's most voluminous writings—the interpretation of Daniel and Revelation.

Interpretation of Daniel and Revelation. The two-volume *God Cares* amounted to almost 900 pages, but many of his other writings touched on aspects of Daniel and Revelation. His M.A. thesis investigated the 1260 days/42 months/3 1/2 years of Dan 7 and Rev 11-13. All the courses mentioned in the previous paragraph contained sections directly involved in the interpretation of these two apocalyptic books.

Religious Liberty. All the above—science and religion, church history, and Daniel and Revelation—have interfaces within the context of religious liberty, so it is not surprising that religious liberty was another of Maxwell's major interests. His 56 articles and columns in *Liberty* have already been noted. For many years he subscribed to and read the *Journal of Church and State* from Baylor University—no doubt a significant source of information for his column.

Perfection and Perfectionism. Maxwell's most comprehensive writing on this topic was a seven-chapter section in *Perfection: The Impossible Possibility*,²⁰ but the theme was a factor in many of his other writings and sermons. Autobiographically, Maxwell expressed a lifelong desire to be “like Jesus” in character. He defined “character perfection” very simply as “the outliving in everyday life of Christ's character, of the loveliness of Jesus.”²¹ This was so thematic in his personal life that at his funeral his *Adventist Affirm* colleagues

¹⁷ All these themes are reflected in his first book, *Man, What a God!*

¹⁸ He subscribed from 1963 to his death; Pauline Maxwell noted that he was a reader of *Scientific American* from college days, but not until 1963 did he feel he could afford the cost of a subscription.

¹⁹ *Church History*, *American Historical Review*, *Michigan History*, *Harvard Theological Review*, and *Journal of Biblical Literature* were among the journals he subscribed to.

²⁰ C. Mervyn Maxwell, “Ready for His Appearing,” section 4 in *Perfection: The Impossible Possibility*, by Herbert E. Douglass, Edward Heppenstall, Hans K. La Rondelle, and C. Mervyn Maxwell (Nashville: Southern Pub., 1975), 137-200.

²¹ *Perfection*, 141.

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distributed, as a memorial, an eight-page excerpt from *Magnificent Disappointment*, the chapter titled “1844 and Being Like Jesus.”²² He strongly disavowed belief in “absolute perfection,” as if the sanctified Christian would become, in this life, infallible in judgment or free from physical and mental infirmities. Neither did he perceive perfection as a prerequisite to salvation and hence a threat to assurance. Rather, he saw the biblical call to perfection as “alive with the promise of victory”²³—God’s assurance to the believer of sufficient grace to become like Jesus in character. To the end of his life he marveled that any lover of Jesus could object to the promise of becoming like Him. Closely connected with Maxwell’s exposition of perfection in the context of Adventist doctrinal development was the doctrine of the sanctuary.

Doctrine of the Sanctuary. Interestingly, Maxwell’s absorption in the sanctuary doctrine did not begin until he came to the Seminary in 1968. In one of the first SDA history classes he taught there, a student “on the back row called out, ‘What does the sanctuary have to do with SDA history?’” Until then, Maxwell recollected, he had believed the sanctuary, but considered the 2300 days a rather tedious calculation and was perfectly content to leave the teaching of it to his colleagues. But with that student’s question, Maxwell realized that without a particular understanding of the sanctuary, there would have been no SDA history, and from then on his interest in the sanctuary motivated a series of significant publications, as noted above. From these publications, and from an interview with Maxwell conducted by Lynn Eisele, several salient themes emerge.²⁴

1. One of Maxwell’s foundational emphases in any class dealing with the sanctuary doctrine was his passionate exposition of the historical and theological fact that the “Adventist doctrine of the pre-advent investigative judgment is not based on an isolated proof text but was developed from a large body of interrelated data located in both the Old and New Testaments”—and he listed some twenty texts and biblical passages to prove his point.²⁵

2. Another conviction he advocated strongly and convincingly was that the sanctuary doctrine (in connection with the time prophecy of Dan 8:14) is the explicit biblical basis for SDA identity.²⁶

3. Also close to the top of his sanctuary priorities was the confidence that the sanctuary underlines the perpetuity of the Sabbath. Revelation 11:19 men-

²² *Magnificent Disappointment*, 151–158.

²³ *Perfection*, 141.

²⁴ Evelyn (Lynn) Eisele, “Interview with Dr C. Mervyn Maxwell,” audio cassette, 1977; produced in conjunction with “C. Mervyn Maxwell—Thematic Contributions to the Doctrine of the Sanctuary in the SDA Church,” (term paper, Andrews University, 1977), 31–33.

²⁵ Maxwell, *Magnificent Disappointment*, 84; see 81–85. This concept is also expounded in “The Investigative Judgment: Its Early Development,” in *The Sanctuary and the Atonement: Biblical, Historical, and Theological Studies*, 545–547, and in “The Investigative Judgment: Its Early Development,” in *Doctrine of the Sanctuary: A Historical Survey*, 120–123.

²⁶ Eisele, “Interview”; cf. Maxwell, *Magnificent Disappointment*, 5.

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tions the temple of God in heaven, and specifically highlights the ark of the covenant, which contained the Ten Commandments, showing their relevance to the end-time. In Ellen White's *Great Controversy*, she follows up her chapter on the sanctuary with two chapters on the Sabbath, *before* she presents the Investigative Judgment, thus showing the prominence she placed on the connection between the sanctuary and the Sabbath.²⁷

4. Maxwell also connected the sanctuary with character perfection. He argued that one of the "standard features of Sabbatarian Adventism," was the concept first articulated by O. R. L. Crosier, in 1846, that there are two sanctuaries to be cleansed—a "literal" temple in heaven and a "spiritual temple"—"the church"—on earth.²⁸ Ellen White concurred that while Christ is cleansing the "heavenly sanctuary," "we must enter by faith into the sanctuary with Him, we must commence the work in the sanctuary of our own souls. We are to cleanse ourselves from all defilement."²⁹ Maxwell reasoned, therefore, that the cleansing of the sanctuary in heaven cannot be finished until the cleansing of believers on earth is also finished.³⁰

5. Maxwell always staunchly insisted on the reality and literal existence of the heavenly sanctuary.³¹ He would remind his students that in type-antitype relationships, the type is the figurative or symbolic element, and the antitype is the real, the true. But he also maintained that the heavenly is *not* a finite rectangular box like the desert tabernacle, but rather a structure so immense that, in the language of Ellen White, "no earthly structure could represent its vastness and glory."³²

6. Maxwell saw the prophetic gift manifested through Ellen G. White as messages from Jesus in the Most Holy Place (the "testimony of Jesus," Rev 1:1-2, 9; 12:17; 19:10).

7. Maxwell believed that the ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary is the doctrinal hub of Adventist theology.³³

Controversial and Activist Writings. A final category of Maxwell's writings may be seen as the expression of his soul-passion for the Seventh-day Adventist church, its history, doctrine, and mission. Mervyn Maxwell was not only a scholar, but first and foremost a churchman, a minister of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. His scholarship was always in the service of the church,

²⁷ Eisele, "Interview."

²⁸ O. R. L. Crosier to Enoch Jacobs, March 31, 1846, in the *Day-Star*, April 18, 1846, 31; quoted by Maxwell, *Sanctuary and Atonement*, 517-518; 539, n. 11.

²⁹ Ellen G. White, *The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials* (Washington, DC: Ellen G. White Estate, 1987), 127; quoted in Maxwell, *Sanctuary and Atonement*, 518.

³⁰ Maxwell, *Magnificent Disappointment*, 120 (see 111-121).

³¹ Note, for instance, the preceding paragraph where Crosier calls the temple in heaven the "literal" sanctuary and the temple on earth—the church—the "spiritual" sanctuary (see note 26)

³² Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 357; quoted in Maxwell, *Magnificent Disappointment*, 64.

³³ Eisele, "Interview"; cf. Ellen G. White, *Great Controversy*, 423.

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and he did not hesitate to espouse unpopular causes or viewpoints if he perceived that the vitality of the church was at stake.

Consequently, when a proposal was made to close the Pacific Press as a full-service publisher, and merge the printing plant with that of the Review and Herald, Maxwell entered the fray with a tightly reasoned defense of multiple publishing houses, based on SDA history and Ellen White's strong advocacy of the same principle.³⁴ He was a founding member of the Adventist Theological Society, when that was a controversial innovation.³⁵ In 1992, in response to a letter from a General Conference leader, Maxwell authored a fervent defense of *some* of the motivations and purposes of the Adventist organizations termed "independent ministries," even while he refused to sanction others of their emphases and practices.³⁶

The publication to which Maxwell devoted much of the energy of his retirement years began with the debate over the propriety and biblical authority for ordaining women. Maxwell was one of the twenty-seven delegates to the Camp Mohaven conference called in 1973 by the Biblical Research Institute to study the matter. At that point Maxwell was still undecided. By 1987, however, when the campus church at Andrews University proposed ordaining elders, Maxwell's convictions had crystallized to the point that he, with several others, published an eight-page position paper against the ordination of women. The pivotal text for Maxwell was the phrase "husband of one wife" in 1 Tim 3:2. When he found that *aner*, "husband," is always masculine in the NT, he could not evade the conviction that the NT requires elders to be men.³⁷ After three numbers on this and related questions, *Adventists Affirm* moved on to address a variety of doctrinal and lifestyle topics within Adventism.³⁸ Maxwell wrote an article for almost every issue and served as acting editor from 1997 to his death in 1999.³⁹

³⁴ C. M. Maxwell to Faculty and Staff of Andrews University, May 26, 1983, typescript signed (photocopy), Adventist Heritage Center, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

³⁵ Gordon Hyde, "New, Yet Historic," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 1/1 (Spring 1990): 4; C. Mervyn Maxwell, "How to Pick Real Seventh-day Adventists Out of a Bushel of Christians," *ibid.*, 103-117.

³⁶ Maxwell, "On Disciplining Hope International: Some General and Specific Observations, Based on a Letter to a Denominational Leader in Response to a Request of His" (1992), Adventist Heritage Center, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

³⁷ Maxwell, "Let's Be Serious," *Adventists Affirm* 3 (Fall 1989): 30-31.

³⁸ One of those topics was music, especially music in worship. A college class in conducting had strengthened Maxwell's lifelong interest in hymnology, and here, as in other areas, he had strong convictions. He believed syncopation should be used as a musical flavoring, not as a primary ingredient, and regarded the lyrics of much contemporary religious music as intellectually superficial in comparison to traditional hymnology.

³⁹ In his hospital bed, only hours before his death, his last editorial activity was helping to prepare for publication, *Prove All Things: A Response to Women in Ministry*, ed. Mercedes H. Dyer (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventists Affirm, 2000).

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Summary

Mervyn Maxwell's academic contributions resulted not from an ambitious scholarly agenda, but from responding to the needs of the church as he became aware of those needs. He was not interested in innovation for innovation's sake, but rather maintained a steadfast devotion to preserving, articulating, and passing on the truths that have made Seventh-day Adventists a distinct movement and people.

In a personal letter written only a few months before he died, Maxwell calculated that his books had sold a total of 700,000 copies—then noted that was only one percent of the 70 million copies sold of books written by his father, Arthur S. Maxwell.⁴⁰

Mervyn's motivation was not to gain academic distinction, but to fulfill his commitment to ministry. As a young pastor he had some marked successes in evangelism. He told me he would never have left evangelism for teaching had not the Lord made it clear that was His will. Mervyn never lost his love for ministry as ministry. He was a pastor to his students and to the end remained active in his local church.

Someone with a perspective not far from that of C. Mervyn Maxwell has remarked that "Anything true is not really new; anything new is not really true." If the topic were human free will, Maxwell would vigorously disagree. But if the subject were doctrine, Maxwell would probably agree. The truth he devoted his life to was the ancient truth of Scripture, as confirmed and amplified by Ellen G. White. He was content to be a conserver, preserver, and proclaimer of that body of truth.

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⁴⁰ Conversation with Stanley Maxwell, September 28, 2000.

A Life Lived With No Regrets¹

William Fagal

E. G. White Estate, Andrews University

He wasn't young anymore. But neither was he very old. Certainly not so old that there shouldn't have been a number of good years ahead of him yet. He had faced death before. But this time it would come for sure. As the end approached, he reviewed his life. As he looked back, he had no regrets about the course he had chosen since the day he had met the master. The fundamental truths of Jesus Christ had been the theme of his teaching and preaching since then.

He was a highly educated man. He was a teacher, a preacher, an evangelist, an innovator, a hymn-writer, a man who sat on high church councils. He traveled for the sake of the cause he held dear, speaking to wide-spread audiences. When some in the church started to drift into modern false teachings, with clarity and conviction he called them back to the message that had been delivered to them in the start. He did not coddle those who sought to change or ignore the faith once delivered to the saints. His passion was born of love for Jesus, love for the gospel, and love for souls. You can see that in what was important to him as he knew that death was approaching.

He put down what was important to him in a three-page letter—his last before he died. I say three pages because it takes that many in my Bible. The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, his beloved son in the faith, and expressed things I know were important also to C. Mervyn Maxwell, because I had the privilege of knowing him and talking with him at length in recent years. In his presence I felt like something of a Timothy to his Paul.

I believe that in the words of Second Timothy we can hear the words Mervyn Maxwell would want us to receive today: How to live a life with no regret before God. We find evidence of that theme in the first and second chapters, but I'm going to skip down to the third chapter, because in chapters three and four,

¹ The following sermon was preached at the funeral of C. Mervyn Maxwell, Pioneer Memorial Church, Berrien Springs, MI, 26 July 1999.

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Paul focuses and intensifies his concerns and links them together. The passages I'm going to read from Timothy are familiar to us, but, if you're like me, you've tended to see them in isolation—out of their context. Today, I want you to see them put together as Paul put them together and think about what it means. In them we'll find Paul's prescription for living a life with no regrets.

So in 2 Timothy 3, we find Paul offering this counsel. He says, from childhood, Timothy, "you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."

Paul tells Timothy to "pay attention to the Scriptures. Believe the Scriptures because they have a tremendous power to work in your life and in the lives of others. [Scripture is] able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ." Yet some look to the Scriptures for no more than the minimum requirements for salvation. They discount the rest. But Paul asserts the inspiration and usefulness of all Scripture. He makes no dichotomy between Gospel and Doctrine, between Salvation and Christian Living, between Jesus and the Truth. All of Scripture is important to the conscientious Christian who wants to be complete, equipped for every good work.

Paul enumerates four things Scripture is good for. In the King James the first one is doctrine. That's teaching. That is, it tells us what we ought to believe. The second one is reproof. Oh, we're not so interested in that. We'd rather not be reproved. But, in fact, the Bible tells us where we may have gone wrong. Correction is the third. It tells us, then, how to get back on the right track when we have gone wrong. And the last one is instruction, or teaching in righteousness. How to stay on the right path. This is what Scripture is to us. All of it, Paul says. All of it is inspired. All of it. And it is profitable for these things.

And so, Timothy, pay attention to Scripture. Believe it. Follow it. Make it your own.

You know, you can't believe the Scriptures and not live what they say.

Dr. Maxwell read the Scriptures that said such things as, "Now onto Him that is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy." And he believed that. And felt he should live it as well.

Believe Scripture! Live it! This is what Paul wants Timothy to grasp. And then, if Timothy, and if we, will grasp that and make it our own, when we come to the end, we'll have no regrets.

Right on the heels of that famous affirmation of Scripture, Paul takes the next logical step. We read it in 2 Tim 4:1. "I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, Who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His Kingdom: Preach the Word! Be urgent in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke and exhort. Be unfailing in patience and in teaching."

FAGAL: A LIFE LIVED WITH NO REGRETS

There's life in the Word, not in man's cleverness or opinions or philosophies. Preach the Word. Timothy's business, as a man of God, was to preach the Word. What is your business? What is mine? Are we not also commissioned—whatever our job may be—to preach the Word?

Now sharing the Word with others will not necessarily make everyone happy. Paul recognizes that in verses three and four. "For the time is coming that people will not endure sound teaching. But having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their likings, and will turn away from listening to truth and wander into myths." But Paul says to Timothy, "You have a sacred work to do." And in verse five, he says, "As for you, always be steady. Endure suffering. Do the work of an evangelist. Fulfill your ministry."

Mervyn Maxwell took that commission seriously. He devoted a lifetime to preaching and teaching the Word. He wrote books to call attention to the Bible's teachings. And even their titles not only tell us something of the subject of the book, but they make something of a road map of his journey.

Listen to these titles: *Man! What A God!*: A book on the loveliness, awesomeness, and character of our God. Isn't that where the Christian life really begins, as we come to that kind of appreciation of Who God really is?

Tell It To the World: Once we see Who God is and what His plan is, our hearts are filled with the desire to tell the world. Of course the book was about the Millerite Movement and the development of the Advent Movement that arose from it. *Tell It To the World*. But for him it represented that stage in his life, too.

God Cares: Couldn't do it in just one volume. It took two. *God Cares* so much. The books, of course, are about those central books of Scripture: Daniel and the Revelation. And the volumes have enabled people to understand Daniel and Revelation in a way they may have never done before. But for him, the experiences that he passed through helped him see indeed how much *God Cares*, whether in the good times or the bad.

Magnificent Disappointment: What the Bible teaches about 1844 and what happened then and what it means for us today. Today we're disappointed, aren't we? We'd hoped that he might yet have time. But in our grief, we can say that it is a *Magnificent Disappointment!* Because we have faith. We have hope in Christ that there is a better day coming. A time when there will be no more sickness. No more pain. *Magnificent Disappointment*.

In a gracious and winsome way, he made the Bible clear and appealing. And at the end of his life—at the end of Paul's life—Paul had no regrets that he had preached the Word. And neither did Mervyn Maxwell. And neither will you and I, if we determine to use our talents in faithfully proclaiming the Word of God.

And then the very next thing is this famous passage: "For I'm already on the point of being sacrificed. The time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight. I've finished the race. I've kept the faith. Henceforth, there is

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laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the Righteous Judge, will award to me on that day. And not only to me, but also to all who have loved his appearing.” Paul speaks his confidence in his Lord, in Whom he has but his trust. “Trust the Lord of the Scriptures,” he says.

When it’s all over, when we face the end, what shall we say? Do we want then to have regrets, or do we want to have confidence in the Lord? Will you and I have fought a good fight? Will we have finished the race, or dropped out along the way? Will we have kept the faith, or given it up? Paul trusted his eternity to the Lord Who called him and Who empowered him. He was confident of the crown laid up, not just for him, but for others who love Jesus’ appearing, including Mervyn Maxwell. And including you and me.

Shall we be there? Shall we determine today, that by God’s grace, we will have no regrets on that day? Dr. Maxwell, I believe, fought a good fight, finished the race, kept the faith, all through trust in the Lord of Scripture. He died trusting that same Lord for the next stage, for the crown of life. How about you and me? Will we do the same? Let us determine now, today, that we will believe the Word and live it. That we will preach the Word, by God’s grace, in whatever capacity He calls us. And that we will trust the Lord of the Word with our present life and our future destiny. Then what joy will be ours when God wipes away every tear from our eyes. And there will be no more death, but life and health every lasting.

Do you want to have no regrets on that day? No regrets! May God make that so, in your life and mine, is my prayer.

We’re going to sing a hymn, a hymn that was very special to Mervyn Maxwell, because he wrote it! It’s number 415 in the Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal. “Christ the Lord All Power Possessing.” You’ll notice that in the upper left of the page there are three texts of Scripture that are given—one for each of the verses. The verses represent Jesus’ transits on the clouds. The first, of course, is when He—after His resurrection—left this earth and went up into the clouds of heaven and a cloud received Him up out of their sight. But Daniel 7 tells us of another coming on the clouds, where Jesus comes to the Ancient of Days at the time of the Judgment. Seventh-day Adventists have a special interest in that, believing that God called our attention to that at just the right time. And then there’s the reference to Revelation’s portrayal of Jesus coming again on the clouds. Coming back to this earth. Let’s sing this beautiful hymn with the spirit and enthusiasm that Mervyn would want us to have. And let us put our faith and our trust in our Lord Jesus Christ and in His soon return.

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He Molded My Life: Elder C. Mervyn Maxwell, My Teacher

Don Schneider, President
North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists

Teachers mold lives. And no teacher molded my life more than Elder C. Mervyn Maxwell. When I was his student, his Ph.D. hadn't yet been completed. I had come to Union College, in Lincoln, Nebraska, as a Junior from Southwestern. When I met him, he handed me this paper reproduced in the ditto fashion, a syllabus for the class I was taking from him. I read the introduction. "A teacher ought to challenge his students to reach the highest reasonable standard of achievement," it read. The paper went on to say, "A teacher, if he is to be a teacher, ought to do his very best to help his students to reach this standard." And every day, in his class, he operated that way.

The classes I loved. The tests I hated. In those classes I learned much. Our family had not had an Adventist background, but in those classes I became convinced once again that we had made the right choice when we came to the Adventist church. When I heard about the Scripture as he taught it, I believed it. When he talked to us about Ellen White, I believed it.

In preparation for this assignment, I looked up some of my class notes. I didn't always like to take notes because I was so inspired as I listened. But I knew that terrible day was coming. There would be a test. I looked at a few tests, too. They weren't so inspiring. A few circles here and there—no, to tell you the truth, there were a whole bunch of circles. And one of the tests had a message scribbled in his handwriting, which said, "You don't spell very well." I never did get over that.

But the class! Oh, I loved it! I sat there on the front row as I listened to him talk about Galatians. And I especially loved his class illustrations. In one class, Elder Maxwell brought in an old tree and presented it to us. Then I watched him as he tied fruit onto that old tree that was already dead. And there in my notes, I have his words, as he explained what the fruit and the dead tree were all about. I will never forget that lesson. His class props represented a rela-

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tionship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Let me tell you, when I came into his classes, I was convicted to be a Seventh-day Adventist. But when I left his classes, I was not only convicted to be a Seventh-day Adventist, but I wanted to be a Christian Seventh-day Adventist—which meant I was determined to know Jesus personally.

No man, no teacher molded my life like Elder Maxwell did. Some of the molding was in class, for I think I took every class he ever taught at Union. Most of the molding took place outside the classroom, for teachers mold lives inside, while teaching their classes, but they mold students outside their classes, too. That's where Elder Maxwell molded my life virtually every day. When I became the Junior Class President, I met with him regularly. And he taught me how to manage committee meetings. He taught me the value of an agenda, He taught me the value of completing that agenda on time. I learned. He molded my life.

He molded my life. I was trying to decide what I wanted to do with my life. He spent time with me on a Friday afternoon as the two of us sat in your Ford automobile, Mrs. Maxwell, and we looked at the back side of that old Administration Building that is no longer there. And he talked to me about serving Jesus. He prayed with me that I would make a decision that would be the best for God's work. He taught me that a good way to make decisions is to consider how the decision will advance God's cause. I learned that, Mrs. Pauline Maxwell, in your Ford behind the Administration Building. Teachers mold lives, and no teacher molded my life more than your husband.

Teachers mold lives. When the ministerial students heard me telling too many jokes, they voted to kick me out of the Ministerial Club. One of your husband's fellow faculty members wrote a note to my soon-to-be Conference President telling him what a lousy pastor I would be. Your husband continued to tutor me in the MV Officer's Meeting every week on how to be a pastor. No teacher molded my life more than your father, Stanley.

From your father I learned a lot in class, but much more out of class. From your father I learned the value of talking to boys and girls. For he taught a class in Christian story-telling, describing how we ought to be doing it. He molded my ministry, helping me realize kids are important.

He molded my ministry, teaching me that reaching people who are not presently in our community is worth the effort. While others were trying to throw me out of the club, he was helping me organize so I could reach out to the entire city of Lincoln. Together we developed a leaflet that talked about Jesus and invited people to learn about him.

Today, when I opened up my annual, I saw his picture, standing beside the car, giving directions as people were headed out of the campus. He told people how to do good things and encouraged them. He molded my life.

He molded my life when I watched him deal with a person who had made a mistake. One of the ministerial students had unintentionally gotten his girl-

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friend pregnant. The authorities decided that act of indiscretion made the student an unlikely candidate for the pulpit. He was forced to make new career plans. While almost everyone in the religion department was ostracizing that poor young couple, Elder Maxwell handled the situation differently. He didn't challenge the authorities concerning the young man's future as a minister. However, he did his best to help that devastated couple pick up the pieces. I joined Elder Maxwell one quiet weekend and watched him as he conducted that wedding. It was small, with no frills and few attendants, but Elder Maxwell tried to make the occasion something to celebrate. He furnished that wedding with his own prize geraniums. A quarter of a century later, that unfortunate couple and I happened to make contact. They were still happily married! For what Elder Maxwell had done for them in their time of crisis, they were grateful. At that wedding, Elder Maxwell taught me a lot about church discipline. He taught me how to put an arm around somebody who's made a mistake. He molded my life.

He molded my life as he taught me how to deal with adversity. I remember it. I can see it right now. It's a light flashing! It was in a little skit for vespers. We had put on dozens of them. Elder Maxwell was always helping us perform. This wasn't a class assignment, but this was where he taught me. This is where he molded my life. And there on that Friday night, he molded it. Then, on Sabbath afternoons, he molded my life again. The play was about that man who was so terribly disappointed that Jesus had not come—William Miller. There he was, looking again, wondering, "What do I do now?" And then, there was the light—flashing on the stage—as people asked, "When do you think Jesus is coming?" And the light flashed on and off, revealing the letters that read, "Today! Today! Today!" I don't know when Jesus is coming. But any time people ask me when I think He's coming, what I learned—what I'd been molded into thinking by your husband, Mrs. Maxwell—is, "Expect him today!" And so I remind you to look to the Creator of the Universe. I don't know when He's coming, but, like William Miller, I look for Him today, today, today! And I want to know Him today, today, today!

Let me take you back into that lesson about Galatians when Elder Maxwell brought that dead tree into the room. Your husband said to me about Jesus, "Don't tie on this fruit. Learn to know Him." And I want to know Jesus. And therefore I look for Him to come today, today, today. And when He comes, I anticipate that you [the surviving members of the Maxwell family] will meet your brother, your father, your husband, in that great Resurrection Day. I look for him today, today, today—until He comes!

Elder Mervyn Maxwell, you are a teacher and a man I cannot forget. You molded my life!

He molded my life.

Don Schneider, a former ministerial student at Union College in Lincoln, Nebraska, was President of the Lake Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists when he delivered this funeral eulogy in tribute to his former religion teacher. Schneider is

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now President of the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists and a Vice-President of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

C. Mervyn Maxwell: Memories of My Brother

Lawrence Maxwell

C. Mervyn Maxwell, 74, was born January 13, 1925, in Watford, England, not far from the Seventh-day Adventist Church's British publishing house, Stanborough Press, where our father was editor and general manager.¹ I arrived ten minutes later. For many years thereafter I was always a bit taller and a pound or two heavier, but I was always ten minutes younger. It has taken me 74 years to catch up on those ten minutes, and I would give anything if only I hadn't.

Growing up, he and I were always very close. We even invented some of our own words, as twins often do. We also corrupted the English language. To those who remember my brother as always editing other people's speech, it may be interesting to note our utter outrage when someone told us it was wrong to say "Give it to we." The two of us discussed the criticism seriously. Apparently some older person, maybe 10 or 12 years old, had told Mervyn we ought to say "Give it to us," but that couldn't possibly be right.

Let me pause here and share a problem. You folk here at the Seminary are used to calling Dr. Maxwell "Dr. Maxwell," and it probably sounds strange to you to hear me refer to him as Mervyn. But Dr. Maxwell gives me a problem. By Dr. Maxwell do you mean his big brother who teaches at Loma Linda? Or the Dr. Maxwell, his younger brother, currently president of PUC? Or perhaps Dr. Maxwell who taught nursing at Loma Linda? Or maybe Dr. Maxwell who received an honorary doctorate from Andrews University in 1970? And then again, sometimes kind folk introduce me as Dr. Maxwell. I'm always very grateful when they do, because they save me many years of fatiguing study. But I'll try to call Dr. Maxwell Dr. Maxwell and assume you will figure out which one I refer to.

Mother and Dad were determined to bring us up right, and because Sister White said not to put children in school too early, they did not enroll us in the

¹ These remarks are slightly edited from those given at my brother's funeral in Pioneer Memorial Church, Berrien Springs, MI, July 26, 1999

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local schools at the usual time. Soon five-year-old Dr. Maxwell and I were standing against the wall just inside the kitchen door listening to a man in uniform scolding our mother. We didn't think anyone had the right to talk to her like that—not to our Mother! We decided later he must have been the truant officer. This explains why it was already late in the fall term when we entered Park Gate Elementary. I did not want to be there and cried for several days. Apparently your Dr. Maxwell didn't want to be there either, but the nervous habit he developed and the symptom it produced I shall not here describe. Dr. Maxwell soon changed his mind and enjoyed school. He saw nothing to criticize about the barbarous custom of posting on the classroom bulletin board the names of all the students in the room with their scores in each of the final exams. He might have found fault with it, except that, in a class of twenty-six boys—there were no girls—his name was always among the top two or three.

It was in those days that he began to learn foreign languages, starting with Latin. For many months the Latin teacher required us, as soon as he entered the room, to begin repeating the verb endings in the present indicative active. So we would chant “o, s, t, mus, tis, nt, I, thou, he, we, you, they” over and over until he told us to stop. I know rote learning is supposed to be bad, but I still remember those endings, and I believe Mervyn did also, to the day of his death.

In those days too we had chickens in our back yard, 200 of them. You can read the sad fate of two of them at the hands of Dr. Maxwell and his twin brother in *Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories*. The three chicken houses had to be cleaned out every two or three weeks. What we cleaned out proved very good for growing vegetables. But Mervyn developed an allergy to it, so he was let off the unpleasant chore, and you can guess who took his place. But I will be honest. Our big brother Graham and Mother herself did most of the cleaning. May I insert here that when we came to America Mother said to Dad, “There'll be no more chickens!” There weren't.

Dr. Maxwell was eleven and a half when our father, attending the 1936 General Conference Session in San Francisco, was invited by Pacific Press to come to California and edit *Signs of the Times*. Among other reasons for accepting the call, Dad had been hoping for several years to get his children into Pacific Union College. This move opened the way.

But first Dr. Maxwell had to finish elementary school. Mother took us to the local church school a few days after we arrived at Mountain View in December, 1936. I clearly recall that the door was opened by an attractive 8th grader by the name of Anne Marie. I know it was Anne Marie. Mervyn insisted later it was a boy. Well, his memory sometimes faltered. Be that as it may, our new classmates forever afterward have reminded us of our short pants. I want to tell you about those short pants and the other clothes we were wearing. Those short pants were pure wool. We also had woolen suit coats, and blue cotton shirts and ties and caps. They were our school uniform in England; we had to wear them there. We were also required to wear wool socks that came almost to our knees.

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Those socks were marvelous; you could slide a ruler between the sock and your leg, and that left your hands empty for interesting things.

We now for the first time came up against Seventh-day Adventist education and American schools and multi-grade rooms all at once. One afternoon, soon after our arrival, Mr. Paul Meeth, 7th and 8th grade teacher, gave us a placement test. I think it was the history test he had given his students earlier that day. It was the first time we ran into True and False questions. And what questions they were! Let me give you two examples: “True or False: Prophecy is history before it happens?” “True or False: History is prophecy fulfilled?” I have never forgotten those questions; they seemed so strange. We waited at the school while Mr. Meeth marked our papers. We saw the scores of the other students. We saw that Mr. Meeth had given them A’s or B’s or C’s or D’s, and we expostulated indignantly to Mother when we got home that he had skipped right over E and given us both F’s. But Mr. Meeth must have seen something good, because he put us, just barely turning twelve, into the second semester of 7th grade. We enjoyed the American school better than the English—at least, I did, chiefly, I suspect, because we were not under so much pressure. And the students were more tolerant of our foibles than we were of theirs, though they did tease us about the English custom of dropping h’s at the beginning of words. We were amazed one day when everyone in both grades burst out laughing as Mervyn read aloud Genesis 1:11: “And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb . . .” [*sounds of scornful laughter*]. He looked around bewildered. Finally someone explained. “You’re not supposed to say herb,” he said, “you’re supposed to say ‘erb.” Now, I ask, who drop their h’s at the beginning of words?

From grade school to academy. Because our older brother and sister—Dr. Maxwell (Maureen) and Dr. Maxwell (Graham)—had gone on to PUC, and because little Dr. Maxwell (Malcolm) was still too young, many of the household chores fell on us twins. One was washing dishes. We got it down to a system. Every school night I would wash the dishes, clean the pots, and tidy up the kitchen. Mervyn would clear the supper table, take out the garbage, and dry the dishes.

Then came homework. We studied at the same table, and we always compared our answers. But we never copied them. Oh, you can be sure we didn’t copy them. It was much too humiliating to be wrong! If our answers differed there would always be a thorough restudy of our work, each of us desperately hoping to prove *our* answer was right.

During his academy years Mervyn developed a great interest in growing things. It was an interest that continued to develop all through his life, as evidenced by the intricate pattern of his back yard in Berrien Springs, and the lovely flowers he grew all winter in his glass house. During academy days our home had about fifty apricot trees. Mervyn took on himself the job of pruning them. He must have done a good job, because the fruit tasted better than any

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apricots one can buy in a store, and Mother canned many quarts. Mervyn also tried his hand at grafting, and I give him credit: several of his grafts grew successfully.

Mervyn was very active in extra-curricular activities at the academy. He edited the school paper one year, led the subscription campaign another—and got impatient to organize the senior class. In fact, he began to organize it before Harry Westermeyer, the school principal, was ready, which earned him a firm, but, withal, kind and gentle, rebuke! When the class finally organized, Mervyn got the idea that he could make the class pins. I should explain that behind our house was what Californians called a tank house, a building that supports a tank high enough to let the water flow down into the home. Beneath the tank, in our tank house, was a room that had once been home to the Japanese gardener whom the previous owner had been rich enough to hire full time. It had an old-fashioned, wood-burning stove with an oven inside and places on top for pots and pans. We cleaned the room, a very messy job—which I did most of—and protected a table with acid-proof paint. We ran a pipe under the driveway from the house so we would have natural gas for our Bunsen burner. Our parents must have had enormous confidence in us!

We conducted a number of experiments in our laboratory. We got some home-made cider from a neighbor and distilled the alcohol out of it, to the annoyance of the neighbor who didn't want people thinking there was alcohol in her apple juice. And we generated hydrogen gas. Dad promised us fifty cents if we could fill a balloon with hydrogen so it would float. We tried and failed and tried again. Finally with a series of rubber stoppers and glass tubes and rubber tubing we managed to catch hydrogen in a couple of glass gallon jars, then forced the gas into a balloon. The balloon floated! It was evening. Dad was out. We tied the floating balloon to the landing going upstairs so Dad would see it when he came in. We went to bed. In the morning, the balloon was no longer floating. It was held down with the weight of a dollar bill. Sure, Dad had promised us fifty cents, then gave us a dollar. That was typical of our Dad.

Well, to get back to those class pins. Mervyn's idea was to melt some metal in the old stove and pour it into molds and plate it. I was up in the tank house for just a few minutes one evening while he was working on the project. The sight of the roaring flames in that rusty stove scared me then and still scares me whenever I think of it. Only the good angels protected that dry old wooden building. Perhaps they knew that in the space above our room—where the water tank used to be—Dad was going to write *The Bible Story*. Anyway, to my great relief, Mervyn gave up on his project and lived to accomplish greater things.

College Days. After academy came college. But in between came our first full-time jobs. Mervyn worked all summer in the photo-engraving department of Pacific Press. I worked in the type room. Both departments are now as extinct as the dodo, victims of computers. All that summer I expected us to go to San Jose State College in the fall to take science, then on to PUC to take the minis-

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terial course, and then to Loma Linda for medicine, with the long-range plan of opening a medical office in a town where there were no Adventists and raising up a church. But near the end of that summer, Mervyn got a terrible burden to go into the ministry right away. I think there must have been something of the mystic about him; this burden was so very personal, and so very pressing. At the last minute, we applied at PUC—but by then the boys' dormitory was full. The college graciously opened a small, unused room in the basement of the administration building for us to move into. The arrangement was supposed to last about three weeks—till a couple of boys would leave the regular dormitory. As it turned out, we were there the whole year. Now don't get any ideas that this was an easy way to attend school. We still had to be at worship with the rest of the guys at 6:20 every morning!

It so happened that the windows in our room had a full view of the end of the girls' dormitory, Graf Hall. As you can see, this meant that the rooms in the end of Graf Hall had a clear view of the windows in our room. One evening I arrived at the room just in time to see Dr. Maxwell turning the room light on, then off, then on, then off—several times. I learned that he and a certain girl had developed a code. Perhaps that's enough on that one.

Dr. Maxwell loved putting on programs. He loved the fact that making arrangements required placing long-distance phone calls, which were much more complicated then than now. But he was frustrated by the lack of any way to dim or brighten the lights on stage. What with wartime shortages and the faculty's conservatism, there wasn't any hope of getting the professional equipment he longed for. So before one program he partially dismantled the switch board that controlled the platform lights, then provided himself with a basin partly full of salty water. During the program he carefully manipulated the ends of the wires in the briny mix, drawing them apart when he wanted dimming and bringing them closer when he wanted the lights brighter. Where the fire marshal was that evening I don't know.

Mervyn also loved editing. When asked to edit the 1945 school annual, *Diogenes Lantern*, he seized the opportunity and spent a great deal of time on it, often coming to bed after midnight. This cut into his study time. Meanwhile his brother—this brother—plodded along, underlining textbooks and writing notes in the margins. One night right before a major test (in physics, as I recall) he grabbed the textbook and buried himself in it, studying all my notations. Next day we both got A's, but his score was one point higher than mine.

Somewhere in here I must mention a young lady with golden hair who played the accordion. I don't know all the details, but one night she had to play and he got the job of raising and lowering the piano lid, both for her scheduled pieces and also for her encores. She had many encores. By the time the evening was over, they were both thoroughly annoyed with each other. Notice that. They were both annoyed. Their emotions had been stirred. Not favorably, to be sure, but they had been set in motion. And when the annoyance had passed, Dr. Mer-

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vyn felt a strange attraction to this pretty musician. His job now was to guide what he had begun. The young lady, as it happened, had a car—almost unheard of in those wartime years—and she also had a marimba. Though she could move the accordion unaided, she could not move the marimba without help. A time came when Mervyn volunteered to help with the heavy instrument, not only help to put it into her car but also help to take it out. After that, of course, it had to be set up, and he volunteered to do that, too. All this meant that he had to travel in the car with the marimba player, for there certainly was no other car he could travel in.

One summer evening in Yosemite, stretched out in her sleeping bag under the stars, the young lady noticed that Cassiopaea in the evening looks like the letter W—as in Weitz, Pauline Weitz, her name. She observed that by morning, the constellation had turned itself over and looked like the letter M—as in Maxwell, perhaps?

Pastor Maxwell. As in Maxwell, indeed. They graduated a year apart, Mervyn in 1946 and Pauline in 1947. Mervyn spent the year interning in Roseville, above Sacramento, in northern California. They were married in September, 1947. Their first church was East Stockton in Northern California. Then, Mervyn's internship completed, they were assigned to Mount Shasta, somewhat farther north. There, in full view of the magnificent, snow-clad volcano from which the town gets its name, they nurtured the church and did what many young ministers did in those post-war years, helped the congregation build a school. Then the conference sent them to Alturas, utterly remote, out beyond where the roads were fully surfaced.

Immediately they started a Pathfinder Club with two or three Adventist children and about the same number of non-Adventists. I visited them for their Investiture. I was to be the guest speaker, since no one else would come. Mervyn and Pauline had long before placed an order with the conference youth department for the necessary pins, tokens, and scarves, but none had arrived. Frantic long-distance calls had produced nothing. The last mail had been delivered—with no materials. Mervyn and Pauline got out red and blue pencils, cardboard, small safety pins, old bed sheets, packages of dye—and that afternoon we made Friend and Companion pins and honor tokens and kerchiefs. The Investiture began on time, and the children were just as excited to receive their cardboard pins and tokens and their dyed-sheet kerchiefs as if they had been the real thing! Perhaps even more so, knowing they were special.

The Rest of the Story. By now Mervyn was thinking he should go on for further education. He and Pauline moved to the Seminary, then in Takoma Park, Maryland, not realizing that he would spend nearly a third of his life chairing one of its departments.

In 1961, with his Seminary M.A., he was assigned to Colton in Southeastern California, then to Escondido. Always fascinated by technology, he built up

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an impressive collection of slides and projectors and related equipment to accompany his sermons.

From Escondido it was on to the University of Chicago for the Ph.D. But first, before he got the degree, he and Pauline got what they had wanted for a long time. On September 13, 1958, Stanley came to join them! With him and the Ph.D they went to Union College in 1966 to teach religion. In 1968 the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary urged Dr. Maxwell to come to them. From then on he was Professor of Church History and Chair of the Department of Church History at the Seminary for twenty years, till he retired in 1988.

Somewhere in all this he found time to author many published articles and several books including *Man, What a God!* and *Tell It to the World*, a history of the Adventist church. His two-volume commentary on Daniel and Revelation, *God Cares*, has been translated into several languages. Sales of his books number more than 700,000 copies. He conducted seminars on almost every continent. For several years he answered youth questions for *Signs of the Times*.

He died July 21, 1999, in a hospital near Berrien Springs, MI, after a long and vigorously fought battle with lymphoma.

For fifteen years before his death he was an active charter member of Adventist Heritage Ministry, an organization that purchases and restores buildings significant to early Adventist history. Projects have included the William Miller house in Maine, Hiram Edson's barn in upstate New York, and the Adventist Historic Village currently under construction in Battle Creek, Michigan, home of Adventist world headquarters from 1855 to 1903.

At the time of his death he was acting editor of *Adventist Affirm*, a popular magazine affirming the validity and contemporary relevance of historic Adventist beliefs and practices.

Dr. Maxwell was the son of the late Arthur S. ("Uncle Arthur") and Rachel E. Maxwell. He is survived by his wife, the former Pauline Weitz, their son Stanley and his wife Phemie, three brothers—A. Graham (and his wife Rosalyn), S. Lawrence, and D. Malcolm (and his wife Eileen)—a sister, Deirdre (Charles) Smith, and a little granddaughter, Roxanne. The funeral service was conducted in Pioneer Memorial Church on the Andrews University campus. Elder William Fagal of the Ellen G. White Estate officiated. In place of flowers, Dr. Maxwell requested gifts to Adventist Heritage Ministry. He was interred in Rose Hill cemetery in Berrien Springs.

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Tribute to Dr. C. Mervyn Maxwell

James R. Nix
Ellen G. White Estate

The world for me is a diminished place from what it was a week ago due to the passing of my friend and mentor, Dr. C. Mervyn Maxwell. In the lexicon of titles bestowed by one individual upon another there is none higher than “friend.” He was my friend, and I was his.

Of course, it did not start out that way. When first I met Dr. Maxwell, he was one of my seminary professors. But since the first class that I took from him nearly thirty years ago, no other person—with the exception of my own family—has had a larger impact upon my life than did Mervyn Maxwell. I owe him much, and will sorely miss his counsel and friendship.

During the years I was privileged to know Mervyn, first as his student, and then as his friend, to me he was always the embodiment of a genuine Christian. Although I am tempted to say much about him, I will just share five areas where his life’s example impacted mine.

First, Mervyn was a man of prayer. As secretary of our Adventist Heritage Ministry board, he often led us in praying for various projects. For years we prayed for \$100,000. At one board meeting someone commented that we needed much more than that per year if we were to respond to all the openings that God was providing our organization. In his simple, yet direct way, Mervyn reminded us that we shouldn’t complain to God about lack of money since He had been giving us what we had been asking for. Mervyn then challenged us to start praying for more funds. To his mind, if we needed more to accomplish God’s work, then pray for it!

Second, Mervyn’s faith in God and the Remnant Church were unshakeable. Of course he knew that problems exist. From his study of the Bible, the Spirit of prophecy, and Adventist history, he could discern potentially harmful trends prior to most. But those never deterred him from his belief in the prophetic mission and ultimate triumph of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. On the

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contrary, his life and entire energies were directed toward supporting and uplifting our church and its Christ-centered teachings.

I remember once asking Mervyn to be the after-dinner speaker at the end of a New England/Michigan denominational history tour I was leading. We were having our closing banquet in the Andrews University dining facility. Although extremely busy, he accepted. His assignment was to put into their larger context the significance of the various historic sites our group had been visiting. He did a super job, talking about our church's history in the setting of the prophetic mission of Adventism and Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary. All present that evening were deeply blessed. But I wondered about our bus driver. She was a young, African-American, single parent mom who had never before even heard of Adventism.

On our way back to the motel afterward, our driver couldn't stop talking about what she had heard. She said she "could have listened to that man talk all evening!" The next morning she was still talking about Mervyn's presentation. She told us she had phoned her mother in Detroit to share with her all that she had heard.

Mervyn had a unique gift to touch lives. His own belief in Adventism and its teachings was so strong it was contagious. When others were either throwing out our doctrines or becoming disillusioned and migrating off into little groups, Mervyn's consistent course was a powerful example to many, including me.

Third, Mervyn also deeply loved his family and friends. Almost without fail during our conversations, Mervyn would make some comment about his wife, Pauline, that let me know how special she was to him. I'd like to quote from a letter he wrote in early 1995 to the members of the Adventist Heritage Ministry Board of Trustees. After thanking us for our prayers on his behalf during a time when he was critically ill, he closed by saying, "The pain is beginning to lessen at last and hope is springing that I may be reasonably normal in a few more weeks. Pauline has been a super wife. I mean, even if his back is killing him, no husband deserves to have a wife act as though it were a *privilege* to take off his shoes and socks for him! Or is this the sort of thing God had in mind when He invented love?" (Letter to AHM Board members, March 22, 1995).

Mervyn also deeply loved Stanley, and with a father's justifiable pride exulted in his son's successes. Many were the times that Mervyn shared some anecdote about what Stanley was doing.

Beyond his immediate family, Mervyn also highly prized his friends. Among my most cherished possessions are notes and letters from him, encouraging me and telling me how much our friendship meant. For me, the ultimate example occurred when he tried to surprise me by attending my ordination to the ministry. That he and Pauline would travel one-third of the way across the United States just to be with me on that special occasion spoke volumes. From conversations I have had with others of his friends, I know he related similarly

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to them. By both word and example, Mervyn constantly reminded me of the importance of family and friends, no matter how busy one becomes.

Fourth, Mervyn was continually learning. I never ceased to be amazed at the scope of his interests. Although he was recognized as one of the Adventism's premier church historians, he always wanted to learn more, including from his students and former students. But not just learning, he also enjoyed sharing new discoveries. A number of times he shared with me items pertaining to Adventist history that either he or one of his students had come across. That was something else I admired about Mervyn: not only was he constantly looking for new information to share, he also was generous in crediting others with their finds. His willingness to be open rather than exclusive with new information contrasted sharply with some other researchers with whom I have dealt.

Fifth, even though I could say much more about Mervyn's example, I want to share just one last point. It was the way he handled pain, trials, and disappointments in life. Although often in excruciating pain during recent years due to his illnesses, never once did he express to me so much as a single word of complaint about what was happening to him. Even during my last visit with Mervyn a few weeks ago when he was facing the prospect of undergoing chemotherapy, there were no expressions of anger toward God or rancor over what he was going through. In his typical candor, Mervyn did comment that it is easier to say all the "right" things to others who are facing death than to face up to that possibility yourself. But beyond saying that if his treatments did not work he would feel sorry for those he left behind, there was no bitterness or self-pity, but only expressions of total trust and confidence in his God.

To me, Mervyn was a powerful example of one who lived a consistent, trusting Christian life. For having witnessed that, I am a better person.

As everyone here knows, Mervyn was the consummate story-teller. For that, too, our church is diminished with his passing. Likewise, anyone who was ever present when Mervyn led a group in singing early Adventist hymns was in for an unforgettable spiritual experience. In my mind's ear I can still hear him lining out the old hymn,

Let others seek a home below,
We'll be gathered home;
Which flames devour or waves o'er flow,
We'll be gathered home.

We'll work till Jesus comes,
We'll work till Jesus comes,
We'll work till Jesus comes,
And we'll be gathered home.

Mervyn wore many hats with great ease: husband, father, grandfather, pastor, teacher, student, historian, scholar, theologian, friend, counselor, speaker, story-teller, author, hymn writer, brother, uncle, editor, defender of the faith,

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administrator, mover and shaker, and doubtless many more. Indeed, he was always a busy person—a man with a mission.

As the old hymn says, Mervyn had fervently hoped to be among those still found working when Jesus returns. Obviously, God had a different plan. Although all of us who loved and respected Mervyn will miss him terribly, we know that one day soon—on the great resurrection morning—we shall meet him again when all together “we’ll be gathered home.”

Until then, sleep, my friend; I’ll see you in the morning.

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Pauline's Testimony¹

Pauline Maxwell

There is much I could say about Mervyn, since he was my husband for nearly fifty-two years, but there is one thing I think I really must say. Since many of you have been telling me of the kind and thoughtful things he has done, what I am going to say may at first seem inappropriate, but to me it is a most precious memory. He taught that through the power of the Holy Spirit, we *can* overcome our sins. He strongly believed that if we choose to plug into the power of the Holy Spirit, we can be victorious over sin. I want you to know that he practiced what he preached.

He had a tendency to become impatient and a bit irritable at times. I don't like to tell you this, but I want to give God the glory. Sometimes he would be sure he was right and that he had a right to feel upset. However, he had a deep desire to be like Jesus, and eventually the Holy Spirit must have impressed him that he needed patience. He began to recognize his impatience and irritability and prayed earnestly for victory.

I could see the Holy Spirit molding him into the likeness of Jesus. If he slipped up, he would acknowledge that he had done so and would tell me he was very sorry.

Recently he became concerned that he might become a disagreeable person to care for in his last days of sickness. He prayed that this would not be. From the testimonies of nurses and doctors, and from my own experience caring for him, I can truthfully say the Lord answered that prayer and gave him complete victory. He was able to beautifully reflect the love of Jesus right up to the end. I am confident that God will say to him, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, . . . enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

¹William Fagal read this note from Mervyn Maxwell's wife, Pauline, as part of his sermon at the funeral service, July 26, 1999.

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Dr. C. Mervyn Maxwell, My Father

Stanley Maxwell
Andrews University

I will remember Dr. C. Mervyn Maxwell, my father, for many things, for he was truly a multifaceted individual.

I will remember him for his playfulness. At my request, my father designed our house so that I could run in a circle through the living room, the kitchen, and the dining room. When I was a boy, that circle was used for playing a little Friday night ritual called “Sambo and the Crocodile.” The neighbor youngsters, Diane and Steve Michaelis, and I would run around the circle, representing Sambo, a naughty little boy in one of my grandfather’s *Bedtime Stories*, who was, though advised otherwise, swimming in a river full of dangerous crocodiles.

Soon a crocodile (in the form of my father) would come chasing after us, catch us, and throw us into the crocodile’s lair (the living room couch), where we were wrapped for a future lunch. Sambo would lie in the lair until help (mother) arrived to rescue him from the mean old crocodile! It is a tradition I now play with my own daughter, Roxy, much to her delight.

I will remember my father for his imagination. He was quite a storyteller. One night, when I was about six, I asked him to tell me a story—not one of my grandfather’s *Bedtime Stories* or a selection from *The Bible Story*, which were often read to me, but his own story. Without hesitation, he accepted the challenge.

There on my bed, he instantaneously composed an allegory of the *Great Controversy* between Christ and Satan. The characters of the story were fish who lived in the sea around a glorious coral reef. There was Badfish, the barracuda, who came to the reef to eat any fish that swam beyond the safety of the coral, and Big Brother, the porcupine fish, who offered to give himself to Badfish so that the mean old barracuda would never have to (actually, be able to) eat fish again. Later Big Brother was indeed eaten by Badfish. Once inside the barracuda, Big Brother puffed up, and ate a hole in the belly of Badfish, killing him.

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The triumphant Big Brother swam back to the reef, and all the fish were safe from the terrible barracuda! They lived happily ever after in the idyllic reef.

Later, in college, I researched the story in animal behavior texts. I discovered that porcupine fish have been known to eat their way out of the bellies of sharks! Even in telling a fairy tale, my father was scientifically accurate (and he didn't even know it—or did he?). After concluding my research, I wrote up the story as a book for a creative writing class.

I will also remember my father for the enthusiasm he put into Christmas. Santa visited every yuletide without fail, but what was most memorable was that Santa never arrived the same way twice. Sometimes he arrived in the front yard. Sometimes in the back yard. My favorite was the year he arrived on the roof unable to slide down the chimney! My father was full of tricks to convince me that the real Santa Claus visited our home. One year, when I had grown suspicious, because my father was never home at the time when Santa arrived, my father *was* home when Santa came up from the basement. But then I noticed that my mother had gone on “an errand” and had missed Santa's appearance.

Perhaps the most memorable Christmas was when my father dialed the North Pole, and we listened to Santa's answering machine (my father's secretary). She thanked us for calling the North Pole, and informed us that Santa was not there. The message was repeated so convincingly that I actually began to think perhaps Santa *was* real and that he *was* coming. I later learned that my father's secretary had had a difficult time maintaining that deadpan voice without laughing. When, at last, we hung up, the secretary had broken into hysteric laughter.

Though my father hated travelling (he was a stay-at-home-kind-of-guy who didn't even want to eat out), I will always remember him for the trips he took me on, or, as the case may be, sent me on. The first trip my father took me on that made an impression on me was the 1965 GeoScience Trip, sponsored by Andrews University, with Dr. Dick Ritland as our guide. The trip introduced me to my father's interest in the creation-science issue. I will never forget crawling into the fossil cast of a rhinoceros which “gored” F.D. Nichol—the injury from which (it was rumored) he later died. That GeoScience Trip increased my vocabulary to the point where, before I could even read or write, I understood such words as trilobite, gastrolith, cephalopod and paleontologist.

My father would later encourage me to tour the Galapagos Islands, where I stayed as long as Darwin, studying the famous life forms there to further examine the question of creation vs. evolution. The result of that journey was an article in *Signs of the Times*, entitled, “I Visited Darwin's Islands!”

It was my father who taught me how to sell. He loved to raise geraniums. When I was a little tyke, he set pots of his blooming geraniums onto my little red wagon and sent me down the street to sell them. He told me that when I knocked on the door, I wasn't to ask, “Would you like to buy a geranium?” or “You wouldn't want to buy a geranium, would you?” Those were yes-no ques-

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tions that could easily result in rejection. Instead, I should ask, “Which geranium would you like to buy?” or “How many geraniums would you like?” I followed his advice, and the geraniums disappeared in no time!

My father coached my speeches. From the time I was in kindergarten, I would go down to his office in the basement, and he would listen while I rehearsed for my show-n-tell presentation, book report, or speech contest. He would suggest how to make the speech more interesting and encourage me not to mutter under my beard, but to use my backrow voice. That backrow voice he would later regret, because it often kept him awake at night when he was in bed and I was studying at the other end of the house in the kitchen. I will never forget his sermons, stories and one man plays. Some of his stories I have memorized word for word. Now that he is gone, I wish I had paid closer attention to others.

When I was about ten, I aspired to travel around the world when I reached the age of twelve. Thanks to my father, the dream was almost fulfilled. When I was thirteen, my father was asked to teach a summer course in India, and the dean of the seminary, Dr. W.G.C. Murdoch, allowed my father to spend a month in the Middle East on the way, saying that all who taught in the seminary should visit the Holy Land because it would help them with their teaching. This meant the seminary would provide a round-the-world ticket for my father.

After careful consideration, my father decided that since this was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, he would take his wife and son. He would later say that he could have bought a small boat with the money he spent on that trip, but he wouldn't trade the experience for the world. It broadened our horizons. We understood many things we had never before imagined.

As a result of that trip around the world, I became interested in anthropology and in peoples from other cultures. It would lead to over ten years of mission experience in Thailand, China, Hong Kong, and Macau. I'm deeply grateful that my father took me along on that trip. It was while living in the Orient that I found material for my first two books, *The Man Who Couldn't Be Killed* and *The Man Who Lived Twice*. The trip ultimately changed my life. For it was at the other end of the world that I would find my wife! She was made in Hong Kong.

Fortunately, my wife, Phemie Cheng Maxwell, fell in love with me before she ever met my father. She still loves me very much, mind you, but when she finally met my father, she liked him so much that sometimes I have wondered whether she liked my father more than she likes me. Occasionally, she encourages me to be more like him. Once in a while she wants me to try to develop his personality and character. For the rest of this article we will examine those attributes.

The strongest tribute to the man who was my father was the environment he created. He created a cheery atmosphere and a happy home. In the poem I wrote two years ago for my parent's 50th wedding anniversary, I said that the home

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was happy because the marriage had three partners: my mom, my dad, and Jesus. That's why the home was happy.

Near the end, as his lymphoma and ankylosing spondylitis progressed, happiness didn't always come easy for him. My father once said to my wife, "I am in pain, but I don't want to be a pain." Statements like that show he practiced what he believed. He thought happiness was a choice—and he chose happiness. He was a cheerful man—even under difficult circumstances. To ensure that his family was happy, my father consulted with my mother and me about his major decisions. Once he told me he was trying to decide what would be the best use of his writing talents. He seemed concerned about his legacy. He had written *Tell It to the World*, a history of the development of Adventism, which was a best-seller, but he wasn't sure it was enough of a contribution to the church. Did I think he should continue writing articles for *Signs of the Times* and *Liberty*, or write a book? Should he attempt to reexamine Uriah Smith's *Daniel and Revelation*? I told him that if he wrote articles, they would soon be forgotten (unless he could turn them into books). But if he could replace Uriah Smith as the authority on Daniel and Revelation, he would be remembered. He took the advice of his son and completed the project, though it was literally almost the death of him. Researching the book in the damp basement weakened his immune system which (according to some estimates) was a contributing factor leading to a near fatal attack of pneumonia. The two-volume set of *God Cares* has proved to be his greatest accomplishment.

My father respected authority and went through proper channels. He considered authority to be similar to an umbrella of protection, and to step out from under it was to get soaked. Before tackling the writing of *God Cares*, he approached Andrews University President Joseph Smoot for advice. Smoot counseled him to go ahead. Gaining his approval made things easier later. It would take seven years for my father to write the second volume. Much of it he did while working only half time at the university. He would later say the rewards he derived from *God Cares* would make up for all his struggles and sacrifices. He was especially happy that he had obtained permission from Smoot before tackling the project, because it took so many years to complete.

Though he respected authority, he was sometimes heard muttering when he thought a leader was too weak to do the right thing. The heyday of Walter Rea and Desmond Ford was perhaps my father's darkest hour. A cloud seemed to hover over the household. It was almost as if forces were tearing at him as he fought to preserve Adventism from destruction. I think it was the only time he didn't enjoy his teaching career. The pressures around him were so strong that I decided that if I were to get any studying done, I should escape into the dorm, which I did.

About that time, a student sympathetic to Ford tried to convert my father to Fordism by presenting him with a paper that taught Ford's ideas. Before writing the paper he had asked my father if he could write his term paper on the subject

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of the sanctuary. My father rejected the request, telling him to research a different topic, but the student disobeyed. My father gave the student an F on the paper and a C for the class, saying he had told him not to write the paper, which in my father's opinion wasn't Adventist.

The student, not to be outdone, took the paper to some other Seminary professors and asked them what grade it was worth. They gave him A's. The student then took the paper to the administration, and they, without asking an explanation from my father, encouraged my father to change the grade. I can still hear him grumbling to himself about lack of support from superiors. Nonetheless, he respected their authority.

This same student, under the pseudonym of Michael Bradley, submitted an article for *The Student Movement* entitled "Cracks in the Foundation," in which, in allegorical form, he said the foundations of Adventism were cracked, and Frank (i.e., Desmond Ford) had discovered those cracks and pointed them out to the church. After reading the article, I couldn't sleep. I got out of bed and wrote "Sequel to the Cracks in the Foundation." At daylight, I took the manuscript to my father, who made a few corrections, but said that essentially I had understood the issues.

In essence, my parable stated that Merlyn (i.e., my father) and Sean (i.e., Dr. Bill Shea) had visited the foundations and found the cracks were indeed there, but they had been painted and signed by the artists, Benjamin (i.e., A. F. Ballenger), Brent, (i.e., Robert Brinsmead), Reid (i.e., Walter Rea) and Frank (i.e., Desmond Ford). When I took my article to *The Student Movement's* feature editor, Lori Pappajohn, she said, "Your father would love this!" and printed it. The sequel started quite a stir from coast to coast. My father was very proud of me.

My father thought about others. When I took him to the hospital the last time, he was more concerned about being able to provide support and care for me than about what was going to happen to himself. He spent most of the time assuring me that he was going to get well. He had plenty of evidence for that. He had gained weight. He seemed to be recovering from his bout with lymphoma, and the doctors had reduced the number of appointments he was to have for his chemotherapy. He was going to get well in a number of months and perhaps live another five years. During that time, he said, he was going to be a better provider for my mother.

My father encouraged others. When I was working on a European story for the Pacific Press, he provided support by saying, "Print off what you've written, and I'll edit it for you." So he spent his mornings editing my material. That got me on a schedule so that I was writing chapters for him to edit. I was going gang-busters until I got a letter from the agent of the man I was writing about, saying he didn't want the story published. The kind of encouragement my father gave wasn't just "Go do it!" He helped people get started by offering to give of his time and talent.

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My father had a great sense of humor. After going on chemo, he wanted to write a sermon to preach at Fairplain Seventh-day Adventist church entitled, “Things You Can Live Without—Like Sin, Temper, and Hair.” He wanted to preach it when he was completely bald from the chemo.

Once, when he drove me in to the library, after he had lost much of his hair, he told me in a grave tone that when he had combed his hair that morning he had lost three hairs—and that was very serious because it represented three percent total hair loss! But then he tried to look on the bright side. He said that since taking chemo, he had become more like God. Now he could number the hairs on his head!

My father was always sure he was right, and I’ll have to admit he generally was. Certainly he never followed the trend. He seemed to *know* what was right. He thought he knew more than my English teachers about how to teach English. Sometimes he even thought he knew more about how to treat his illness than the doctors did. Some of the doctors have generously acknowledged to me that by keeping his own counsel, he lived five years longer than they had expected. Of course other factors to consider include the many folk who prayed for him, combined with my father’s tremendous will to live. My father was a fighter and a researcher. He studied and understood what he examined. But, as an independent thinker, he reasoned with the information and came up with his own conclusions.

My father had insight. He understood a situation. He penetrated to the point, and he wasn’t afraid to do what he thought right. Most of all, he was brave enough to speak up. He had high standards, but he loved people and freely gave them a second chance, as he did for me many times. His keen insight explained why many called on him for advice. They knew the counsel he would give would be honest.

He never tried to be politically correct. I never heard him say these exact words, but it’s likely that he would have said, “Why should I be politically correct when I can be right?” And, as I have said, he usually *was* right, and he was brave enough to say it. He didn’t care whether or not what he had to say offended the person to whom he was speaking. He said it. And sometimes it changed people. Other times it didn’t. But either result never altered how he related to the individual in question.

My father loved pomp and ceremony. This was reflected in the manner in which he laid his driveway. He put in a brick driveway using old road bricks dug up in the name of progress. Whenever important people came to visit, like *Voice of Prophecy*’s H.M.S. Richards, Jr., he offered them the opportunity to place a memorial brick in the driveway, and this placement was carried out with as much fanfare as if the guards were changing at Buckingham Palace. He led the celebrities to believe he would always remember which brick they had set in his new driveway. They in turn were honored to add another brick to the project.

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My father was the type of man who could rise to an emergency and come to the rescue. One day, when I was riding my little yellow scooter home from work at the refugee camp in Thailand, a dog leaped up and bit my ankle, causing it to bleed. I visited a doctor from a Catholic organization in the camp, and he told me I should wait until I came down with symptoms before taking rabies shots. Wanting a second opinion, I visited the doctors of a Protestant organization in another corner of the camp. Shocked at what the first doctor had said, they told me I should start rabies shots immediately, because rabies was 99.9% fatal. The only problem was that they had no serum. My father, at Andrews University, learned about the situation, obtained some serum, and contacted the American embassy in Thailand. The serum was flown to Bangkok, where my boss, Judy Aitken, transported it to the camp. Unfortunately, on the way from Bangkok to the camp, a two hour drive, it was not refrigerated, and arrived useless. Again my father came to the rescue. This time, Judy Aitken found a way to refrigerate the serum, and I was administered five shots for rabies. I never came down with any symptoms, and all the dogs in the area got vaccinated. I've often wondered how many fathers would have done such heroic deeds under similar circumstances.

My father was hopelessly romantic, for he loved my mother shamelessly. He loved to write her poetry for special occasions. Whenever she came home from a trip, he would plaster the house with cards full of welcome—all written in poetry. He was quite fond of telling her how much he loved her. He encouraged me to tell Phemie that I loved her, saying that it takes time for the ladies to express their true feelings, but they come around, if you give them a good example! My mother returned my father's love by fixing healthful meals, by keeping the house neat and clean, by having regular permanents, and by keeping her youthful figure so well that she could even wear her wedding dress on their 52nd anniversary. In his later years she would help him pull socks over his feet. Often, when my mother found time to tell my father she loved him, he would play deaf, basking in the moment as he forced her to repeat the phrase several times!

My daughter, Roxy, was a blessing for her grandfather. A few months before he passed away, he got lymphoma on his shoulder. When her mother told Roxy that her grandfather's shoulder was painful, Roxy volunteered to massage the shoulder. This impressed her grandfather very much. It delighted him. Most of the time Roxy cheered him up—except when she was crying! In general, she helped him a lot in his last months.

In his last days, much of my father's time was spent making up his pills. Before taking his medication, he had to pour the medicine into empty capsules. Once he miscalculated and discovered he was short one capsule. Two-year-old Roxy had been watching her grandfather and had noticed he needed one more capsule, so she ran out of the room. Nobody told her what to do. Soon she returned with a capsule. Nobody had told her where the capsules were. Somehow

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she knew. She had known exactly what her grandfather needed and gone to get it without being asked. This impressed my father very much. Occurrences like that helped make his last days more enjoyable.

My father was a man of prayer. He had a long prayer list. He prayed for people and events and patiently awaited God's answers. He was happy when candidates on his prayer list altered their ways. Our neighbor boys, though raised Adventist, became hippies in the sixties. Often, when my father was hoeing in his garden, he would see one of the neighbor boys on the roof, drinking a bottle of champagne. Once, while the boys were on the roof, the eldest, Dave Shultz, broke one of the bottles, spilling the contents. My father looked up, cleared his throat, and said something like, "That wasn't exactly what I was praying for, but at least you won't be able to drink from that bottle!" Shultz, determined to have his alcohol, retorted, "There's plenty more where that came from." He climbed off the roof, retrieved another bottle, returned to the roof and drank it. Years later, when Shultz was an alcoholic at the end of his rope, he would remember that conversation. At around midnight, on December 31, 1989, bottle in hand, he rang our doorbell, and gave the bottle to my mother, saying he was going to quit drinking. He didn't want to get drunk on New Year's at the dawn of a new decade. He then requested that my father meet with him at ten the next morning. My father showed up promptly at the appointed time, grateful that his prayer was finally being answered. This January, at the beginning of the millennium, Shultz celebrated ten years of sobriety at a local Alcoholic's Anonymous. He gave my father much of the credit.

One of my father's regular prayers was that God would give him the opportunity to help others. That was a prayer God always answered with a yes. Sometimes my father would almost regret the prayer when he couldn't follow his schedule. Then he would remind himself about his prayer and reconsider, knowing God had arranged a different schedule for him. He would thank God for the opportunities he had sent him and for answering his prayer.

I know for a certainty of at least once when my father was grateful the Lord did *not* answer his prayer in the way he had intended. It was his prayer for Phemie. When my father learned I was dating a Hongkong girl, he prayed we would break up! However, after he flew to Hong Kong and met her, he changed his mind. He was certain I would never find a better wife—and he was right! My father and his twin brother Lawrence proudly conducted the wedding ceremony for us about three years later at Fairplain Seventh-day Adventist Church. Phemie remained his favorite (and only) daughter-in-law!

Now that my father is gone, I have to learn everything. While he was alive, I only had to concentrate on everything else—because *he* knew everything. I could ask him about anything and he knew the answer. Now he won't be around to ask. But many of his answers can be found in the Bible and in the writings of Ellen G. White, which he read, understood, and applied to everyday life.

MAXWELL: DR. C. MERVYN MAXWELL, MY FATHER

Others are written in his own books and communicated in his own tapes and videos.

My father loved to edit. It was in his bones. He would even edit my sentences as I spoke them. When I returned from Hong Kong, I rejoined my Mom and Dad at the dinner table. We used the dictionary often. Sometimes, when he thought I was wrong, he looked up the word in the dictionary and (to his frustration) discovered the dictionary was wrong! Now I won't have anyone to challenge me on grammar and pronunciation. If he were alive, he would have edited this piece. I'm sure this tribute might not be as good as he would have liked it, but, as he is no longer here to make it any better, it is the best I can do.

He will be missed by many for many reasons. He was a great man, a romantic husband, a good friend, and a wonderful father. Sleep well, dad. You prayed for healing, knowing God would heal you, if not in this life, in the next. When you wake up, you'll see your prayer was indeed answered. The lifetime warranty on your parts will then be honored, for you'll have all those parts made new. I will see you then—with a straight backbone and a full head of hair! Until then, sleep well, Dad, sleep well!

*Stanley Maxwell, son of Dr. C. Mervyn Maxwell and grandson of "Uncle Arthur" Maxwell, has taught English in Thailand, China, Hong Kong, and Macau. He is the author of **The Man Who Couldn't Be Killed** and **The Man Who Lived Twice**.
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“I Need to Finish My Work”: Tribute to Dr. C. Mervyn Maxwell¹

Samuel Koranteng-Pipim
Michigan Conference of S. D. A.

Exactly a week ago today, I arrived here in Berrien Springs, MI (from Ann Arbor), in response to an urgent message Dr. Maxwell had left on my answering machine. The message said: “Hello, Samuel Pipim. This is Mervyn Maxwell, encouraging you to get me your article and diskette as soon as possible. *I need to finish my work.*”

The specific work he wanted to finish was the editing of the next issue of *Adventists Affirm*. But I want to believe he was also speaking about his larger work for the Lord—a work of teaching, writing, singing, preaching, Christian friendship, and kindness—for which he is known around the world.

We’ve gathered here this afternoon because our lives have been impacted by a man who believed God had a work for him to do, who did that work faithfully, who did it with a sense of urgency, and who finished that work. We shall dearly miss his wise counsel, prayers, and sense of humor.

My tribute this afternoon will touch on some of these aspects, especially Dr. Maxwell’s sense of humor.

Worst Grade in Seminary. I took only one class from him while studying at the Seminary. Interestingly, the worst grade I ever received while at the Seminary came from the hands of Dr. Maxwell. I really enjoyed his lectures. Why? He believed what he was teaching; he made it very simple to grasp; he taught it with a sense of urgency; and often, while teaching, he would lead us in singing hymns.

One day, however, in the course of his lectures, I found an issue on which I disagreed with him. After class, I went to see him and, after some preliminary

¹ Presented at Dr. Maxwell’s funeral, Pioneer Memorial Church, Andrews University, 26 July 1999.

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discussion, I offered to write a paper presenting an alternative theological position.

I thought I did a good job; but he was not convinced by my well-reasoned paper. He explained: "Any time a student attempts to disagree with his teacher, the student must make sure he does his homework well."

I was caught off-guard by his rather direct answer. But I was impressed by his candor. In the years that followed, I developed a profound respect for him as a scholar who was not afraid to state where he stood on issues. By the way, I'm still doing that particular homework. Too bad he did not live to see my final paper.

Despite our disagreement, I've learned from him that it is possible to hold different opinions and yet be very close friends. Though he gave me a disappointing grade, I can truthfully say that Dr. Maxwell became one of my theological mentors, counselors, and best critics.

Counsels on Writing. I got to know him intimately during his work as editor of *Adventists Affirm* and associate editor of the *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*. He edited a number of my articles and some of my book manuscripts.

Some time ago I mentioned to him that there are "inherited and cultivated tendencies" to writing. I felt the Maxwell family had a special gene for good writing. Since I was not born that way, could he help me cultivate how to write well?

Here is a summary of his counsels on how to write:

1. Say the most important things first; and don't put them in your footnotes.
2. Be sure you've done your homework well by finding out everything the Bible has to say on the subject. Don't ignore Ellen G. White's insights on the issue. If the Bible writers and Ellen White have not explicitly addressed a subject, and if you cannot find clear examples in the Bible or during the lifetime of Ellen White, you will be wiser not to recommend the teaching or practice.
3. Don't just make scriptural references; many readers do not look up references. If you consider a Bible reference to be very important, quote it in the body of your text!
4. Keep your sentences short. And you shouldn't have more than three sentences in your paragraphs. (And with a characteristic sense of humor, he added: "Long paragraphs and footnotes are for Germans. *Good* Englishmen, and those trained in the English tradition, prefer precision and brevity.")
5. Present your biblical position forcefully and persuasively.
6. Don't be surprised if people take offense at truth (it has always been the case).
7. When you are hated, called names, or attacked for upholding truth and combating error, handle it with cheer and Christian grace. Remember that bitterness has no place in God's work. It will keep us from the kingdom." He pointed

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me to: 1) the example of Jesus in praying for those who were nailing him to the cross; 2) the verse “All things work together for good to them that love the Lord” (Rom 8:28), and the story of Joseph; 3) a contrast between Edson White and F. E. Belden (the song writer in early SDA history)—though both faced injustice and misrepresentation, Edson consciously chose not to be bitter, while Belden was a bitter man.

Generosity. Dr. Maxwell was a very generous man. A few years ago, I was going to teach at one of our African institutions where Dr. Maxwell had visited earlier. Shortly before I left, some of the students from this school had written to me, urging me to purchase for them copies of Dr. Maxwell’s book on SDA history. They explained that because of their financial situation, they could not afford to purchase it, and thus, their request was a plea for me to do something about their urgent need. Unable to afford it myself, I decided to pass the problem on to Dr. Maxwell.

I went to his house one evening with my request. As he had always insisted in my writing, I made sure my question was one sentence long and that it contained every relevant bit of information about the request (what book I needed, for whom the books were being requested, where they were, and why they needed it).

I asked: “Dr. Maxwell, would you consider donating some copies of your book *Tell It To the World* to nine very poor students in Africa who need your book, but cannot afford to pay for it?”

He responded to my request with a rather puzzling question: “Give me another very good reason why I should give your African students a book on SDA history.”

Not knowing what else to say, I replied: “Dr. Maxwell, the title of your book is *Tell It To the World*, not *Sell It To the World*.”

I got ten copies of the book—one extra one for myself!

Vision for Young People. When last year I was invited by the Michigan Conference to direct the newly created department to reach out to students in secular universities and colleges, I sought his counsel on what approach or philosophy to adopt:

He responded: “You already know our church is not just another Christian denomination, and our message and mission are different from all others. For these reasons, the methods we employ to reach young people should be different. My counsel to you is this: keep things simple; and don’t be carried away by every new fad.”

He then spoke to me at some length about his pain in seeing our young people being offered a bland brand of Adventism. He expressed a desire to see the restoration of the spirit of the “missionary volunteers.” And when I was about to leave, and just before he prayed for me, he read to me this statement of Ellen G. White:

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Your success is in your simplicity. As soon as you depart from this and fashion your testimony to meet the minds of any, your power is gone. (*Testimonies for the Church*, 2:608)

Walking History. Dr. Maxwell was a walking encyclopaedia. In fact, he seemed to know where one could find some rare sources in the library—sources that even the computer did not know about.

About two weeks ago, when Dr. Maxwell started to bleed on the tongue, I went to visit. He mentioned to me how he now could eat only baby food.

I responded: "That's good news. It means you are not far from the kingdom. For the Bible says, we must become like babies if we are to make it to heaven."

"In that case, I will have to start crawling, too," he added.

"I'm not sure about that one," I rebutted.

"Well, it will interest you to know that in early Adventism, some fanatical groups took Jesus' statement so literally that some of them literally crawled—in order to be like little children!"

Dr. Maxwell continued by giving me an insightful historical lecture on fanaticism, drawing parallels to some of the tendencies we are witnessing in other churches ("laughing in the spirit," etc.) and in our own church.

Optimism. Last Tuesday, I visited him at the hospital, in the company of his wife Pauline. He was in good spirits; there was no indication he would die the following day. In fact, when he saw me, he asked: "Did you bring the manuscript?"

"Yes, but how are you doing?" I replied, trying to feel his pulse before engaging in some jokes.

"You can tell I'm OK," he stated.

Convinced that he was indeed quite well, I said, "Really, Dr. Maxwell, you scared us to death yesterday."

"I know. Even my Pauline [his wife] was scared to death. But I wasn't scared."

"But why did you treat your friends this way. You didn't you give us advance notice. That is not the best way to die. In my African village, if a person decides to die, he invites all his best friends around his death bed, gives them some good advice, discloses his will, blesses them, then dies. You didn't do any of these, Dr. Maxwell."

"That's not a biblical way to die," he responded.

I mentioned that it was, pointing him to the last four chapters of Deuteronomy—recording the last acts and words of Moses.

"Oh, I see," he replied. "So you really want to know why I didn't invite all my friends to watch me die?"

He explained with a smile: "*You see, I do have many other friends here at the hospital, and I needed to see them urgently. But the only way I could be brought down here in time to see my friends was by an ambulance!*"

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Apparently Dr. Maxwell believed he had to finish his work with his friends as well. (Indeed, testimonies from one of the nurses who attended him indicate the profound impact Dr. Maxwell had on her life).

Another Mighty Oak. In the words of a Ghanaian-African proverb, we can truly say, *a mighty oak has fallen*. This proverb is not merely an announcement of the sudden fall of a huge oak, nor even a public declaration of why it was regarded as a stalwart tree among its peers. More importantly, the proverb is a call upon the smaller oaks (which grew in the shadow of the huge one) not to be unduly shaken by the unexpected loss of the mighty oak. It summons the bereaved oaks to sink their roots a little deeper into the ground, and to stretch forth their branches and leaves a little higher towards the sun. It encourages them to reach up and down for the resources needed for them to fill the opening created by the unanticipated departure of the deceased. Thus understood, this African maxim is the strongest encouragement and motivation that can be given in the face of tragedy.

Dr. Maxwell was a mighty oak—we shall lose his physical presence and counsels. Like all mighty oaks, this oak did not fall because it was old, tired, or even cut down. In His divine providence, God allows mighty oaks to fall that He might raise many more oaks to fill their place.

The best tribute we can pay to Dr. Maxwell is when we allow the Lord to make us smaller oaks do what the mighty oak used to do.

Honoring Dr. Maxwell's Memory. Ellen G. White explains to us how we can best honor the memory of mighty oaks that have fallen. The following statement, which was made in the context of her husband's death, is a fitting message not only for Mrs. Pauline Maxwell and other members of the bereaved family, but to all of us who loved and appreciated the ministry of Dr. Maxwell.

The best way in which I and my children can honor the memory of him who has fallen, is to take the work where he left it, and in the strength of Jesus carry it forward to completion. We will be thankful for the years of usefulness that were granted to him; and for his sake, and for Christ's sake, we will learn from his death a lesson which we shall never forget. We will let this bereavement make us more kind and gentle, more forbearing, patient, and thoughtful toward the living. . . . Some who have stood in the forefront of the battle, zealously resisting incoming evil, fall at the post of duty; the living gaze sorrowfully at the fallen heroes, but there is no time to cease work. They must close up the ranks; seize the banner from the hand palsied by death, and with renewed energy vindicate the truth and the honor of Christ." (Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 1:111-112)

May the Lord help us to honor Dr. Maxwell in this way.

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masi, Ghana, where he later worked as a research and teaching assistant. After accepting the call to the gospel ministry, he served the Central Ghana Conference as its Coordinator of Campus Ministries. His doctoral degree was in systematic theology (Andrews University). He has also taught courses in theology and ethics at different campuses in the USA and around the world. Best known for his book Receiving the Word and his sermon series on The Return of Elijah, he speaks and preaches extensively at camp meetings, ministerial conferences, churches, revival retreats, and schools. He has recently completed a new series called Faithful Unto Death (ACM.). pipim@compuserve.com

One Penny: My Friend Dr. Maxwell

Stephanie Tilly
Andrews University

His hand was outstretched, and I was on my tippy toes to see. "Now," he said, "If these are your ten pennies, this one belongs to God." I can remember thinking, "This guy talks neat!" This is one of my first memories of Dr. C. Mervyn Maxwell, telling stories and answering questions.

Dr. Maxwell was a fun person. I remember him sharing with us what happened when his son, Stanley, moved back home. Father and son would visit at their kitchen table and discuss words. Then they would get into heated discussions over meaning. Finally, they would break out the dictionary. And, as Dr. Maxwell said, "Sometimes Mr. Webster was right, and sometimes he wasn't."

Whenever I needed help on a paper, Dr. Maxwell was my first resource. When I lacked funds for my school bill, he always found a way to get them. When my sister was not helping out, he called her a "lazy wench." (He later assured her it was not an inhuman characteristic.) That was his style: saying something a person would not be offended by so he could get the message across. This is probably why I always came to him.

Even though I already had two grandpas, he was a grandpa to me. When I was little, he acted out stories. When I was older, he gave me advice (whether I wanted it or not). I can still see his face when I dyed my hair red. "I lived through the fingernail polish," he said. "But I don't know about the hair." There was always a clever remark ready whenever he spoke. He had a dry sense of humor, which was something I would not expect from a pillar of the Adventist church. We would have long telephone conversations when he would talk about my Mom, then me, and then my sister. Sometimes—I hate to admit—it would be difficult for me to get him off the phone!

I remember the last time we talked. He called after my grandfather had had a stroke. Dr. Maxwell expressed how he had "enjoyed watching [me] blossom into a beautiful servant of God." He went on to say how he was so proud of me

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and that he felt that his prayers for me had been answered. He always knew the right thing to say.

Four days later I received another phone call, a call I was not expecting. When the phone rang, I was lounging in front of the television, vegetating like a piece of broccoli. By the way my mother jumped after she said hello, I knew something was wrong. She hung up and said, "That was Grandma. He died. Dr. Maxwell died." I froze. It took the longest three seconds of my life for me to begin crying. My stomach knotted up so tight I couldn't breathe. This couldn't be possible. My grandmother must have misunderstood. (She is, after all, getting old!) Dr. Maxwell can't die! He's doing too much for God to die. I needed someone to call, but Dr. Maxwell was the one I would have called.

I then faced the task of calling a mutual friend, Steve Beatty. I dreaded it for half an hour, staring at the phone as if it would tell me what I should say. Finally I got up the nerve and called. It rang twice—answering machine. I left the shortest message I have ever made: "Dr. Maxwell died."

The next night I was sitting in my mother's room crying when Steve stopped by. We sat by the fishpond. I can still hear the gentle trickling of the waterfall in the background. I was wearing my pajamas, but that was okay. He just wanted to sit. There are really no words for a situation like that. But once we found them, it was hard to stop. We relived stories about Dr. Maxwell. I recalled when he taught me how to throw an egg without breaking it—something every little girl needs to know. Some of the stories were funny, but most made me cry.

It was when I was standing outside the Youth Chapel at Pioneer Memorial Church, dreading going in for the viewing, that it really hit me. Steve was with me and sensed what I was going through. He hugged me and then I let it out, saying, "What am I going to do now that he is gone? Who am I going to talk to about my problems?" I felt very alone.

I made it through the funeral. It was long, with humor sprinkled here and there. The hardest part was seeing Mrs. Maxwell hold her granddaughter, Roxy, over the casket and say, "See, Granddaddy is sleeping." The body looked nothing like him. I felt like breaking down right there. Roxy just smiled. I had no one to talk to. I didn't know what to do.

About a month after the funeral, I realized something. He wouldn't want me to cry and moan for him. And he sure wouldn't want me to feel alone, or like I had no one to talk to. He wouldn't want me to continue thinking that way. The entire time I knew him, he always reinforced one thing—take it to God.

When I was little, he taught me about tithe. He showed how we are to give to God what is His. Well, God has claims on everything—including our problems. I had grown up relying on Dr. Maxwell to handle my predicaments. When I thought about it, it occurred to me that he had handled them by taking them to God. I think he would be proud if he knew I have finally gotten what he always tried to show me: Take it to God. God is the *only* one who will *always* be there

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to handle my problems. It is painful for me to think that it took his death for me to fully comprehend this.

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To Be Like Jesus: Dr. C. Mervyn Maxwell's Life Ambition: A Tribute to a Professor Emeritus

Gerard Damsteegt
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I wish I could say I was one of Mervyn's students! But I was a seminary student at Andrews when he arrived to be a teacher there, and I had already taken all the subjects he was teaching.

Then I went my way and he went his. When I felt impressed to select the topic of Adventism for my dissertation, the more I studied about the spirit of the pioneers, the more I discovered, in reading Mervyn's works, a kindred spirit. We shared an experience of Jesus I think God wants each of us to have, an experience that brings people closer together. And so when, from time to time, I visited Andrews University, we had brief talks

Then we [the Damsteegt family] went to the Asian mission field [in Korea and Thailand]. When we came home, there was a call from the Church History Department. I think Mervyn was very much involved in this. I looked forward to the privilege of being his colleague. However, when I joined the department, Mervyn left.

But he wasn't far away. Whenever I faced an apparently insoluble problem and cried out, "Is there anybody who can tell me the answer?" I thought of Mervyn and called him. And with his encyclopedic mind, he guided me through the maze of Adventism to further insight. I praise the Lord for those times. They were beautiful.

Over the years, when I hear people talk about him, there is one thing that is amazing: The impact he had on students. He knew how to communicate the essence of Adventism. But he was a specialist—a University of Chicago scholar in Early Church History! He could give you the most sublime lectures about Chrysostom and Irenaeus and Hippolytus—even a few weeks ago. And yet his love led him to grasp the essence of being a Seventh-day Adventist today. And

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instead of rising in the celestial heavens of scholarly Adventism, he had a great burden to make it relevant to everyone.

Look at his contributions. I wish I had his gifts. I haven't. I pray to the Lord that He will raise up another hero to make the theology and church history seem relevant. Mervyn took these topics and made them significant by combining them with simple, moving little stories, heart-touching and uplifting. By the way, I think that you, Stanley, have inherited some of that ability! Friends, I tell you, if God calls you, follow His call. Stanley, follow in the footsteps of your Dad!

Anyone who experienced Mervyn's Adventist Heritage tours of Battle Creek will say there is no comparison between his and the ones offered today. Mind you, the people in Battle Creek do the very best they can. But without Mervyn, the tour is not the same. I'm not saying this simply to lift him up for you, Pauline. It's the truth, and nothing but the truth.

I wish we had recordings of all the fascinating anecdotes Mervyn shared during his lifetime. His emphasis was always the past and its lessons for today. Many of our scholars today, and I'm including myself here, have to remind ourselves about the questions Mervyn always asked himself before he wrote or lectured. These are the questions he asked of a body of historical documents: "What is it all for? What are we going to do with this? Can we not bring it down to an earthly level?"

Fortunately, a couple of years ago, when it seemed Mervyn wouldn't make it, Jim Nix got together with a video team and produced *The Heritage Attic*. On this video you see "Uncle Mervyn" with the children telling stories about the Adventist pioneers, like the story of J.N. Loughborough and the Three Cent Silver. In this video you can see how Mervyn used his scholarly knowledge and popularized it in narrative form. These are unforgettable stories, and yet the message is as relevant to kids as it is to adults. We can praise the Lord.

Then a few years later, after another illness that nearly took Mervyn's life, Melchizedek Ponniah put together another video, entitled *Three Angels Over Battle Creek*. Much of the essence of Mervyn's Battle Creek tours are preserved on this wonderful video. Both these videos are available at the ABC Bookstores.

More than 700,000 readers have been blessed by Mervyn's books. Many of them have been used as textbooks in high schools, colleges, and graduate programs. I think of *Moving Out*, *God Cares*, *Tell It To the World*, and *Magnificent Disappointment*. The two volumes of *God Cares*, explaining the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation, have been sold by colporteurs around the world.

In my opinion, the two most outstanding books Mervyn wrote are *Tell It to the World* and one of his last works, *Magnificent Disappointment*. I have been using *Magnificent Disappointment* to stimulate students who didn't see the relevance of Christ's present-day duties in the Most Holy Place after October 22, 1844. I have also used it for my churches for prayer meeting. I used to recom-

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mend this book to every student in my class. This is a unique book. One of the most profound crises in the Seventh-day Adventist church today is losing the relevance of Christ's on-going work in the heavenly sanctuary. Scholars, writers, and editors in the church today want to be contemporary. But there is nothing more contemporary today than Christ's work in the sanctuary which started on October 22, 1844, on the day of the Millerite Movement's Great Disappointment. *Magnificent Disappointment* is the most brilliant attempt to explain the topic to the church today. Unfortunately, the Pacific Press has let the book go out of print.¹

There is one theme Dr. Maxwell returned to time and time again. "Are you ready for Jesus to come?" With all our knowledge about the Judgment and 1844 and all the discussion about contemporary issues like women's ordination, worship style, and contemporary Christian music, the question still remains, "Are we ready today?" Don't lose yourself in the controversies and conflicts of this life. Are you ready today? This was Mervyn's great theme. It can even be found in his source book on Adventist theology. In his classes, after reading Mervyn's source book, every student was given a final test in which he had to give an intelligent explanation. I think Mervyn has gotten the answer better than most of us. He dealt with this problem in Malachi 3:

"The Lord shall suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant. Behold he is coming saith the Lord of hosts, but who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears. For he is like a refining fire, like the fullers soap. And he will sit and also refine a fire of purifying silver. He will purify the sons of Levi. Who will be able to stand?"

And the echo can be found in Revelation 6. When he comes and the sky parts, will you be able to stand? It's not a matter of the nature of Christ, whether you can explain perfectionism, or whatever. The question is, "Will you, when you face Christ, be able to stand when he appears?" This is a nagging question. Many Adventists will say, "Oh yeah, that is simply the teaching of Ellen G. White. Let's go on to something more practical!"

Are you ready? To give you a flavor of Dr. Maxwell's concern about readiness, let me read from one of his favorite authors. Ellen White in *Great Controversy* continues here, "Those who are living upon the earth when the intercession of Christ shall cease in the sanctuary above are to stand in the sight of the Holy God without a Mediator."² What do you do with this passage? Many will say,

¹ Those interested in can purchase it, however, from Stanley Maxwell at his web site: www.maxwellsgiftsandbooks.com.

² We find this in Rev 15:8 (NIV), "And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from the power, and no one could enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed." Thus, the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of the wicked ceases. We find a relevant thought in Rev 22:11 (NASB), "Let the one who does wrong, still do wrong; and the one who is filthy, still be filthy; and let the one who is righteous, still practice righteousness; and the

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“Read it for your devotions and pray about it.” Not Dr. Maxwell. He would say, “Here truly is a challenge. To stand in the sight of the Holy God without a Mediator. What are you going to do with this?” Mervyn explains in a most beautiful way how we can meet Jesus. He says, “Those who receive the seal of the Living God and are protected in the Time of Trouble must reflect the image of Jesus fully.” Too many, when they read these words, cringe. “What are we going to do, my Lord?” But then Dr. Maxwell continues: “Here is beauty. To be as gracious as Jesus, as kind as Jesus, as sensible, as dependable, as generous, as prompt to do the right thing. This is every Christian’s prayer:

Be like Jesus this my song
In the home and in the throng.
Be like Jesus all day long.
I would be like Jesus.

What do you say, friends? Remember, it’s a promise. Jesus shall purify the sons of Levi, and if we will, we are all sons of Levi. What does it mean “without a Mediator”? Does it mean Christ’s followers will be left during the time of trouble to wrestle with temptations on their own? No, no no! Jesus will still be their Guard and Guide and Stay. Still the Lord and King. Still their Help in time of storm. And then he continues. “Yes, they will be spotless. Their robes, their characters are perfected. Through the grace of God and through their own efforts, they will be conquerors in the battle with evil.”

Friends, don’t pass over that sentence. “Through the grace of God and their own efforts, they will be conquerors in the battle with evil.” And so then he beautifully illustrates what it takes to stand with Jesus. It takes everything we have. But it takes everything of God to keep us there. Praise the Lord for Mervyn’s remarkable insight, challenging us to be like Jesus every day.

In the controversies and conflicts he was involved with in his lifetime, he was always, like a Christian gentleman, wanting to be like Jesus. Even in dealing with his greatest opponents. We would say, “but Mervyn, look what is happening to yourself!” He would smile and say something kind, neat, and beautiful about those great opponents. This is true Christian greatness. We can praise the Lord for examples like Dr. Maxwell.

To be like Jesus has been a great challenge to me. If the Lord gives me the grace, I want to walk like that. I want to be like that—to be like Jesus. The task resting upon us is to share this message of hope and encouragement to fellow

one who is holy, still keep himself holy.” The saints are never without a mediator until they have received “the seal of the living God” (Rev 7:2), after which the books are closed, so they cannot be lost, while the Holy Spirit will cease trying to convince the wicked to repent, so they can no longer be saved. What is intended here is not the idea that the saints must live for a time without possibility of forgiveness, so if they sin they will be lost. If it were, it would not be biblical. God promises in Josh 1:5 (NIV), “I will never leave you or forsake you.” Jesus repeats this promise in Matt 28:20 (KJV), “Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” Fear not; be faithful. [editor’s comments]

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Adventists and to other people around the world. Be like Jesus every day. May the Lord impress us to carry on this wonderful legacy of Adventism that Dr. Maxwell so ably shared throughout his life. Be like Jesus every day. That was his goal. That is my goal.

Let's all make that our goal. "Be like Jesus every day! / I would be like Jesus!" Amen.

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The Impact of Eschatology on Protology

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I want to pay tribute to those who have wrestled with the divine decrees to election and to reprobation, attempting to see justice in them. My remarks are not to denigrate these attempts. I am pleading, rather, for a rethinking of the issues in an expanded worldview. I will argue here for what I call a cosmic controversy biblical worldview. This worldview will bring us to these issues in a fresh way that penetrates beyond the Calvinist-Arminian debate. These cosmic dimensions will take us beyond the classic teaching of predestination to a new understanding.

Concerning protological questions, Randall G. Basinger notes, “These issues presuppose some of the most thorny and divisive metaphysical issues” and “the age-old faith/reason debate is never far below the surface.”¹

It is essential that a theology based on Scripture be internally consistent, and not appeal to some inscrutable hidden mystery in God’s eternal decrees that reprobates multitudes while at the same time speaking of God as love. Nor should a system true to the balance of Scripture be interested in focusing on the sovereign will of God to the exclusion of His other attributes as loving, merciful, good, and just. Nor should it accept the claim that the cause of human destiny in the eternal decrees is unfathomable because God’s ways are beyond human comprehension. For it is God who invites humans to “come now let us reason together” (Isa 1:18).

Evil and the Cosmic Controversy

Human protology begins with creation (Gen 1-2), when God created Adam and Eve in His image (Gen 1:26-27). In what way were they in His image? God’s image is seen in their freedom to choose, in their dominion to rule, and in their relationship. They could choose whether to obey or ignore God’s warning

¹Randall G. Basinger, “Exhaustive Divine Sovereignty: A Practical Critique,” in Clark H. Pinnock, ed, *The Grace of God and the Will of Man*, 192.

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about the forbidden tree (Gen 2:16-17). They were given dominion to rule over things in this world as God rules over the universe (Gen 1:26). In the relationship of two individuals who loved each other, they mirrored the relationship of love within the Trinity. Evidently, Satan and the angels who followed him in his rebellion in heaven prior to human creation had misused their freedom to choose—as humans would do

Eve's temptation was only a real temptation if she was free to choose. Two opposing claims met head on in her temptation. The crafty serpent (this is Satan; see Ezek 28:14-17; Rev 12:9; 20:2) said, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'" The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." (Gen 3:1-5). The serpent questioned God's word. He was saying, "God cannot be trusted. He is keeping something back from you which you could have if you eat. His forbidding is not in your best interests, Eve. Therefore God is unjust. Reject His claim and eat the fruit—you can become like God." A heady idea, indeed!

Think of it. Eve was confronted by two opposing claims. Only one could be true. Her preincarnate Creator Christ (John 1:1-3; Col 1:16-17; Heb 1:1-2) had given her life, her husband, the world to have dominion over, and a beautiful garden. The crafty serpent had given her nothing except a claim contrary to Christ's claim, with his own "wisdom" as supporting evidence. Why would she believe the one who had given her nothing and turn from the One who had given her everything? Scripture says, "When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it" (Gen 3:6). She saw the forbidden food would give wisdom. How? Logic suggests that the crafty serpent ate the fruit and claimed the eating of it had given him—a serpent—the ability to talk human language ("wisdom"). The apparent truth of this is what she saw. One can hear him say, "Eve, if I a snake can speak your human language after eating the fruit, think what you a human can become—like God. Look, I'm not dead, am I?"

What could have kept Eve true? Believing God's warning was from Someone who wished her nothing but good. Her choice was not predestined, but her own, even though illogical. God would not predestine such a choice against His warning. God would not predestine a decision to question His truthfulness and justice—in essence to act upon a belief that God is a liar. That's the enemy's offensive in the cosmic controversy. Any idea which calls into question God's justice—even though it is a theological idea hallowed by centuries of thought—should be evaluated in the light of Satan's charge against God (which is what we will attempt in this article).

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Was this the same approach Satan used in heaven when he launched the cosmic controversy? God says of Him, “You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High’” (Isa 14:13-14). In Eden Satan said, “you will be like God.” In heaven he wanted the same experience. He thought he could become God, sit on God’s throne, in spite of the fact that it was Christ who had created him (John 1:3) and given him everything, given him freedom of choice and a position as a guardian cherub at the throne (Ezek 28:14-15). In Eden the serpent was instilling in Eve a doubt and desire similar to the doubt and desire he nourished within himself in heaven. The fact that He wanted to become as God and suggested Eve could do the same indicates his belief that God was holding this possibility back from him, and to that extent was unjust. This is why questions about the justice of God are a part of the cosmic controversy and should be the larger biblical worldview within which questions of protology and eschatology must be evaluated.

The very fact of evil in God’s good universe suggests that beings created by God are in rebellion against Him. This is a cosmic controversy. The justice of God has been called in question by Satan, by his followers, and by every human being, both those in rebellion against God and those who, like Job, are reckoned “blameless” because they have submitted to God’s call. One cannot speak of God’s sovereign will decreeing who will be saved and who lost and hope to convince those investigating God’s justice. The opposite is true. Any decree that is arbitrary would be the greatest evidence that He is not just. It is not good enough for scholars to say God is just to send to hell people He has never chosen and never helped—because He is God. This merely assumes what needs to be revealed. And it fails to be convincing, anyway. What picture of God does this give unbelievers? Or believers? Would you want to spend eternity with this kind of God? How do we know He will not do the same again to the saved some day?

The issue before the universe is to decide, based on evidence, whether or not God is just and Satan wrong to accuse Him of injustice, then acknowledge Him as such. The universe must decide whether God is to be trusted, and so obeyed as One who always knows best. Questions of protology and eschatology—of God’s relationship to His created beings, of human freedom and destiny—are crucial information for making this decision. It should be remembered that all created beings, both the saved and the lost, must be convinced to bow their knees (Isa 45:23; Rom 14:11; Phil 21:10-11; Rev 5:13; 15:3; 19:1-6). So the stakes are high. It is not enough to have only the saved agree that God has judged righteously. They would find it easy to say He is just. The reprobate must also acquiesce. What evidence will convince them? It will have to be evidence beyond doubt. This is why it is essential that the cosmic issue be kept center stage in questions of protology and eschatology, for it is in this issue that they both meet. We need a protology informed by eschatology—the divine decrees

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must be seen in the light of the Final Judgment. For it is at the Final Judgment that all created beings will acknowledge the justice of their fate.

This is why we title the chapter, “the impact of eschatology on protology.” Much of the chapter will present thinkers who have called in question protological questions. Of those cited, only John Wesley questions protology in the light of the Final Judgment and thereby breaks through to new ground to examine protology in the light of that eschatological event. What remains to be done is to go further and examine all that is involved in the Final Judgment in the light of the issue in the cosmic controversy which will be resolved in that Judgment.

If a system is wrong in its protology it will be wrong in its eschatology. So it is necessary to carefully examine the protological issues to establish the biblical view. Calvinism and Arminianism have fought over these issues for centuries with little progress. It is time to transcend the debate and look at it from the vantage point of the cosmic controversy over the justice of God, particularly at Calvary, where the two sides met in the decisive battle of the war. As we will see later, the way humans respond to that decisive battle will have everything to do with their final destiny and will be the deciding factor in the Final Judgment.

Now we will turn to a Jesuit priest, three Protestant theologians, and a leading contemporary philosopher to study correctives to protological thinking. Then we will come to the book of Romans that launched the Reformation, the mission of Christ that inspired it, and the Final Judgment to see their contribution to looking at protology in a broader context.

Correctives to Protology

Protology that confines future events, including eschatology, to divine determinism, where foreknowledge is based upon eternal sovereign decrees, has dominated much of Christian thought since Augustine. “In the Middle Ages Anselm, Peter Lombard, and Thomas Aquinas followed the Augustinian view to a certain extent.” And later, “In pre-Reformation times Wycliffe and Huss set forth strict predestinarian views.”² We have seen how much Luther and Calvin contributed to this debate. It “became the official teaching of the Church of England as summarized in the Thirty-nine Articles.” Even some Catholics promoted predestination, such as some Dominican theologians and the Jansenists.³ Calvin’s view of predestination dominated the thinking of post-Reformation theology. “The Puritans of England and those who early settled in America, as well as the Covenanters in Scotland and the Huguenots in France, were thorough-going Calvinists.”⁴

²Lorraine Boettner, “Predestination,” *Baker’s Dictionary of Theology*, Everett H. Harrison, ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1988), 415.

³W. R. Godfrey, “Predestination,” *New Dictionary of Theology*, Sinclair B. Ferguson, ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988), 529.

⁴Lorraine Boettner, *Baker’s Dictionary of Theology*, 416.

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The formal corrective to these views on protology was made by Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609), and is called Arminianism. It has had wide influence. We will note its advances over the Augustinian-Lutheran-Calvinistic predestination, but comment on some of its excesses. On balance it supports human freedom and the ability of the human will, which is necessary in the context of a cosmic controversy, where humans need to be free to decide on the justice of God. Although the portrayal of God is much better in Arminianism than in the other tradition, it fails to be a full corrective.

In presenting these correctives to protology, I have chosen to present each thinker very much as one would present witnesses in a trial. I will allow them to speak for themselves, then comment on any relevance to the issue of God's maligned justice when appropriate. As such, one runs the risk of some repetition. I am aware of this, but want each witness to take the stand and give his evidence. It will be seen that the combined witnesses present a powerful case for correcting the problems of protology.

Before looking at the theology of Arminius and Arminianism, we first note a Jesuit reaction to the Protestant views on Predestination.

1. Luis Molina, (1535-1600)

Luis Molina was a Spanish Jesuit who made his major theological contribution after the Protestant Reformation was well underway (1517 onwards) and after the Council of Trent (1545-1563). As Alfredo J. Freddoso points out, Molina was a central thinker in one of the most tumultuous doctrinal disputes in Catholic intellectual history.⁵ His *Concordia*, published in 1588, showed the compatibility of free choice with gifts of grace, divine foreknowledge, providence, predestination and reprobation.⁶ Here the newly formed Jesuits (1540) had a major work that challenged the established orders, particularly the Dominicans, who were loyal to the theology of Thomas Aquinas.

(a) Causal Determinism Called in Question

Aquinas, along with Aristotelian scholastics, focused on the eternity of God that makes all dimensions of time present to Him, just as His omnipresence makes all space present to Him. "Medieval philosophers often explicate this temporal omnipresence by analogy with God's spatial omnipresence."⁷ Hence the future is known to God simply because it is already present to Him. While

⁵Molina and Francisco Suarez (1548-1617) were Jesuits who supported human freedom, and opposed Mercederian Francisco Zumel (1540-1607) and the Dominican Domingo Banez (1528-1604) who supported the divine prerogative. Luis de Molina, *On Divine Foreknowledge (Part IV of the Concordia)*, trans. and Introduction by Alfred J. Freddoso (London, UK: Cornell Univ. Press), 1988, vii. Afterwards listed as *Concordia*.

⁶The full title was *Liberi Arbitrii cum Gratiae Donis, Divina Praescientia, Providentia, Praedestinatione et Reprobatione Concordia*.

⁷*Concordia*, Introduction, 31.

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accepting the omnitemporality of God, Molina denies that future things exist in eternity before they exist in time. Molina's major difference with Thomas Aquinas⁸ and Domingo Banez is his claim that God's foreknowledge "is prevolitional rather than the result of God's free act of will."⁹

Molina opposed causal determinism.¹⁰ This is crucial, because the perennial question before philosophers and theologians has been which comes first, God's foreknowledge of events so they are known, or God's willing of those events so they are known? Molina maintained that if God predetermined Peter's sin, for example (rather than permitting it), then He is to that extent responsible for it.¹¹ Molina opposed the idea that humans are mere puppets in God's hands.¹²

(b) Concomitant Theory Called in Question

Besides those who have placed divine will before divine foreknowledge, or divine foreknowledge before divine will, there are those who see them as simultaneous from eternity. This is called the Concomitant theory, which Norman Geisler espouses today. Geisler says "Whatever he forechooses cannot be *based on* what he foreknows. Nor can what he foreknows be based upon what he *forechose*. Both must be simultaneous and coordinate acts of God. Thus God knowingly determined and determinately knew from all eternity everything that would come to pass, including all free acts."¹³ Molina opposed this Concomitant theory.

Concomitant theorists do injustice to prophecy. For example, Jesus told Peter that he would deny Him three times (Luke 22:34). Yet they teach that Peter's sin was not a part of the divine plan until Peter actually denied Him. Then Christ's prophecy is also not a part of the divine plan argues Molina. This calls in question that prophecy.

(c) Importance of Human Will

Aquinas and the Reformers emphasized that God wills future events, so they are known. But this places future events as contingent upon God's will instead of upon creaturely will. Yet, creaturely will must have a part to play, or it is not truly free, and hence the resolution of the cosmic controversy over the justice of God is not served. For if humans are not free in their actions, their actions are predetermined, and to that extent God would be responsible for the sin-problem in the universe, and hence His justice could not be demonstrated to

⁸Aquinas believed that the future is present to God before its cause in time, an idea opposed by Molina. As a place is not present to God before it exists, so, said Molina, time is not present to God before it exists. *Concordia*, Introduction, 30-32.

⁹*Concordia*, Introduction, 34-35.

¹⁰*Concordia*, Introduction, 43.

¹¹*Concordia*, Introduction, 40.

¹²*Concordia*, Introduction, 41.

¹³David & Randall Basinger, *Predestination and Free Will: Four Views of Divine Sovereignty and Human Freedom* (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1986), 71.

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those in rebellion who claim He is unjust. Hence the cosmic controversy issue would remain insoluble.

The Reformers taught that sin brought total depravity which removed the possibility of human free will. Molina presented a doctrine of omniscience called *scientia media*, or middle knowledge. “By means of this doctrine, he proposed to avoid the Protestant error of denying genuine human freedom, yet without thereby sacrificing the sovereignty of God. It is a sad note of history that in Molina’s perception, the main point of the Protestant Reformation was that man lacks true freedom in virtue of God’s knowledge and sovereignty.”¹⁴ We will look at this middle knowledge later.

The Council of Trent taught that the process of justification by faith involves “God’s unmerited, prevenient grace, which stirs and solicits the will of man, but which may be either accepted or resisted by human will.” Molina accepted this and “opposed himself to what he perceived to be the central teaching of the Reformation: the denial of human freedom.” Molina, like the Council of Trent, looked at soteriology as a joint work between God and man,¹⁵ and to that extent missed the fact that the gospel is a free gift to be elected (chosen) or rejected, and only in the matter of response elicits human free will. There is no cooperative human works to accomplish salvation, but there is a necessary free choice if the gift is to be received.

Trent’s and Molina’s view of human free will was an opposite extreme to Protestant denial of human free will in the election/reprobation process. Both overlooked the function of human free will as a necessary response (and only that) to the gift of salvation, in either acceptance or rejection. Neither the Protestant nor Catholic views resolved the tension between divine sovereignty and human freedom, and yet that resolution is fundamental to a proper understanding of salvation and to the resolution of the issue in the cosmic controversy.

According to the Reformers, because of God’s foreknowledge (Luther) and providence (Calvin), everything that happens in human history does so necessarily. Even though they speak of freedom of choice, the will cannot choose other than it does. This posed serious problems to Molina, for how, on those terms, could humans be free moral agents, and who would be responsible for evil? How could prescience, providence, and predestination be seen as compatible? He believed *scientia media* (middle knowledge) was the solution.¹⁶

(d) Middle Knowledge

There are three moments in the knowledge of God. They are not temporally arranged, as if in a sequential order, but are logically arranged so that one aspect is prior to others, while simultaneous. They are: (1) Natural knowledge (2) Free

¹⁴William L. Craig, in Clark H. Pinnock ed., *The Grace of God and the Will of Man* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany, 1989), 141.

¹⁵William L. Craig, in *The Grace of God and the Will of Man*, Ibid.

¹⁶William L. Craig in *The Grace of God and the Will of Man*, 144.

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knowledge, and (3) Middle knowledge, the latter coming between the first two. Natural knowledge does not depend upon God's will, but upon His nature as God. He knows all possibilities. He knows all the possible persons He could create. Free knowledge is God's knowledge of the actual world He created, and foreknowledge of everything to take place in it.

Natural knowledge is before any determination of God's will, and free knowledge is after the decision of God's will to create the world. God's knowledge does not cause anything. Between natural and free knowledge comes middle knowledge. Middle knowledge comes before any determination of the divine will. It not only knows what a person could do but what the person will do if placed under certain circumstances. Though knowing this, it does not cause or control the person's willing and doing. As William L. Craig puts it, "Middle knowledge, like natural knowledge, thus is logically prior to the decision of the divine will to create a world."¹⁷ Or as Jerry L. Walls expressed it, "This means that God has no control over what he knows through middle knowledge. He is passive rather than active with respect to this kind of knowledge. What God knows depends on what choices free persons would make of their own accord."¹⁸

Middle knowledge means that God does not arbitrarily will, and thus violate human free will. It does not mean that predestination is the basis of foreknowledge. It simply means God knows how persons will exercise their free will without causing it to happen. Hence eternal destiny is not dependent upon God, but is up to the free will choice of humans. They can freely accept or reject salvation. How paradoxical that Molina, and the Jesuits who promoted this view, should grasp the compatibility of divine foreknowledge and human freedom in a way that escaped the Augustinian-Lutheran-Calvinistic predestination tradition. Their doctrine of divine predestination/providence was true to the gospel, as opposed to the Reformers' position, even though their soteriology was not true to the gospel (salvation by works).

It took the thinking of these Jesuits to break through to a proper balance between divine and human willing, a balance vital to appreciating the justice of God, at issue in the cosmic controversy before the universe. It was important that the Reformers break through to a new understanding of justification by faith, but if they could have grasped the middle knowledge of God in predestination/providence, they would have taken the freedom of the gospel to new heights and discovered the compatibility of divine will and human willing.

Commenting on Molina's Middle Knowledge, Robert M. Adams said, "Molina held that God, in His omniscience, knows with complete certainty what every possible free creature would freely do in every situation in which that

¹⁷This whole section is based upon William L. Craig's presentations in *The Grace of God and the Will of Man*, 146-147, and *The Only Wise God: The Compatibility of Divine Foreknowledge and Human Freedom*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1987), 127-152. The quote is on 130.

¹⁸Jerry L. Walls, *Hell: The Logic of Damnation* (MI: University of Notre Dame, 1992), 38.

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creature could possibly have occasion to act freely. The knowledge thus ascribed to God was called ‘middle knowledge’ (*scientia media*) by Molina, because it was seen as falling between his knowledge of the merely possible and His knowledge of the actual, and between His knowledge of the necessary truths and His knowledge of truths that He causes to be true.”¹⁹

John Feinberg says, “Middle knowledge is knowledge of counterfactuals; that is, knowledge of what would have happened if something else had occurred. Some claim God knows the future via middle knowledge. Consequently, we can have indeterministic freedom since God does not know what *will* happen, and God can be omniscient in the sense of knowing everything that could happen and knowing what would happen if other things occurred.”²⁰

The important contribution made by Molina was calling into question divine determinism that robbed humans of free will. Protestant predestination was called into question by contra-causal freedom. Whereas the Protestant Reformers presented the freedom of the gospel against human works to earn it (Catholic theology), the Catholic Molina grasped a deeper freedom of human willing that the Reformers failed to comprehend, for they did not penetrate to the place of human will in the freedom of the gospel. Saying salvation is unearned (versus human works) is not the same as saying salvation is predetermined (apart from human will). The deeper meaning of the freedom of the gospel includes the freedom of human willing as necessary to human destiny.

If this were not so, if destiny is predetermined by divine decrees (salvation and reprobation), then humans become mere puppets in the hands of God. This means their choosing or rejecting God would not be taken seriously, and hence the cosmic controversy would also be insignificant. For if creaturely rebellion is not rebellion, but merely the outworking of a divine plan, then how could those puppet-creatures question the justice of God or fight against Him in the cosmic controversy? Furthermore, how could any decision be made by those who have no freedom to decide? For even their decision would be predetermined. And if the consideration of God’s justice is before each created being, how could any response to the question have any value if such a response is predetermined by the very God who is the object of the question? This would be tantamount to God rigging His own case.

2. Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609)

Jacobus Arminius was a Dutch theologian, educated at Leiden, Basel, and Geneva, and became a professor at Leiden in 1603. He studied under Theodore

¹⁹James E. Tomberlin and Peter Van Inwagen, eds, *Alvin Plantinga* (Boston, MA: D. Reidel, 1985), 230.

²⁰John Feinberg in *Predestination and Free Will*, eds. David and Randall Basinger (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1986), 33. In this definition of middle knowledge God’s absolute fore-knowledge of the future is called in question, and to that degree is somewhat analogous to Process Theology, neither of which do justice to divine omniscience.

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Beza (1519-1605), Calvin's son-in-law and successor, at Geneva. Beza continued the theology of Calvin, and it was this theology, with its divine decrees overriding human free will, that Arminius rejected. He "views Christian doctrine much as the pre-Augustinian fathers did and as did the later John Wesley."²¹

In *The Works of Arminius*, volume 2, we find important topics on predestination that discuss divine election and human free will. In volume 3 we find his analysis of Romans 9, a chapter often misused by exponents of Calvinistic determinism. In both he is opposed to God's irresistible grace that overrides human free will.²² Divine election is not solely based upon the electing God but upon human response. Throughout Arminius emphasizes that belief and unbelief are what decide human destiny, rather than an arbitrary decree of God irrespective of human response.²³

Whereas the Augustinian-Lutheran-Calvinistic predetermination looked to a *Deus Absconditus*, or hidden God, as the source of the divine decrees, Arminius looked to Christ as the "Foundation of this decree."²⁴ No longer was human destiny decided in the secret recesses of eternity; it was now decided in human response to Jesus Christ in human history. And this is the only way that the cosmic controversy issue before the universe will be decided—creaturely response to Jesus Christ (as we will see later). For Arminius predestination "is the Decree of the good pleasure of God in Christ." He quotes John 6:40, "This is the will of God, that every one who seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life."²⁵ This is a good biblical definition of the will of God. His will is not some arbitrary decree made in eternity, but is linked to Christ and His salvation work for all mankind.

The eternal dimension of this decree Arminius rightly finds in Ephesians 1:4, "He hath chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world."²⁶ As to reprobation, God "resolved from all eternity to condemn to eternal death unbelievers who, by their own fault and the just judgment of God, would not believe. . . ." ²⁷ Arminius believed God knows the future because He knows how people will freely choose. "For a thing does not come to pass because it has been foreknown or foretold; but it is foreknown and foretold because it is yet (*futura*) to come to pass."²⁸

In Romans 9, like so many others, Arminius misses the missiological meaning of Jacob and Esau. But he does distinguish between the children of the flesh and the children of faith in Christ. To the degree that these two groups are

²¹J. K. Grider, "Arminianism," *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 79.

²²*The Works of James Arminius*, trans. James and William Nicholls (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1996), vol. 2, 53; vol. 3, 516.

²³*The Work of James Arminius*, vol. 2, 53, 226, 698; vol. 3, 494-495, 497.

²⁴*The Works of James Arminius*, vol. 2, 227.

²⁵*The Works of James Arminius*, vol. 2, 226.

²⁶*The Works of James Arminius*, vol. 2, 227.

²⁷*The Works of James Arminius*, vol. 2, 228.

²⁸*The Works of James Arminius*, vol. 2, 368.

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distinguished he continues his focus on election involving human acceptance or non-acceptance of Christ. Election is not only God's willing in eternity, but human willing in time.²⁹

Arminius "attacked the speculative supralapsarianism of Beza on the grounds of its lack of Christocentricity." Secret eternal decrees were considered prior to the mission of Christ in Calvin's and Beza's theology. "For Arminius, election was subsequent to grace. God decrees to save all who repent, believe and persevere. Election is conditional on man's response, dependent on God's foreknowledge of his faith and perseverance." Whereas Calvin and Beza had God knowing the future because He predetermined it, Arminius had God knowing the future because of what humans would freely choose. Whereas Calvin and Beza confined foreknowledge to secret decrees in eternity, Arminius took history seriously. "Arminius was saying that God does not choose anyone but instead foresees that some will choose him."³⁰

The views of Arminius are presented in his commentary on Romans 9, *Examination of Perkins' Pamphlet*, and his *Declaration of Sentiments*. His view is called "conditional predestination." It was no longer arbitrary and rooted in a decree of God. It made evident that creaturely beings are responsible for evil in the universe and are responsible for their own destiny. His protology does not swallow up human actions and responsibility. He rejected the idea that grace is irresistible (Calvin), noting that believers can lose their salvation.

So in the theology of Arminius human free will is the determining factor for human destiny, rather than God's sovereign free will that does not take into consideration the free will of humans. Room for free human willing in salvation and reprobation makes possible human response to the justice of God in the cosmic controversy.

Although Arminius was right to be more Christocentric (than predestinarians) in his understanding of salvation/reprobation, so that Christ, rather than secret decrees of God, stands behind human destiny, he did not go on to develop a Christology that is true to Scripture. He was right that the mission of Christ radically calls in question the secret decrees of God, but he failed to follow through with the implications of this view. He ended up having a confined understanding of the atonement, just as Calvin had a confined understanding of the cause of human destiny.

In his Christology he says, "since Christ was held to have suffered for everyone he could not have paid the penalty for their sins, since all are not saved. His death simply permits the Father to forgive all who repent and believe. It makes salvation possible but does not intrinsically atone for anyone in particular. In fact, the atoning death of Christ was not essential for salvation by virtue

²⁹*The Works of James Arminius*, vol. 3, 485-519.

³⁰R. W. A. Letham, "Arminianism," *New Dictionary of Theology*, 45.

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of God's own nature as both loving and righteous but was rather the means God chose to save us for prudential administrative reasons."³¹

This was the view that Hugo Grotius (1583-1645) developed later (1617) in his Governmental Theory of the Atonement. In this theory God is sovereign, so that "God's pardon of sinners is within his absolute unfettered discretion, the death of Christ being accepted by him as ruler or governor, not as creditor or offended party. As ruler God's interest is in the good government of the world. The death of Christ illustrates the punishment which sin may attract and therefore serves good government by acting as a deterrent."³²

It is a curious paradox that Arminius rejected God's sovereign act (predestinating ruler) because of Christ's mission for humanity, and yet ended up limiting that mission because of God's sovereign act (forgiving ruler). He rightly rejected the eternal secret decrees of God as sovereign ruler because it did not take seriously the mission of Christ, yet he accepted the forgiving of God as sovereign ruler, even though it didn't take seriously the mission of Christ.

3. John Wesley, 1703-1791

In *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 10, there are two important sections on predestination. They constitute a powerful argument for free will, in opposition to divine determinism. Whereas Arminius blazed the trail in breaking away from the Reformer's focus on the divine decrees, John Wesley continued the battle, adding new insights and explaining it with clarity not found in the writings of Arminius. Wesley rejects "absolute predestination"³³ or "unconditional election,"³⁴ because they allege that God elects and damns individuals without them having any choice in the matter. It is God's will that is absolute. Human willing doesn't affect the outcome. There are no human conditions that affect human destiny, so the decrees are unconditional. This absolute and unconditional election is presented as an exercise of God's sovereignty. Freedom of choice to be among the saved or among the lost is disallowed, for the choice is not made at the human level in history, but at the divine level in eternity.

For Wesley election is conditional. "He that believeth shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned."³⁵ Clearly, for Wesley, human destiny depends upon human response to God's desire to save all mankind. Wesley rejects the decree to reprobation. He asks, "How can you possibly reconcile reprobation with those scriptures that declare the justice of God?"³⁶ This is a crucial question. It impacts on the issue in the cosmic controversy, although Wesley never discusses it within that broader biblical worldview. The very fact of an uncondi-

³¹R. W. A. Letham, "Arminianism," *New Dictionary of Theology*, 46.

³²F. Lyall, "Grotius, Hugo," *New Dictionary of Theology*, 284.

³³John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1996), vol. 10, 258.

³⁴John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 10, 209.

³⁵John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 10, 210.

³⁶John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 10, 216.

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tional decree where large numbers of humans are thrown into hell without their having any say in their destiny would make impossible any free acknowledgement of the justice of God.

Wesley rejects the view that God is merciful to elect even the few. He says such mercy is called in question by the fact that God isn't merciful to the majority of mankind. Predestinarians claim that "God might justly have passed by all men." Wesley replies, "Are you sure he might? Where is it written? I cannot find it in the word of God. Therefore I reject it as a bold, precarious assertion, utterly unsupported by Holy Scripture."³⁷ Wesley points out that one attribute of God (justice) cannot be separated from His other attributes (e.g. love, mercy). Would it be loving or merciful to pass by all mankind? He rejects the use of divine sovereignty by itself. God is not just sovereign. He is a merciful, loving sovereign. "For the Scripture nowhere speaks of this single attribute, as separate from the rest. Much less does it anywhere speak of the sovereignty of God as singly disposing the eternal states of men. No, no; in this awful work, God proceeds according to the known rules of his justice and mercy; but never assigns his sovereignty as the cause why any man is punished with everlasting destruction."³⁸

The decree of reprobation, as taught by the Reformers, was God bypassing the mass of mankind just because He did not choose to elect them. They receive no help to live, and even if it were possible that they desired to live a better life, they could not change their destiny. That was unalterably fixed in eternity. They were born to eternal damnation, and can never choose otherwise. This is said in defense of divine sovereignty. In reply, Wesley says, "The sovereignty of God is then never to be brought to supersede justice. And this is the present objection against unconditional reprobation; (the plain consequence of unconditional election;) it flatly contradicts, indeed utterly overthrows, the Scripture account of the justice of God."³⁹

A major thesis of this chapter is the importance of thinking through issues of protology in the light of eschatology. The fact of a Final Judgment is an important eschatological event in Scripture, the Creeds, and in theological systems. The decree of reprobation has not been thought through in the light of this Final Judgment in any systems known to this author, nor in any of the Creeds. Yet this is precisely what must be done, and is what we will attempt later. But for now, it is important to note that John Wesley makes an important contribution to this question.

He asks, "How shall God in justice judge the world, if there be any decree of reprobation? On this supposition, what should those on the left hand be condemned for? For their having done evil? They could not help it. There never was a time when they could have helped it. God, you say, 'of old ordained them to

³⁷John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 10, 217.

³⁸John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 10, 220.

³⁹John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 10, 221.

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this condemnation.' . . . Shall he then condemn them for what they could not help? Shall the Just, the Holy One of Israel, adjudge millions of men to everlasting pain, because their blood moved in their veins? Nay, this they might have helped, by putting an end to their own lives. But could they even thus have escaped from sin? Not without that grace which you suppose God had absolutely determined never to give them. And yet you suppose him to send them into eternal fire, for not escaping from sin! That is, in plain terms, for not having that grace which God had decreed they should never have! O strange justice! What a picture do you draw of the Judge of all the earth!"⁴⁰

Strange justice indeed! Think of how these reprobate will feel just before being consigned to their punishment. Wesley imagines their conversation with God. "Righteous art thou, O Lord; yet let us plead with thee. O why doest thou condemn us for not doing good? Was it possible for us to do anything well? Did we ever abuse the power of doing good? We never received it, and that thou knowest. Wilt thou, the Holy One, the Just, condemn us for not doing what we never had the power to do? Wilt thou condemn us for not casting down the stars from heaven? For not holding the winds in our fist? Why, it was as possible for us to do this, as to do any work acceptable in thy sight! O Lord, correct us, but with judgment! And, before thou plungest us into everlasting fire, let us know how it was ever possible for us to escape the damnation of hell."⁴¹

If God has elected the few to be saved and the rest to be damned, then the judgment is already made. Why the need for the Final Judgment? Here an alleged protological judgment makes an eschatological judgment meaningless. Wesley grasps this significance, and is one rare thinker who considers protology in the light of eschatology. He says, "Justice can have no place in rewarding or punishing mere machines, driven to and fro by an external force. So that your supposition of God's ordaining from eternity whatsoever should be done to the end of the world; as well as that of God's acting irresistibly in the elect, and Satan's acting irresistibly in the reprobates; utterly overthrows the Scripture doctrine of rewards and punishment, as well as of a judgment to come."⁴²

Wesley presses the point, giving Scriptures that demonstrate "God's justice." He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezek 18:23; 33:11). In fact His love is for all mankind. (1) He died for all (2 Cor 5:14), (2) "He is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2) and (3) "He died for all, that they should not live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them" (2 Cor 5:15). He challenges anyone to find three Scripture passages that say the opposite. He then notes that the gospel commission is for all mankind, and asks, "how could God or Christ be sincere in sending them with this commission, to offer his grace to all men, if God has not provided such grace for all men. . . ?"⁴³

⁴⁰John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 10, Ibid.

⁴¹John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 10, 222.

⁴²John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 10, 224.

⁴³John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 10, 224-226.

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The justice of God is rightly important to Wesley. His justice involves God's love and mercy for all mankind, and the freedom of all mankind to either accept or reject the eternal salvation that God has made possible through the life and death of Christ. God has not arbitrarily pre-ordained through an absolute, unconditional decrees the destiny of a few to salvation and the destiny of the majority to damnation. In Christ He has made possible one destiny for all mankind. Whether that destiny is realized is up to human acceptance and belief.

By contrast, predestination gives humans no choice. Wesley returns to the Final Judgment, and says, "Justice cannot punish a stone for falling to the ground; nor, on your scheme, a man for falling into sin. For he can no more help it than the stone, if he be, in your sense, fore-ordained to this condemnation." How can God condemn a person for not doing what he could never do? You claim it is because of "the sovereign will of God." Then you have "found a new God, or made one!" Wesley says, "This is not the God of the Christians. Our God is just in all his ways. . . . The glory of his justice is this, to 'reward every man according to his works.'"⁴⁴

Predestination means destination decided before. It means, to predestinarians, that those destinies are fixed, and cannot be altered. Hence the elect will be saved, irrespective of what happens in human history, and the reprobate will be lost irrespective of what happens in human history. But Wesley rightly points out that God entered into covenant with Abraham and his descendants, and Scripture clearly states the conditionality of this agreement (Exod Gen 36:2; Exod 19:3; Lev 26:3). Furthermore, a believer can turn away and be lost (Ezek 18:24; Matt 5:13; 12:43-45; John 15:1; Acts 13:46; Rom 11:17; Gal 5:4; 1 Tim 1:18-19; 2 Pet 2:20; 3:17; Heb 3:14; 6:4-6; Rev 3:11). The just live by faith, not by election (Hab 2:4). Sanctification and holiness is essential for salvation. Far from being irresistible, the Holy Spirit can be resisted by humans (Acts 7:51). Christ died for all mankind, but it is only those who believe who will be saved. Conditions for salvation and for retribution deny the unconditional eternal decrees.⁴⁵

4. Karl Barth (1886-1968)

Karl Barth radically called in question the traditional doctrine of predestination, as we will see, but ends up with another kind of predestination that has as many different problems as the one he called in question. There are two stages to this process, first the work he did in his *Romans commentary*, (1918/1921) and the next the work he did in his *Church Dogmatics* (1932-1970).

(1) *Commentary on Romans*

⁴⁴John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 10, 234.

⁴⁵John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 10, 240-259.

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Karl Barth's Commentary on Romans (*Römerbrief*) was written against the background of Schleiermachian existentialism, where the subject of theology had become man (as seen in the *Glaubenslehre*), and one spoke about God by speaking about man in a loud voice. This immanentism was challenged by Barth with his call, "Let God be God."

In his preface to the second edition, Barth gives credit to Plato, Kant and Kierkegaard for their influence on his thinking.⁴⁶ Each of these philosophers posited a similar view of God. To Plato the gods were separated from mankind by a *chorizma*, or unbridgeable gulf; for Kant we can never know God as He is in Himself, and Kierkegaard said there is an infinite qualitative distinction between God and mankind. Each, in different ways, presented a distant god/God who was opposite to the god of immanentism. This "Wholly Other" (*Ganz Anderer*) God is the God of the early Barth, and continued to be right up to the second attempt at writing his system, when the more existential *Christian Dogmatics* vol 1 (1927) was replaced by the more objective *Church Dogmatics* vol 1 (1932).

In commenting on Romans 9, where God loves Jacob and hates Esau, Barth speaks of the "secret of eternal, twofold predestination" in a paradoxical way. "Now, this secret concerns not this or that man, but all men. By it men are not divided, but united. In its presence they all stand on one line—for Jacob is always Esau also, and in the eternal 'Moment' of revelation Esau is also Jacob."⁴⁷ The Church is both the observable Esau and the hidden Jacob, it is both rejected and elected. "For God is the God of Esau, BECAUSE He is the God of Jacob."⁴⁸ For "whilst He is, in every moment of time, the God of Esau, He is in eternity the God of Jacob."⁴⁹

Here is an incipient universalism—reprobate in time but elect in eternity. Behind this paradoxical statement stands Barth's undeveloped Christology. "The process of revelation in Christ is decisive. In Time, we are *vessels of wrath*; in Eternity, we are not merely something more, but something utterly different; we are—*vessels of mercy*."⁵⁰ "God is unknown, apart from the knowledge which He Himself—as the Unknown—gives to us in Christ."⁵¹

Barth's paradoxical language and philosophical insights clutter the developing Christology he is attempting to bring to protology. Unlike those before Him, he is attempting in *Romans* to look at election/reprobation from a new perspective in Christ. This is a welcome breakthrough, but it is woefully inadequate, for his Christ remains in eternity, and at best stands only tangentially on

⁴⁶Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans. Edwyn C. Hoskyns (London, UK: Oxford University Press, 1965), 4.

⁴⁷Karl Barth, *Romans*, 347.

⁴⁸Karl Barth, *Romans*, 350.

⁴⁹Karl Barth, *Romans*, 357.

⁵⁰Karl Barth, *Romans*, 360.

⁵¹Karl Barth, *Romans*, 361.

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the edge where time and eternity meet. There is no entrance of Christ into time, to make revelation within human history. There is only the ever repeated encounters of revelation as divine eternity impacts human time. On these terms Christ has not revealed the Father, and so He does not give historical evidence about God to mankind. Such a revelation is necessary to understand what God is like, whether He is just. Barth's incipient universalism is better than an arbitrary predetermination to damnation, but his argument is less than convincing.

Later Barth criticized his *Romans*. It failed to do justice to the incarnation⁵² and to the love of God.⁵³ He would have to wait until his *Church Dogmatics* to take the incarnation seriously and think through the eternal decrees from within the historical revelation of them in Jesus Christ. To this we now turn.

(2) Church Dogmatics

In his *Church Dogmatics* Barth rejected the secret decrees of the Father's election of a few, for the mission of universal salvation in which "the elect man Jesus Christ" is the true object of the divine predestination."⁵⁴ Rather than have the Father electing, it is now Christ who elects. But not only does He elect, He is the elected man, where man means mankind (*humanitas*) and not just one individual (*homo*). So the object of election is not some unknown, hidden secret in the will of an unknown God, but is the election of Christ for the world. This is a radical departure from the Augustinian-Lutheran-Calvinistic tradition. A more "Christian" version of predestination is offered. Its universal breadth replaces the choice of a few.

What does it mean that Jesus Christ is the electing God and the elected man? The electing God is good news because it is true to Scripture. It overcomes the dualism in the Godhead where the Father elects the few, and yet the Son comes for the world. It removes the secrecy of the decrees with the revelation of Christ's mission in history. No longer is the sovereign will of God the manifestation of His glory and the revelation of His mercy and justice. Now the will of God is revealed in the God-man. No longer is there an unknown God who stands before and behind Christ, hidden in His secret, inscrutable willing. For in Christ one has the exhaustive self-revelation of God, in which it is seen that, "The will of God is Jesus Christ."⁵⁵ "The substitution of the election of Jesus Christ for the *decretum absolutum* is, then, the decisive point in the amendment of the doctrine of predestination."⁵⁶

The double decrees (election/reprobation) are no longer two separate destinies. They are one in Christ. He is elected mankind and rejected God, for as the

⁵²Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, G. W. Bromiley, T. F. Torrance, eds. (Edinburgh, UK: T&T Clark, 1963), 1/2, 50.

⁵³Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 4/2, 798.

⁵⁴Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 2/2, 143.

⁵⁵Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 2/2, 157.

⁵⁶Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 2/2, 161.

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elected man He took the place of rejected mankind. Here all humans are objectively elected to salvation in Christ, which is the root of Barth's tendency to universalism. Hence "predestination is the non-rejection of man."⁵⁷ This is an attempt to look at predestination christologically. Judgment and mercy are given a corporate function in the election of the Community. Barth says, "This one Community of God in its form as Israel has to serve the representation of the divine judgment, in its form as the Church the representation of the divine mercy."⁵⁸ Here Barth confuses the category of election with that of mission, and makes the same mistake when commenting on Romans 9 when he calls Israel a vessel of dishonor and the Church a vessel of honor.⁵⁹

Concerning Judas, who betrayed Christ, Barth does not look at that as a personal act of rebellion, but "as one element of the divine will and work." He says, "In one sense Judas is the most important figure in the new Testament apart from Jesus. . . . If we consider the indispensability of Judas from the point of the view of the divine delivering-up of Jesus, we can almost understand for a moment what inspired the ancient sect which gave special veneration to this man. In itself, it is no more foolish than the considerations which at a very different point led to the veneration of Mary, the mother of Jesus. At any rate, we have to say that the usual horror at this 'arch-villain' (as Abraham a Sta. Clara puts it) is quite unjustifiable in its over-simplification of Judas' actual function."⁶⁰ In other words, Judas was used by God to hand Jesus over so that He could become the Savior of all mankind, including Judas. He says, "the traitor Judas is the strange instrument of the will of God."⁶¹ So Barth can say that "the story of Judas is extraordinary calm."⁶² If that was true, why did Judas commit suicide? It seems Barth is focusing more on the will of God than the will of Judas

Barth speaks of "the eschatological possibility," of "salvation on the day of the Lord" for the rejected.⁶³ In other words their rejection is only temporal, and not eternal. He claims we need "to accept the eschatological reality of the delivery of Jesus Christ in the place of sinners. And in view of the efficacy of this event, we must not lose sight of the hope of the future deliverance of the rejected at the very frontier of perdition."⁶⁴ Barth can say, "there is no good reason why we should forbid ourselves, or be forbidden, openness to the possibility that in the reality of God and man in Jesus Christ there is contained much more than we might expect and therefore the supremely unexpected withdrawal of that final

⁵⁷Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 2/2, 167.

⁵⁸Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 2/2, 195.

⁵⁹Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 2/2, 224.

⁶⁰Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 2/2, 502.

⁶¹Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 3/2, 214.

⁶²Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 2/2, 460.

⁶³Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 2/2, 486-487.

⁶⁴Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 2/2, 497.

threat, i.e., that in the truth of this reality there might be contained the super-abundant promise of the final deliverance of all men.”⁶⁵

(3) Calvin and Barth Compared

The protology of Calvin and Barth are diametrically opposite. Whereas Calvin’s God is a hidden God, who made decrees in eternity that are secret, inscrutable, and past human comprehension, Barth rejected this view of predestination because it doesn’t take the reality of Jesus Christ seriously. Barth presents predestination of all mankind in Christ, the Electing God and the elected man. The reality of rejection and election is found in the life and work of Christ, in whom all humanity is found. So the election of everyone is wrapped up in the election of the man Jesus. Even those rejected were elected in His death for them. So much so that the eschatological possibility holds out the fact that all may be saved, whereas for Calvin only the few elect will be saved.

Admittedly these two views are radically diverse. But they share common ground in not allowing for the proper use of free human will in the process. Both are built on a selective use of Scripture, and both end up doing a disservice to the biblical revelation of human destiny. Because human will is not given its proper place, the “whosoever believeth will be saved” emphasis in Scripture is ignored. It is precisely this rejection of human free will which, if true, would be sufficient to call in question God’s justice. How would it be just to damn those who were not elected by Calvin’s God, and how would it be just for all to be saved according to the possibility of Barth’s God?

In Scripture eschatological rewards are never forced upon all indiscriminately. Even final destiny takes into consideration human preparation (Matt 6:33; Heb 11:6; Rev 22:14-15). The God who asks humans to come and reason (Isa 1:18) and allows them to reap what they sow (Gal 6:7), who made them in His image (Gen 1:17-18) with the ability to think and to decide, respects their freedom to choose sides in the cosmic controversy (Deut 30:19; Joshua 24:15) on the basis of the evidence provided in His Word. One day, in the eschatological judgment, all will have revealed to them the justice of God (Isa 45:23; Rom 14:10-11; Isa 45:23-24; Phil 2:10-11). It will be essential then that humans have freedom to respond to that revelation, for God does not want to dictate the conclusion. There is no judicial universalism here, flowing from the fact that all are predestined to say that God is just and the apostasy in unjust.

No! One day, in the final moments of eschatology, “at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth (in the entire cosmos), and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil 2:10-1). All will see that God is just. This is not, as some have argued, a second opportunity to turn to God and receive salvation. The wicked will admit they have received the reward they have chosen for themselves, but

⁶⁵Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 4/3, 477-478.

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they will not repent. The trust of the righteous in God's justice will be shown to be fully warranted. Before they have trusted, but now they see fully. Traditional predestination cannot be lived, for Christians know they are using their wills each day, willing to serve and share, and they know they choose Christ.

5. The Free Will Option

The greatest tragedy in the Augustinian-Lutheran-Calvinistic predestinarian tradition is the rejection of free will, but it is cherished by the "free will" churches. I do not speak of the use of free will for salvation in the Pelagian or Catholic sense. No one can earn salvation. It is a free gift. But it is only a free gift to "whosoever" will accept it (John 3:16-17). Human destiny is not inevitable. It is not preordained, or forced upon humans against their will. Humans must make a decision. Jesus said it right to Nicodemus, "You must be born again" (John 3:7). He did not say, "You don't have to worry Nicodemus, you are elected from eternity." The fact that the new birth, Holy Spirit indwelling and spiritual fruits, a changed life and fitness for heaven are pre-requisites for entrance must be taken seriously, for this is the biblical picture. God created humans with the ability to think, reason, and will because He did not want robots. He wanted to dwell with humans, and will do so in the new earth (Rev 21:3). Authentic relationship must be predicated upon a genuine interchange, even though it is between created beings and their Creator.

The Confession of the Free Will Baptists, (1834, 1868) declares, "God has endowed man with power of free choice and governs him by moral laws and motives; and this power of free choice is the exact measure of his responsibility. All events are present with God from everlasting to everlasting; but his knowledge of them does not in any sense cause them, nor does he decree all events which he knows will occur."⁶⁶

6. Christological Focus in the Creeds

As we will see in this section, Karl Barth was not the first to consider election in a Christological context. A number of creeds at least mention the connection. All but two of the creeds we cite never allow the "in Christ" view of election to call in question the secret decrees from a hidden God beyond Christ. They do not take seriously the fact that Christ came to save all mankind (John 3:16), and that human free will is involved in the "whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life." (John 3:16). The Formula of Concord (1576) says, "In Christ, therefore, is the eternal election of God the Father to be sought."⁶⁷ The Belgic Confession (1561) says that God, "in his eternal and un-

⁶⁶Confession of the Free-Will Baptists, Chapter 3, #1,2; Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1996), vol. 3, 749-750.

⁶⁷The Formula of Concord, Article XII. Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, vol. 3, 169. Even though the Formula says "Christ calls all sinners to him" (Art. VI), yet it denies human free-will (Art. 11).

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changeable counsel, of mere goodness hath elected in Christ Jesus our Lord, without any respect to their works.”⁶⁸ The Scotch Confession of Faith (1560) says, “For that same eternal God and Father, who of mere grace elected us in *Christ Jesus* his Sonne, befor the foundation of the warld was laide. . . .” (Old Scottish spelling).⁶⁹

The Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England (1571) say, “Predestination to Life is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby (before the foundations of the world were laid) he hath constantly decreed by his counsel secret to us, to deliver from the curse and damnation those whom he hath chosen in Christ out of mankind, to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation. . . .”⁷⁰ These creeds do not think through the implication of the “in Christ” focus. They merely quote a biblical idea without allowing that idea to materially affect the way they look at human destiny.

The next two creeds go further than the ones already cited and present the real meaning of “in Christ,” and in doing so, show that the mission of Christ was not a narrow election of the few, and that human free will is a necessary human response that negates any divine predetermination. The creeds also show the way that the debate could have gone if the Reformers had only allowed their understanding of justification by faith in Christ to have informed their understanding of predestination by faith in Christ.

The Confession of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church (1829) incorporates some of the Westminster Confession of Faith (1647), but deletes the thorny Calvinistic Chapters II-VIII, replacing them with an excellent, well-thought out, Christ-centered interpretation of election. They suggest that Calvinists and Arminians had gone beyond proper limits in probing predestination. They suggest an “intermediate plan.” This plan suggests that “God is sovereign, having a right to work when, where, how, and on whom he pleases.” “Therefore God, as sovereign, may if he pleases, elect a nation, as the Jews, to preserve his worship free from idolatry. . . . Christendom, in which to spread his gospel. . . . Cyrus and others, to answer a particular purpose. . . . Luther and Calvin to promote the Reformation. But as it respects the salvation of the soul, God as sovereign can only elect or choose fallen man in Christ, who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. But it appears to us incontestible, from God’s Word, that God has reprobated *none* from eternity.”⁷¹

⁶⁸The Belgic Confession, Article XVI. Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, vol. 3, 401. Yet the Confession says there is no salvation outside the church (Art. XXVIII) and rejects human free-will (Art. XIV).

⁶⁹The Scotch Confession of Faith, Article VIII. Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, vol. 3, 444-45. Yet the Confession denies human free-will (Art. XIII).

⁷⁰The Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England, Article XVI. Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, vol. 3, 497. Yet the Confession denies human free-will (Art. X).

⁷¹See next footnote.

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“Reprobation is not what some have supposed it to be, viz., a sovereign determination of God to create millions of rational beings, and for his own glory damn them eternally in hell, without regard to moral rectitude or sin in the creature. This would tarnish the divine glory, and render the greatest, best, and most lovely of all beings most odious in view of all intelligence.” This is precisely the point. This would contribute to the doubt about His justice. This would fuel the cosmic controversy. It would be damaging evidence that Satan would gleefully disseminate.

The Confession continues, “When man sinned he was legally reprobated, but not damned: God offered, and does offer, the law-condemned sinner mercy in the gospel, he has from the foundation of the world so far chosen mankind in Christ as to justify that saying in 1 Tim. Iv. 10, ‘Who is the Savior of all men, especially of them that believe.’ This is a gracious act of God’s sovereign electing love, as extensive as the legal condemnation, or reprobation, in which all mankind are by nature. But, in a particular and saving sense, none can be properly called God’s elect till they be justified and united to Christ, the end of the law for righteousness (none are justified from eternity. . . .” Furthermore if anyone falls, “he was not *bound* by any revealed or *secret* decree of God to do so: it is his own fault. For God declares in his Word that Christ died for the *whole* world; that he offers pardon to all; that the Spirit operates on all; confirming by an oath that he has no pleasure in the death of sinners.”⁷²

This is a true understanding of predestination “in Christ.” Gone is an election from a God behind Christ, hidden in the eternal recesses in secret and hidden decrees with their arbitrary election of some and damning of most. In its place is a view of a loving Christ who comes to save all mankind, and therefore reprobating none, so that all humanity have necessary free will to accept or reject His saving mission for them. Jesus said, “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father (John 14:9). This is the revelation Christ made of His Father to intelligent creatures that shows Him to be a God of great love and compassion for everyone, and not merely for a select few. It is precisely such a manifestation that is vital for the resolution of the cosmic controversy. For Christ came to earth not merely to save mankind, but to manifest what God is like to the universe. We will take this up later when we look at the mission of Christ.

The Confession of the Evangelical Free Church of Geneva (1848) says, “the true believer having been elected in Christ before the foundation of the world, according to the foreknowledge of God, the Father, in the sanctification of the Holy Ghost. . . . We believe that God, who so loved the world that he gave his only Son, now order every man, in every place, to be converted; that every one is responsible for his sins and his unbelief; that Jesus repels none who go to him;

⁷²Confessions of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church (Chapters III-VIII). Philip Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, vol. 3, 772-773.

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and that every sinner who sincerely appeals to him will be saved.”⁷³ Here the “in Christ” election is seen in the light of John 3:16, where universal salvation is based upon a human free will response to God’s gift. This is so much better than The Confession of the Waldenses (1655) which says, “That God so loved the world, that is to say, those whom he has chosen out of the world, that he gave his own Son to save us by his most perfect obedience (especially that obedience which he manifested in suffering the cursed death of the cross), and also by his victory over the devil, sin, and death.”⁷⁴

Here is one of the five traditional points of the Calvinistic view of salvation (known under the mnemonic abbreviation TULIP): Total depravity, Unconditional predestination, Limited atonement, Irresistible grace, and Perseverance of the saints. If humans are so depraved that they cannot choose Christ, and therefore election has nothing to do with their will, but solely with God’s will, so that Christ’s death was only for those whom God chose, and they alone can be saved because grace is irresistible to them, causing them to persevere—then there is no basis for intelligent beings to accept that God is just in the cosmic controversy and bow their knees. How can God choose some and reject the rest without facing the charge of having favorites, being arbitrary and unjust?

The “in Christ” focus recognizes the importance of human free will. The Reformed Episcopal Articles of Religion (1875) say, “While the Scriptures distinctly set forth the election, predestination, and calling of the people of God unto eternal life, as Christ saith; ‘All that the Father giveth me shall come to me;’ they no less positively affirm man’s free agency and responsibility, and that salvation is freely offered to all through Christ.”⁷⁵

The Creeds that really allowed the “in Christ” focus of election to be true to John 3:16 were true to human free will, and thus to a real choice for election or rejection. They see humans as responsible for that choice, even as God is responsible for salvation. In this balance, no human destiny can be seen as unjust, arbitrarily predetermined by a sovereign God whose mission is for His own pleasure or glory. Such a view is totally foreign to the God who gave His Son to save a world and invited all to accept salvation through belief in Christ. Only such a God will be seen as just in the final Judgment, when every intelligent being will have opportunity to respond to the revelation of God by acknowledging His righteousness.

7. Alvin Platinga

⁷³Confession of the Evangelical Free Church of Geneva, Articles X-X. Philip Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, vol. 3, 783-784.

⁷⁴The Confessions of the Waldenses, Article XIV. Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, vol. 3, 762.

⁷⁵Reformed Episcopal Articles of Religion, Article XVIII. Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, vol. 3, 820. Article XVI also says that salvation is only in Christ and to those who believe in Him.

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No contemporary philosopher has shed more light on the topic before us than Alvin Platinga. He does so through two major contributions: examining the problem of evil and presenting the Free Will Defense theory. We will take them up in that order.

(a) The Problem of Evil

Gottfried W. Leibnitz (1646-1716) considered that this world is the best of all possible worlds.⁷⁶ He further suggested that an omnipotent God could have created any possible world. Platinga calls this latter idea, “Leibniz’s Lapse,” and denied its validity.⁷⁷ For God “could not have actualized a world containing moral good but no moral evil.”⁷⁸ For humans to be free God could not have created a world in which all human actions result from external causation. There is no compatibility between divine causation and human freedom. Thus, says Platinga, “He (God) cannot cause it to be the case that I freely refrain from an action *A*; for if he does so, he causes it to be the case that I refrain from *A*, in which case I do not do so *freely*.”⁷⁹

Those believing in divine determinism, where everything created and their actions are predetermined by God, where non-causation is absent, where determinism and human freedom are considered compatible (compatibility theory)—must believe God ordained evil to exist, for nothing can exist (even evil) outside of His divine pre-ordination and providence. Such a view presents God as blameworthy for the existence of evil in His universe, and calls in question His omnipotence, and more importantly for our study, it calls in question His justice. For if God ordained the presence of evil, then to that extent at least, He is responsible for evil. If He is responsible for evil, then to that extent it is impossible to conclude that He is just in the eschatological Final Judgment.

Many philosophers claim “there is a contradiction involved in asserting, as the theist does, that God is perfectly good, omnipotent (i.e., all powerful), and omniscient (i.e., all-knowing) on the one hand, and, on the other, that there is evil.”⁸⁰ David Hume questioned, “Is he willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then he is impotent. Is he able, but not willing? Then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing? Whence then is evil?”⁸¹ H. J. McCloskey says, “Evil is a problem for the theist in that a contradiction is involved in the fact of evil, on the one hand, and the belief in the omnipotence and perfection of God on the

⁷⁶It is important to grasp what John L. Pollock observed, “One of the principle analytical tools of contemporary philosophical logic is the concept of a possible world. It has become commonplace to identify necessary truth with truth in all possible worlds” (in *Alvin Platinga*, eds. James E. Tomberlin and Peter Van Inwagen, 121). That is, the truth in one world is possible in all worlds, so that evil in this world is possible in all worlds.

⁷⁷See his extended discussion in *The Nature of Necessity*, 168-195.

⁷⁸Alvin Platinga, *The Nature of Necessity*, 172.

⁷⁹Alvin Platinga, *The Nature of Necessity*, 171.

⁸⁰Alvin Platinga, *God, Freedom and Evil*, 11.

⁸¹Alvin Platinga, *God, Freedom and Evil*, 10.

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other.”⁸² J. L. Mackie says, “I think, however, that a more telling criticism can be made by way of the traditional problem of evil. Here it can be shown, not that religious beliefs lack rational support, but that they are positively irrational, that the several parts of the essential theological doctrine are inconsistent with one another.”⁸³

Many philosophers, from Epicurus (342?-270 BC) to the present, “believe that the existence of evil constitutes a difficulty for the theist, and many believe that the existence of evil (or at least the amount and kinds of evil we actually find) makes belief in God unreasonable or rationally unacceptable.”⁸⁴ In reply Platinga gives a sustained logical, consistent, and careful analysis of these claims and demonstrates that the existence of God in view of evil is reasonable and rationally acceptable.

Platinga says that a theist may not be able to answer these questions, but that inability should not be the final word. “The fact that the theist doesn’t know why God permits evil is, perhaps, an interesting fact about the theist, but by itself it shows little or nothing relevant to the rationality of belief in God.”⁸⁵ Having said that much, he then sets out to successfully answer these questions. And his logic is a careful and consistent articulation of the Free Will Defense theory.

(b) Free Will Defense

As Thomas P. Flint rightly points out, “the ethological argument from evil can be successfully countered by a version of the Free Will Defense.” The Free Will Defense believes that “all evil might be the result of the free actions of God’s creatures.”⁸⁶ “It is noteworthy,” says Jerry L. Walls, “that Molinism has received renewed attention in contemporary philosophy, largely through Alvin Platinga’s free will defense.” This includes Platinga’s acceptance of Molina’s logic that God has “middle knowledge.”⁸⁷ Here God does not create evil, nor is He therefore responsible for evil, but He did create beings with the ability to choose good or evil, so that with the choosing came the responsibility for the choice. Humans, like many angels before them, chose evil, and hence are responsible for the existence of evil within the otherwise good creation of God.

⁸²H. J. McCloskey, “God and Evil,” *Philosophical Quarterly*, 10 (1960), 97.

⁸³J. L. Mackie, “Evil and Omnipotence,” *Mind*, 64 (1955), 200.

⁸⁴Alvin Platinga in *Alvin Platinga*, eds James E. Tomberlin and Peter Van Inwagen, 37; Alvin Platinga, *God, Freedom and Evil* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 9.

⁸⁵*Ibid.*

⁸⁶Thomas P. Flint, “The Problem of Divine Freedom,” *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 20 #3 (July 1893), 255.

⁸⁷Jerry L. Walls, *Hell: The Logic of Damnation*, 40.

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Platinga defines his Free Will Defense.⁸⁸ It is “A World containing creatures who are significantly free (freely perform more good than evil actions) is more valuable, all else being equal, than a world containing no free creatures at all. Now God can create free creatures, but He can’t cause or determine them to do only what is right. For if He does so, then they aren’t significantly free after all; they do not do what is right freely. To create creatures capable of moral good, therefore, He must create creatures capable of moral evil; and He can’t give these creatures the freedom to perform evil and at the same time prevent them from doing do. As it turned out, sadly enough, some of the free creatures God created went wrong in the exercise of their freedom; this is the source of moral evil. The fact that free creatures sometimes go wrong, however, counts neither against God’s omnipotence nor against His goodness; for He could have forestalled the occurrence of moral evil only by removing the possibility of moral good.”⁸⁹

Platinga rejects the idea that God could have created a world containing moral good but no moral evil. He rejects the compatibility of divine determinism and human freedom. His focus is therefore away from the divine determinism found in much theology. For him, human freedom is a necessary component of divine creation. One might add that humans are necessarily free because made in the image of a free God (Gen 1:26-27). The very presence of evil in God’s perfect universe must come from the misuse of creaturely freedom, because the only other cause for evil would be divine freedom, and God does not create evil. The very fact of evil is a powerful evidence for the use of creaturely free will. To suggest that God is somehow the cause of evil negates any chance of defending His justice, for evil would be the *prima facie* case for His injustice.

Atheologians might say that Adam would not have sinned if God had placed him on a different world from this one, and since God knew this, and did not do it, then He is to be blamed for evil. Platinga’s answer to this is his concept of “trans-world depravity.” Thomas P. Flint comments on Platinga’s view. He says, “If Adam is truly free, it might be the case that, no matter what God had done, Adam would (if created and left significantly free) have freely gone wrong with respect to some action. If this is so, Adam suffers from trans-world depravity, and God can create him and leave him significantly free only if he is willing to let him do evil. Platinga argues that it is possible that all of us suffer from trans-world depravity. If the atheologian then goes on to ask why God didn’t create other people, who didn’t suffer from trans-world depravity, Platinga can respond that God might not have had this option, for it is possible that

⁸⁸He differentiates a Free Will Defense from a Free Will Theodicy, for the former speaks of what God’s reason *might possibly be* compared to what God’s reason *is* in the latter. Alvin Platinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil*, 28.

⁸⁹Alvin Platinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil*, 30. cf. Alvin Platinga, *The Nature of Necessity* (London, UK: Oxford, 1978), 166-167.

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every creaturely essence (i.e., every ‘possible person’) suffers from trans-world depravity.”⁹⁰

“The essential point of the Free Will Defense,” says Platinga,” is that the creation of the world containing moral good is a co-operative venture; it requires the uncoerced concurrence of significantly free creatures. . . . Of course it is up to God whether to create free creatures at all; but if he aims to produce moral good, then he must create significantly free creatures upon whose co-operation he must depend. Thus is the power of an omnipotent God limited by the freedom he confers upon his creatures.”⁹¹ This makes far more sense, to me, than the eternal decrees that make all human action predetermined. The contribution that Alvin Platinga has made to the Free Will Defense is crucial to the thesis of our theological system.

For it is the Free Will Defense, Platinga argues so persuasively, that is the only explanation for evil that fits in with the biblical world view of the cosmic controversy as a rebellion of created beings against their Creator. For God could not will or decree such rebellion and cause His created beings to be at war with Him. He would be less than wise to do so. The very fact that the rebellion cost Him everything, including the life and death of His Son, is ample evidence against His causing the tragedy. Such a rebellion can only be the result of creaturely free will. Later, we will see that when this rebellion comes to a close in the eschatological Final Judgment, then God will be seen as just by all those who have exercised their free wills, whether saved or damned.

The possession of free will by humans is vital. Without such free will they would be mere automatons or puppets. Such lack of freedom would keep them from entering an intelligent relationship with their Creator, and thus they would fail to realize the purpose of their creation, which is to have a meaningful fellowship with God. This would not only affect human history on this planet now (cf. Ezek 37:23, 26; Jer 7:23; 30:22; 31:1; 32:38; Matt 1:28-30, John 15:1-5), but also affect human life in the eschatological new earth (Rev 21:3). Only as humans are truly free can they really have a relationship with God in the present and throughout eternity.

8. Four Views

Four views on divine sovereignty and human freedom are presented in a 1986 book titled *Predestination and Free will*.⁹² The four views are (1) God

⁹⁰Thomas P. Flint, “The Problem of Divine Freedom,” 256. The fact is two thirds of the angels did not sin, so trans-world depravity is not a fact for all created beings. Rather than speaking about trans-world depravity, it would be better to speak of all having free wills to use as they wish, and all humans having used it to do evil, whereas only some of the angels have used it in the same way. Behind the idea of trans-world depravity is Platinga’s freedom of will, and this concept is the only one that is possible in a universe in which evil exists and God remains just.

⁹¹Alvin Platinga, *The Nature of Necessity*, 190.

⁹²*Predestination and Free Will*, eds. David and Randall Basinger (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1986).

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ordains all things (John S. Feinberg), (2) God knows all things (Norman Geisler), (3) God limits His power (Bruce Reichenbach) and (4) God limits His knowledge (Clark Pinnock). A careful reading through this volume gives important insights, some of which we will consider. The importance of this work is the obvious difference that exists between the views, even though there are some areas of concurrence. Does God cause human acts or not? Are humans robots or not? Does God limit His power by making room for human freedom, or not? Does God know all the future or not? These are the major views debated.

John Feinberg and Norman Geisler's view of God could be characterized as a novelist who invents his/her characters and is in control of what they do in the story. The characters are not free. They are at the mercy of their creator/novelist. The picture of the Potter working over the clay in Romans 9:18-21 has been used this way by exponents of divine causation. But Bruce Reichenbach and Clark Pinnock do not subscribe to this model. To them humans have freedom to make their own decisions and to chose their own destiny.

Bruce Reichenbach says, "We must abandon the model which sees God as the cosmic novelist. . . ." ⁹³ He calls for a distinction between God as sovereign and God as novelist. ⁹⁴ The former is appropriate, the latter is not. He rightly states that "God cannot, without destroying our freedom, control us or compel us to choose to act in ways that accord with his will or plan. If God has created us free to choose to love and serve him, then God cannot cause us to do so. It is up to us to accept or reject the grace offered us through the redemptive act of Christ. We are not tools to be manipulated by God or other persons to achieve their end. Rather, we are conscious beings who should be persuaded to freely live according to God's will and commands." ⁹⁵

By contrast, Norman Geisler says, "I deny Reichenbach's view that God does not have as much control over his free subjects as a novelist has over his characters. From God's eternal standpoint, history is just as determined as the story in a novel. Yet the moral actions in history were all free." ⁹⁶ Obviously they cannot both be right. It is true that the plan of salvation was thought through before the foundation of the world, has been carried out according to schedule, and will accomplish its goal. Yet it is also true that each human will meet his/her own destiny through free will/choice. God is the author of the plan of salvation, but each person is free to relate to that plan as they choose, and so cannot relate to it as a novel character relates to a novelist.

If God is a novelist and humans are but actors in His hands, to do as He chooses, both now and in eternity, then there is no real human freedom, and so there is no way humans can comprehend if God is just or not, much less admit the fact in the Final Judgment. When we look at that Final Judgment, we will

⁹³Bruce Reichenbach in *Predestination and Free Will*, 55.

⁹⁴Bruce Reichenbach in *Predestination and Free Will*, 106.

⁹⁵Bruce Reichenbach in *Predestination and Free Will*, 108-109.

⁹⁶Norman Geisler in *Predestination and Free Will*, 131-13

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see that Scripture speaks of it as every knee bowing before God. They will do so in utter freedom. With that in mind, it is worth pondering these words from Reichenbach, “the sovereign cannot make the subjects freely acknowledge his sovereignty. The sovereign can compel his subjects to bow in his presence, but he cannot compel them to bow freely.”⁹⁷

James I. Packer calls for evangelicals to accept both divine sovereignty and human freedom, because the Bible teaches both.⁹⁸ Problems arise when one is stressed without giving proper place to the other. Much of theological thinking has stressed the sovereignty of God and neglected the importance of the freedom of humans. In defense of human freedom, Clark Pinnock observes that there are two central biblical assertions about humans. “(1) they are historical agents who can respond to God in love; and (2) they are sinners who have deliberately rejected God’s plan for them. Neither assertion would make sense unless we posit the gift of freedom in the strong sense.”⁹⁹

C. S. Lewis, in *The Screwtape Letters*, says, “the Irresistible and the Indisputable are the two weapons which the very nature of His scheme forbids Him to use. Merely to override a human will . . . would be for Him useless. He cannot ravish. He can only woo.”¹⁰⁰ In *The Great Divorce*, C. S. Lewis says, “There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, ‘Thy will be done,’ and those to whom God says, in the end, ‘Thy will be done.’”¹⁰¹ Following God or losing eternal life are both a result of human will. Destiny is provided by God but chosen by humans, so that in destiny is found the union of divine sovereignty and human freedom. God invites all to eternal life, but will force none. He longs for none to be lost, so he forbids none. Humans are free to choose their destiny.

9. Book of Romans

Romans 9, with its alleged election of Jacob and reprobation of Esau; the hardening of Pharaoh, and the potter making vessels to honor and dishonor, seems to be the key passage for predestination promoted by the Augustinian-Lutheran-Calvinist tradition. The word “election” means mission in this passage (v. 12), and not decrees for election/reprobation. What we need to do now is to see that an exegesis of these verses in Romans 9, apart from their context in the Book of Romans, gives a distorted view of God. So in this section, we will go chronologically through Romans and provide this larger context. It is within this

⁹⁷Bruce Reichenbach in *Predestination and Free Will*, 105.

⁹⁸James I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1961), chap. 2 give pages.

⁹⁹Clark Pinnock in *Predestination and Free Will*, 147. On page 150 Pinnock writes, “genuine novelty can appear in history which cannot be predicted even by God,” thus showing a weak understanding of divine foreknowledge.

¹⁰⁰C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1961), 38.

¹⁰¹C. S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1945), 69.

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larger context that the larger biblical world view—beyond human salvation/loss of salvation—concerning the cosmic controversy issue over God’s justice, can be addressed.

Here is a list of the items in Romans that negate the confined election/reprobation secret decrees:

(1) Rom 1:16. Salvation is through human belief, not through divine selection.

(2) Rom 1:16. Salvation is for Jews (Jacob) and Gentiles (e.g. Esau). This negates the view that Romans 9:8-16 is election for Jacob and retribution for Esau.

(3) Rom 2:10-11. Salvation for Jews and Gentiles, for God is no respecter of persons. Choosing some to be saved and others to be lost is showing respect of persons.

(4) Rom 3:6. God to judge the world. This future event would be unnecessary if He has already determined their destiny through His eternal choice.

(5) Rom 3:9, 22-24. Jews and Gentiles have all sinned. Salvation comes not through some secret election, but through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. The difference between the elect and the reprobate is not some secret choice of God but a known (belief) choice of humans.

(6) Rom 3:28-30. Jews (Jacob) and Gentiles (e.g. Esau) are justified by faith, for God is the God of Jews and Gentiles.

(7) Rom 4:1-18. Abraham, grandfather of Jacob (Israel) and Esau was righteous through faith, and not through divine decrees. He is the spiritual father of all nations—of all who believe. This has to do with election to mission (not salvation). Mission, like salvation, is dependent upon human faith (will), and not upon divine decrees.

(8) Rom 5:9-10. Justification (salvation) comes through Jesus Christ, and not through divine decrees.

(9) Rom 5:12-19. Sin came into the world through Adam and salvation came into the world through Christ. Salvation is not through divine decrees, but through Christ. So belief and faith are understood as belief and faith in Christ and not in eternal decrees.

(10) Rom 8:32. Christ came for all mankind, and not just for an alleged elect.

(11) Rom 9:24, 30-33. Even in Romans 9, where the alleged election/reprobation ideas are found, Jews and Gentiles are both considered righteous by faith; and trust in Christ is the focus (v. 33). Clearly salvation is through faith in Christ, a human response to the Savior, a human choice made in history and not a divine choice made in eternity, a belief in a Savior revealed, and not a predestination by God in secret decrees. So in the very chapter where predestination is allegedly found, there is ample proof that this is the wrong exegesis of the texts.

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(12) Rom 10:9. “If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” The act of free will is necessary for salvation.

(13) Rom 10:12. “For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him. For, ‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’” Here salvation is offered universally to all on the same basis of calling on Him. Such an offer is not possible if God only elects a few, and damns the rest.

(14) Rom 11:20-23. One can lose one’s salvation and regain it, which is different from deterministic, irrevocable decrees.

(15) Rom 11:32-33. The unsearchable ways of God are mentioned in the context of his mercy upon all. The hardening in Romans 9-10 should be understood in the context of salvation for all if they choose to believe, and hence the hardening is a result of not accepting that option. God allows them to go their own way into hardening, and is credited for that which He permits.

(16) Rom 12:2. It is possible to “test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.” This is a long way from an inscrutable will, hidden in eternal secret decrees, past human understanding.

(17) Rom 13:8-10. Keeping the law is all summed up in loving one’s neighbor. If loving others is an evidence of salvation, then loving all mankind is an evidence of the Savior, too.

(18) Rom 14:10-12. When everyone bows before God in the eschatological judgment, each will give an account of himself/herself. There is no need to give an account if the decision for salvation/damnation depends upon divine will and not on human response. The fact of a judgment and the giving of rewards indicates that destiny is decided in human history, and not in some prior eternity.

(19) Rom 15:7-18. The Gentiles (e.g. Esau) have hope in Christ.

(20) Rom 16:25-26. There is a hidden mystery, but it is not secret decrees that remain inscrutable beyond human comprehension. Rather, “the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known” is that “all nations might believe and obey him,” which means all can be saved if they choose.

So throughout Romans salvation is based on faith, belief, choice—the use of human freedom to will, and not upon some divine will beyond human response.

10. The Mission of Jesus Christ

The mission of Jesus is encapsulated best in the favorite text for all Christians, “God so loved the world that He gave His Son” and “whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish but have everlasting life.” Both parts are important (1) universal love from God, and (2) human response to this love for salvation. Those who confine the atonement to the elect do disservice to both parts of this text. For them it reads, “God so loved the elect, so the elect will be saved.” Let’s consider the system of Lewis Sperry Chafer, theologian for Dispensationalists.

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On this point he says, “God’s attitude toward the entire human family is one of infinite compassion and boundless sacrificial love. Though the two revealed facts—divine election and the universality of divine love—cannot be reconciled within the sphere of human understanding. . . .”¹⁰²

No wonder he says “divine election presents difficulties which are insolvable by the finite mind,”¹⁰³ speaks of the “complexity” of the doctrine, and says problems involved in the doctrine are “insuperable.”¹⁰⁴ No wonder Chafer says the invitation “‘Whosoever will may come’ . . . concerns those only who are regenerated and should never be presented to, or even discussed in the presence of the unsaved.”¹⁰⁵

There is a logical inconsistency, at this point, in Chafer’s system. He assumes that both universal love and particular election are revealed in Scripture, but then says this is beyond human comprehension. But is this the only intelligent option open to the biblical interpreter? How about taking John 3:16 at face value, as a divinely revealed definition of God’s universal mission in Christ, that He has given Christ for all mankind, but will not force His salvation on anyone, for He respects human free will, and so those who accept His salvation, and believe in Him, will be saved. If only Chafer, and other predestinarians, could accept the biblical revelation on the importance of human choice, that human free will is vital to the acceptance of divine salvation, then there would be no need to claim the doctrine as incomprehensible.

Look at what Chafer, rather than accepting human free will, says about God’s decree. “It is not a mere purpose to give salvation to those who may believe; it rather determines who will believe” (p. 172). This negates the “whosoever believeth in Him” of John 3:16. Thus, for Chafer, human destiny is “not only foreseen, but was divinely purposed” (p. 175). The emphasis here is upon the freedom of the divine free will which moves in upon human free will so that the human willing is swallowed up in the irresistible sovereign omnipotent will of God. Chafer also confuses election to mission with election to salvation,¹⁰⁶ so that the calling of Israel, Christ, and the Church are confused with the calling to salvation. He needed to think through election of the saved in the light of their crucial response to the universal love of God manifested in Christ’s life and death. He needed to realize that there are two equally necessary willings for human salvation: (1) divine will in providing the gift, and (2) human will in receiving the gift. It is not one without the other, as with Chafer, but both. Chafer’s appeal to the human incomprehensibility of the doctrine is shattered in the light of divine revelation through Christ’s mission.

¹⁰²Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1993), 165.

¹⁰³Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 168.

¹⁰⁵Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 172.

¹⁰⁶Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 167-168.

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Augustus Strong, in his *Systematic Theology*, claims that human free will is present in God's election, for "man influenced by divinely foreseen motives, may still be free, and the divine decrees, which simply render certain man's actions, may also be perfectly consistent with man's freedom."¹⁰⁷ However, the divine will and human will are related in such a way that the divine will swallows up the human will. Thus, predestination is defined as God's "purpose so to act that certain will believe and be saved," and is called election, and "his purpose so to act that certain will refuse to believe and be lost is called reprobation."¹⁰⁸ So God controls belief, and so genuine free will is scuttled. Thus, "No undecreed event can be foreseen," because "Only knowledge of that which is decreed is foreknowledge."¹⁰⁹ Thus, God's will has determined all future events, such as a believing response to His salvation or an unbelieving rejection of His salvation. Therefore, Strong jettisons the willing response of John 3:16.

Strong's system has a logical inconsistency in it, too. On the one hand he can speak of salvation of the elect "if he will only believe,"¹¹⁰ and rejection of "the sinner to his self-chosen rebellion,"¹¹¹ and "that freedom of will is necessary to virtue,"¹¹² and yet says "the initiative in human salvation" "belongs to God." "That any should be saved, is matter of pure grace, and those who are not included in this purpose of salvation suffer only the due reward of their deeds. There is, therefore, no injustice in God's election. We may better praise God that saves any, than charge him with injustice because he saves so few."¹¹³ This totally ignores John 3:16, with God's plan for universal salvation and its provision of human response to accept or reject.

In the traditionalist views on predestination Christ only died for the elect. This limited atonement view was the logical conclusion to God's alleged choosing of only the elect in eternity and rejecting the rest. Often the elect were understood as only few in number, while the majority of mankind were rejected. So it was for the few that He came to live and to die. Although the election and redemption, in these systems, was logically consistent in itself, it was premised on taking texts that spoke about mission (Romans 9) and applying them to election, and then in turn allowing election to confine Christ's mission. Thus Jacob is loved and Esau is hated (Rom 9:13) applies to Christ's relation to mankind, and the potter making vessels to honor and vessels to dishonor (Rom 9:21) applies to redemption.

This thinking moves from the unknown to the known, from the hidden God to God revealed in Christ, from secret decrees to a public mission of Christ,

¹⁰⁷Augustus Hopkins Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia, PA: Judson, 1949), 360.

¹⁰⁸Augustus Strong, *Systematic Theology*, 355.

¹⁰⁹Augustus Strong, *Systematic Theology*, 357.

¹¹⁰Augustus Strong, *Systematic Theology*, 789.

¹¹¹Augustus Strong, *Systematic Theology*, 790.

¹¹²Augustus Strong, *Systematic Theology*, 367.

¹¹³Augustus Strong, *Systematic Theology*, 785.

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from an incomprehensible purpose of a hidden God to a revelation of God among men in Christ. Since when has an epistemology (path of knowing) moved from the unknown to the known? Surely a reasonable epistemology will move in the opposite direction, from the known to the unknown. The doctrine of predestination, as classically taught, was thought out as if Christ had not come to reveal the Father's love for the world. Floundering on hidden decrees of an unknown God, beyond, above, and separate from Jesus Christ, has impacted adversely views of human destiny. Hence, if few are elected, then Christ not only lived and died for a few, but only a few will go to heaven. Because the majority were eternally rejected, then the majority lay outside Christ's life and death and will be forever outside His mercy in eternal hell. The utter awfulness of this eschatology demands a better epistemology, at least to see if Scripture supports a new approach.

Scripture is crystal clear that God the Father loves the world, and not just the elect, and that He sent His Son to be the redeemer of all mankind (John 3:16-17). We are not speaking here of a simplistic universalism that says all will be saved. There is no universalism when it comes to eschatological destiny. God's deference to creaturely freedom not only allowed the fall, but also allows the final rejection of salvation. But that does not negate the fact that the Trinity has love for all mankind. The mission of Christ was universal, even if the response to it has never been universal. It is important to keep these two in mind. The fact that Christ's mission was universal even though human response to the mission is not universal demonstrates that God does not predetermine humans against their will and indicates that humans use their free will to accept or reject God's universal mission.

Far from secret decrees in eternity to save a few and damn the rest, Christ's mission in human history is described as God "reconciling the world to himself in Christ" (2 Cor 5:19), for "the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world" (1 John 4:14). Limited atonement is confined to secret decrees that never were made. Christ came to earth to manifest what the decrees really were. Christ came for a world, and not just for the elect. His atonement was unlimited. Thus, "He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2), that "he might taste death for everyone" (Heb 2:9). The hidden decrees are ripped open and found to be other than reported. Christ came to reveal what His Father is like (John 14:9). His love for the whole world is but the manifestation of the Father's love for the whole world. And that love has always been from eternity, and this is why Jesus is called the "Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world" (Rev 13:8).

It is exceedingly important not to reject the first chapters of Genesis as a myth (Bultmann) or a saga (Barth). For in the fall of Adam and Eve (Gen 3) there is a vital contribution to this topic. Eve chose to side with the crafty serpent rather than with God. This open rebellion, thinking God was unjust because allegedly keeping something back from her, is not only an insight into the ques-

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tion about God before the universe, but the questioning itself was the result of human free will. Granted that Adam and Eve were without sin, and so had that capacity. But to take away the freedom to choose from sinners would be cause enough for them to say God is unjust—particularly since they have a predisposition to sin, and there is an enemy tempting them. More than ever they need the ability to choose. This does not suggest they can save themselves, or have merit through choosing aright, or can do the choosing without divine help. Christ’s words are still true, “apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). But it is also true that Christ is “the true light which enlightens every man coming into the world” (John 1:9).¹¹⁴

“Every man” (*panta anthropon*) is present for either translation of this verse. Either Christ comes as the Light (in His incarnation) for every man, or He comes as light, through the Spirit, to every man who comes into the world. C. H. Dodd believes both are intended.¹¹⁵ Leon Morris offers a perceptive insight, “It is common teaching of the New Testament writers that God has revealed something of Himself to all men (Rom. 1:20), sufficient at least for them to be blameworthy when they take the wrong way instead of the right way. John attributes this general illumination to the activity of the Word.”¹¹⁶ As Christ draws people, illumines them, they have the ability to choose. The enlightening of humans rejects a confinement of this to the elect, and enlightening rejects irresistible grace, for not all respond positively to the enlightenment.

Here we have a radical difference from traditional predestinarian views. Rather than God being the one who elects or rejects, it is the human response to His universal enlightening that separates the elected and the rejected. This change is vital, for if God does all the electing and rejecting, then humans have no part in choosing and hence would be unable to admit, before the universe, that God is just in giving them the sentence they have chosen for themselves. So it is mandatory not merely for salvation, but also for the resolution of the cosmic controversy, that humans have the ability to choose. Humans must have free will to weigh the evidence in the cosmic controversy and admit that God is right and they are wrong.

¹¹⁴As Henry Alford says, “The construction of this verse has been much disputed” *The Greek Testament* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 1968), vol. 1, 683. For a summary of the debate see W. Robertson Nicholls, *The Expositor’s Greek Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), vol. 1, 686-687. The grammatical construction allows either the verb to refer to Christ coming into the world, or to human coming into the world. The Vulgate and Authorized Versions follow the first, the Revised Version follows the second. Either way the universal focus is intact. Whether Christ comes for everyone who enters the world, or whether Christ comes to everyone who enters the world. I believe both are legitimate, for His coming as a light for everyone would be meaningless if He does not follow through, via the Holy Spirit, to come as the light to everyone coming into the world. So Christ is the universal light because He enlightens universally.

¹¹⁵C. H. Dodd, *Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (London, UK: Cambridge, 1953), 284.

¹¹⁶Leon Morris, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984), *John*, 95.

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On the question of salvation being a choice that can be accepted or rejected by humans, we are faced with the other reason why human free will is vital. If human destiny is based upon God's electing and rejecting, then the whole interim of sin in the troubled universe is a waste of time and a horrible heartache, for if God arbitrarily chooses human destiny, then why did He not choose to disallow sin, so that human destiny could have been decided much earlier? Why come in later and do what could have been done when it really counted? The fact that He didn't would be cause enough to decide that God is unjust. Yet, because God does the electing and reprobating, humans would arbitrarily choose God as just because they would be predestined to make that choice. On this basis the whole long cosmic controversy would be pointless. It would be a sham, not really a battle between two sides claiming the choice of each human.

Rather than secret decrees, beyond human comprehension, of a hidden God beyond and behind Christ, Scripture speaks of "the mystery of godliness" as Christ who "appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory" (1 Tim 3:16). This "mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God," is "that all nations might believe and obey him" (Rom 16:25-26). It was precisely God's universal love, which Israel failed to understand, that Christ revealed. The secret is not predestination of the elect and damnation of the reprobate for God's glory. No. Paul says, "we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began" (1 Cor 2:7). Not His glory, but human glory—decreed in eternity—before time began. Paul said, "None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Cor 2:8). They misunderstood because they failed to understand the mission of Christ. The Calvinistic limited atonement misunderstands His mission, too.

When we begin with Christ's mission on earth and see why He came and how extensive was His goal, then we can proceed on the basis of a safe revelation of the God who sent Him on that mission. "For God so loved the world" (John 3:16). That is clear. Not the elect, but the world. There is no limit to His love. So His love is universal. In coming, Jesus said, "I have come to do your will, O God" (Ps 40:6-8; Heb 10:7). Jesus came to manifest God's universal love. He also loved all mankind. So He could say, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). No hidden God here. Here is God revealed. Here is a known God—One who loved the world. This radically calls in question a hidden God, past understanding, who has secret decrees that elect a few. Such is a non-Christian view, because it looks behind Christ to some eternal hiddenness and mystery, rather than going to His own revelation of God in His mission for a world.

"Whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). The rest of the text shows that this universal love of God for man-

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kind is not predetermined on every human. The difference between the two destinies before mankind is not based on divine election/rejection, but on human choice. Human belief determines human destiny. Acceptance is necessary or the gift is never received. Christ's mission, therefore, was a calling of humans to Himself. "Come unto me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matt 11:28-29).

Jesus never talked about a predetermined elect that His Father had willed to save while passing by the rest. This was the error of Israel. They confused their call to mission with a confined election to salvation. They claimed their eternal destiny was based upon Abraham being their Father (Matt 3:7-12). "'If you were Abraham's children,' said Jesus, 'then you would do the things Abraham did. As it is, you are determined to kill me, and man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do such things. You are doing the things your own father does'" (John 8:39-40). "Abraham believed God. And it was credited to him as righteousness" (Rom 4:3). As such, "he is the father of all who believe" (Rom 4:11). Abraham was chosen for mission, to become Israel through His grandson Jacob and be used as an avenue for God to reach the world. "Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations" (Rom 4:18).

"Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. As it is written, 'I have made you a father of many nations'" (Rom 4:16-17). In other words, connection with Abraham—the chosen one in mission—does not save. Belief in Christ alone saves, and that is open to anyone, irrespective of national origin. Destiny is not according to divine decrees. Christ's mission for a world indicates that God's will is to save everyone. But, because God creates humans to think, to will, and to choose, His mission in Christ was to make the call, for "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him" (John 3:36).

There it is: belief or rejection—accepting Christ (electing Him as Savior) or rejecting Him as Savior. This opens up the fact that there is both an objective and a subjective side to a Christological way of looking at human destiny. Objectively Christ came for a world. He elected all and rejected none. Subjectively, humans elect Him as Savior or reject Him as Savior. As far as human destiny is concerned, there would be no future hope without the fact that God and Christ have elected all mankind, yet human destiny is also finally dependent upon the election/rejection of Jesus Christ by humans. God has elected Christ to save everyone. But humans elect or reject Christ, and so confine the realization of His atonement for mankind. Objectively the atonement is unlimited. Subjectively its realization in human history is limited. For human destiny is equally dependent on both God's choosing, and humans choice.

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Norman Geisler and Ron Brooks say, “Knowing what men *will* do with their freedom is not the same as ordaining what they *must* do against their free choice. God’s knowledge is not necessarily incompatible with free will. There is no problem in saying that God created men with free will so that they could return His love, even though He knows that some will not make that decision. God is responsible for the fact of freedom, but men are responsible for the acts of freedom. In His knowledge, God might even persuade men to make certain decisions, but there is no reason to suppose that He coerces any decision so as to destroy freedom. He works persuasively, but not coercively.”¹¹⁷

Questions about Justice

William G. MacDonald tells of a person who believes God’s will in predestination is inscrutable. His was the strangest statement I have ever heard on this subject. “‘I will love God always,’ he said, ‘even if it should turn out in the end that his eternal decree was to send me forever to hell.’”¹¹⁸ How could someone really love God if He has arbitrarily decreed that he be lost, not given him a chance for salvation, and rejected him merely on the whim of God’s own pleasure? How could undeserved torture ever call forth a loving response? Such a love of one’s enemy has only been seen in the way Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34) as He hung on Calvary amidst the jeers and taunts of those who were responsible for putting Him there. That kind of love is divine. But the fact that the person would be in hell would suggest that it is not that kind of love that possesses him. Such love would not be normal for a sinner condemned to eternal torment—unless God’s divine will controls his will. That would be the logical extreme of predestination.

1. Irresistible Grace

On the other hand, predestination says irresistible grace is what determines humans for heaven. Does irresistible grace and the will of God control human willing even in heaven? If human free will has not been given its proper place in human history, is it logical to assume that the same prevails in human destiny. On that basis, no one saved could freely respond to the question of God’s justice. If grace is irresistible, it could be argued that those irresistibly carried along by grace have no choice but to concur with God. If that were true, even though they say He is just, the process to get them to say this would be unjust.

If this is true about the elect, what about the reprobate? Augustine and Luther would agree with Calvin that in sin-history man’s “image of God” is “ef-

¹¹⁷Norman Geisler and Ron Brooks, *When Skeptics Ask: A Handbook on Christian Evidences* (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1989), 32.

¹¹⁸William G. MacDonald in Clark H. Pinnock, ed., *The Grace of God and the Will of Man*, 225.

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faced,” not just marred.¹¹⁹ This “total depravity” robs the reprobate of free will and denies them the ability to concur with God’s justice in the final eschatological judgment. It might be assumed easier for the elect to bow the knee, saying “God is just,” than for the reprobate. Yet the concurrence of the reprobate with God’s decisions must also take place, for the prophecy is that “every knee will bow” (Isa 45:23–24; cf. Ps 145:9–10; Rom 14:10; Rev 5:13; 15:3–4; 19:1–2), redeemed and reprobate. It will be unanimous. Neither can ignore the overwhelming manifestation of God’s justice. But if the reprobate have no free will, then the largest group of created beings cannot bow the knee before God’s justice, and hence the controversy remains unresolved.

2. The Divine Command Theory of Ethics

The Divine Command theory of ethics says that anything God commands is right because it is God who commands it. This means that a command is not right in itself, right because it is right, but only right because of who commands it. As Jerry L. Walls put it, “if God commanded us to do something that seemed to us clearly wrong, it would be wrong not to obey.”¹²⁰ This makes redundant human ability to choose between right and wrong, because right is right and wrong is wrong.

One can see the parallel between the Divine Command theory and the theory of predestination as usually taught. It is not good enough to assume that secretive decrees issued by an unknown God are right because He is alleged to be the one issuing them. Given a cosmic controversy, with God’s justice being questioned by nearly all who have fallen, this would be a very unwise approach for God to take. Even Luther admits that one day, “the ‘light of glory’ will dispel the seeming injustices of God’s predestination”¹²¹ Augustus Strong says, “only the higher knowledge of the future state will furnish the answers.”¹²² It is not good enough to appeal to some future understanding that causes present understanding to accept what obviously is unjust. A present injustice (like arbitrary secret decrees without reference to human free will) does not become just when we see the God who issued it, any more than a divine command to do what is wrong will somehow become right when we see the God who commanded it.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism (1647) says, “The decrees of God are his eternal purpose according to the counsel of his will, whereby, for his own glory, he hath fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass.”¹²³ In the Westminster Confession of Faith (1647) it says about the reprobate, “The rest of mankind God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will,

¹¹⁹John Calvin, *Institutes*, vol. 1, 214 (2.1.5).

¹²⁰Jerry L. Walls, in *The Grace of God and the Will of Man*, 261.

¹²¹Comment on Luther’s position by Jerry L. Walls in *The Grace of God and the Will of Man*, 264.

¹²²Augustus Strong, *Systematic Theology*, 366.

¹²³Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, 677.

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whereby he extendeth or withholdeth mercy as he pleaseth, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonor and wrath for their sins, to the praise of his glorious justice.”¹²⁴ When you put these two together, then “glorious justice” is defined by a personal glory decision. No person is glorified who withholds mercy when he could give it. Such is injustice, and not “glorious justice.”

Scripture gives a totally different picture. When facing death for all mankind, Jesus prayed “Father the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you” (John 17:1). It is at Calvary, within human history, that the “glorious justice” of God was revealed. For, “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor 5:21). It is here that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son (John 3:16). He became the reprobate in order to save all reprobates who will accept. He took the place of every human, that “whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). This is His glorious mercy.

His glorious justice was paying the price for human sin, taking the punishment as He plunged into the Godforsakenness of the lost (Matt 27:46). “He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each one of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isa 53:5-6). The idea of glorious justice being attached to not giving mercy, and so damning, is a view that is contrary to the cross. It is a view that does not allow what took place at Calvary to have interpretive value on matters of predestination. It is a sub-Christian view, because it fails to see the true “glorious justice” of God in His total self-giving for all mankind, rather than being locked into some selfish motive of good pleasure that refuses to be merciful. Justice and mercy met at Calvary: justice because Christ atoned for all mankind, mercy because this atonement was offered to whoever will accept it. Even at Calvary God does not force His will on the wills of humans. Even though the salvation of all may seem good, as universalists believe, yet to take those to heaven who never chose Christ would be to take people to an experience for which they are unfitted. To be forced into heaven against one’s will would in fact be hell to them.

In the relativism of postmodernity there are no absolutes. Something is not right because it is right in itself. It is only right in the eyes of the beholder, or the doer. “If it feels right do it!” If God issued secret, arbitrary decrees because they felt right—it was His good pleasure, for His own glory—then that is what people will see when they see Him. Such a God is not the Father who loved the world—for its sake, not His—and gave His only Son to come on a dangerous journey to redeem it at any cost to Himself. This totally unselfish outgoing of

¹²⁴Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, 610 (3.7).

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the Godhead to save a rebel race has no connection to a God who merely issues decrees for His own good pleasure, irrespective of whether it is perceived just or not.

In commenting on the Divine Command Theory, Jerry Walls rightly said, “The theory of predestination espoused by Luther and Calvin has the same sort of problem. It requires us to believe God is right in unconditionally damning whomever he will, even though this deeply offends our sense of justice.”¹²⁵

3. God’s Justice Beyond Human Comprehension

The concept of God’s justice being on trial ever since Lucifer’s rebellion, of God’s maligned justice being the central issue in the cosmic controversy, never enters the debates on predestination. Yet it is the crucial biblical worldview that forms the broadest context within which predestination texts need to be interpreted correctly. So often in the debates God is incomprehensible, so that it is impossible to fathom Him, and hence, appeal is made to Him as One far beyond human comprehension. Once one accepts this view, then it is hopeless to argue that human beings can freely yield to His justice. It is assumed that the evidence for His justice is not revealed. As Jerry L. Walls says, commenting on Luther’s position, “Since God is inaccessible to human understanding, it is inevitable that his justice eludes our grasp.”¹²⁶

It is this elusive justice which nags at human reasoning. No wonder, in traditional predestinarian views, it is the damning of the reprobate that is dubbed as God’s justice, the very opposite of what normal human reasoning would conclude.

4. Problem of Evil

We have already noted how the famous philosopher Alvin Plantinga dealt with the problem of evil, believing that it is not inconsistent for an all loving, all powerful God to create a world with the potential of evil. In this section we will broaden the input by considering what others have said about this problem, and consider the eschatological implications.

Many atheists believe the problem of evil is the primary reason for unbelief in a God who is omnipotent and loving. If He allowed evil when He need not have done so, where is His love? If He couldn’t stop it, where is His power? In protology, we confine ourselves to the fact of evil and ask what the presence of evil says about the justice (not power or love) of God. If God permitted evil, is He just?

Supralapsarians place the divine decrees before creation of the good and the presence of evil, and God is said to ordain all things. So He ordained evil even as He ordained the good. So is He just? As noted above, Augustine speaks of

¹²⁵Jerry L. Walls, in *The Grace of God and the Will of Man*, 265.

¹²⁶Jerry L. Walls, in *The Grace of God and the Will of Man*, 263.

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evil as the *privatio boni*, or deprivation of the good. If God has omniscience and knows the future fully, then He knew that evil would come into the universe. If He still went ahead and created angels and humans, knowing they would sin, does He not have some responsibility for evil? John Hick said it is “hard to clear God from ultimate responsibility for the existence of sin, in view of the fact that He chose to create a being whom He foresaw would, if He created him, freely sin.”¹²⁷

Even though classical predestination has God ordaining evil in His eternal decrees, exponents separate the ordaining of evil from the personal responsibility of those who sin. It is a logical inconsistency in their systems, for God cannot be said to ordain that for which He is not responsible. Some writers have used the word “permit” rather than ordain, and I concur that God’s permissive will is involved in the presence of evil. But if evil is present due to God’s permissive will, then the sinner must have free will to choose evil. Again, the presence of divine permissive will and absence of human free will is not consistent. The free will to sin was exercised by angels when they sinned in heaven (Rev 12:7-8), and by Adam and Eve in their fall (Gen 3:1-19). Permissive divine will and angelic and human free will continue to be present throughout the history of sin.

For one day, all the lost—angels and humans—will see that their lives were a series of free will choices that locked them into their destiny. The fact of their being lost is no fault of God, but purely their own choice. That choice was not a singular choice made at the beginning of their journey, but a habit of choosing throughout life until they were unchangeable, and hence locked into their own future by their own choices. God merely permitted them the freedom to make these choices along the way. Only then, on that day, will they admit that God is just and that their awful destiny is their own responsibility, and theirs alone. William Craig is right that lost persons “cannot complain of injustice on God’s part.” For He provided salvation for all, and “the only reason they are not predestined is that they freely ignore or reject the divine helps that God provides. Their damnation is therefore entirely their own fault.”¹²⁸ God offers all mankind the same destiny. The fact that so many will not receive it is because they refused to receive it. They will know one day that they were the ones who turned it down, because they turned Christ down.

God would have it no other way, for He wants created beings to be free and to enjoy Him in perfect freedom. Free will is a component not lost through the fall. At the level of living, everyone knows they have the freedom to choose on a daily basis. For those who get to heaven, it is true that such choosing does not earn salvation or merit their entrance there, but it is indispensable in the process of preparation to receive the gift of eternal life. Only then will persons be free throughout eternity.

¹²⁷John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, 69.

¹²⁸William L. Craig, in *The Grace of God and the Will of Man*, 156.

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But why the presence of evil? Could God have made a different world with different people? The answer is yes. But in His infinite foreknowledge, He made the best of all possible worlds, a world where free choice is both a blessing, when used rightly, and a curse, when used wrongly. Evil was inevitable in such a world, but evil must not be considered merely according to its present contribution. In endless eternity, the presence of evil is just a blip on the screen, a small pause. We must look at the presence of evil within the context of eternity, not just in time. From the breadth of eternity it will be seen that the free will world, in spite of evil, was the best world, for even the entrance of evil has brought benefits.

Evil entered the universe as a tragic rebellion with widespread repercussions throughout the cosmos. Angels and humans entered into rebellion against their Creator. This is the original villain and hero story, Satan and Christ. Satan has brought unspeakable heartache into the universe. He did not do this by secret, hidden, and inscrutable decrees. He is a creature gone crazy, doing the unspeakable, rebelling against the One who gave him life, for all things were created by God the Father through His Son (John 1:1-2; Col 1:15-16; Heb 1:1-3). From the beginning of the rebellion he has appealed to the free will of angels and humans, and he continues to do so in his quest to take over as many as he can. Clearly Satan is responsible for evil, not God. God merely permitted evil. But why did He permit it? Thomas Aquinas says, “God allows evils to happen in order to bring a great good therefrom. . . .”¹²⁹ What a marvelous insight! Alvin Platinga speaks in a similar manner. “God permits evil because he can achieve a world he sees as better by permitting evil than by preventing it.”¹³⁰

Think of it. Evil was permitted, but salvation was planned. God was ready for the eventuality. He knew free will would be used wrongly and planned from eternity to save the free willers from the results of their free willing. As soon as there was sin, there was a Savior. God the Father “chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will. . . .” (Eph 1:4-5). Hence redemption came through “the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world. . . .” (1 Pet 1:19-20). So Christ is spoken of as “the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world” (Rev 13:8). This is why in the eschatological separation of the saved from the lost at the second advent of Christ, He will say to the saved, “Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world” (Matt 25:34).

God was not caught by surprise. He planned for the terrible eventuality of evil. He laid the plan in eternity before the creation of the world. In this sense

¹²⁹Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, vol. 4, 2023 (3.1.3).

¹³⁰Alvin Platinga in *Alvin Platinga*, eds. James E. Tomberlin and Peter Van Inwagen, 35.

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salvation's plan preceded creation in the mind of God. He planned to make rebels His sons and daughters. They would become what they had not been—evil. But they would also become what they had not been—sons and daughters of God. This is an incredible difference, from created beings to sons and daughters of their Creator and King! Here is the good that has come out of evil. This is what God knew about in His foreknowledge. This is why foreknowledge is so much more important in protology than preordination. He knew what would happen. He did not make it happen. He has a plan, but the plan does not violate creaturely free will.

The plan of redemption has been known from eternity. Then came the moment for Christ to enter planet earth, for the Creator to become a creature, for the eternal One to enter time, for God to become the God-man. "Then I said, 'Here I am—it is written about me in the scroll—I have come to do your will, O God'" (Heb 10:7). It was the Father's will to save, and it was Christ's will to be the Savior. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him" (John 3:16-17). What an utterly remarkable response to human rebellion! God poured out all heaven in the gift of His Son. He could give nothing better or more. He gave everything. His will served His love in reaching out to save a world.

In the incarnation God took up humanity and assumed it within His very divine being through Mary. In joining a rebel race with the royal Creator, God and man were united in the person of the Son. In His very being the gulf gouged through human rebellion was bridged. In Him God and man were once more at-one-ment. This is one side of the enormous and expensive atonement plan for all mankind. The uniting of humanity to divinity has raised the human race far above the level of its pristine state before the fall. At that time they were merely created beings. Although perfect and loyal, they were still a great distance from their eternal Creator. Even before the fall there was an infinite qualitative distinction between God and man, to use the words of Soren Kierkegaard. The incarnation bridged that gulf and elevated the human race as nothing else could.

The redeemed will always worship God as Creator, Redeemer, and King, but always have the privilege of being sons and daughter in the Trinitarian family. This is why God will come to this world and make His dwelling place with mankind (Rev 21:1-3). Heaven will be depopulated as all come to the earth made new. Throughout eternity the closeness of the redeemed with their Redeemer will forever call forth gratitude and praise. As the Christ's condescension in becoming a man in sinful history and dying for rebels to give them redemption slowly sinks into their minds, the hearts of the redeemed will thrill with unspeakable amazement. This amazement will deepen as His love is experienced and understood.

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All will then see that the presence of evil in the universe has brought greater good than if sin had never entered. The fact that God was willing to become a human and to suffer so much in life and death to save humans will bring all created beings—fallen and unfallen—closer to God than their original state could have afforded. They will comprehend the depths of His love as only the incarnational life and death of Jesus Christ could reveal. In redemption they behold the heart of the Redeemer, and in the Redeemer they behold the love of the Father and the Holy Spirit.

The eschatological implications have become obvious. Throughout eternity none of the redeemed will question why evil was permitted. They will realize that their lot is far better because it did exist. Their very existence is evidence that God is just.

The Most Important Attribute of God

It follows, from what we said above, that the supreme attribute that defines God is love. John saw it. “God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. . . . And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world . . . God is love” (1 John 4:8-9, 14,16). “For God so loved the world” (John 3:16), and “the fruit of the Spirit [of God] is love, joy , peace, patience, kindness, goodness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (Gal 5:22-23). The other attributes listed are what constitute love.

From the biblical data looked at in this chapter, it is clear that God loves the world, Christ came for the world, and the Holy Spirit brings the ascended Christ as the light to everyone coming into the world (John 1:9). It is God’s love that brought Him to Calvary. It is His love that woos human minds and brings them to decide to accept His salvation. It is this eternal love that should have had center place in discussing God’s relationship to a lost world. But, in its place, the will of God has held center place, and into that will has been read data taken from His choices for mission (Jacob, not Esau; vessels to honor and dishonor), as if they were choices for election/reprobation. It has been a sorry wrong road. It has radically called in question God’s unsurpassable love and made shipwreck of millions who could not comprehend such unbelievable child abuse—God withholding salvation from most of His children and then throwing them away to eternal hell!

It is time to go back to Calvary and see there revealed the incomprehensible love of God. It is the depths of that love that defy human understanding, and not some eternal predestination. For our destiny was not made in eternity but at Calvary. That was the unparalleled eschatological event that determines all human destiny. Calvary is a baring of God’s love that defies every lesser god, be it heathen or sovereign. The blazing revelation of God’s love at the cross shatters any idea of a hidden god, choosing a few and passing by most. Calvary shouts out loud and clear, “For God so loved the world!” Calvary is God’s statement

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about predestination. It will have no other rivals. Given a cosmic controversy, one expects many rivals, the worst of which attempt to change what took place there. To hide the greatest revelation and then appeal to a hidden God's decrees in eternity, cut off from any connection to Calvary, does despite to the cross. Has this not happened, even though unwittingly, and perhaps with the best of intentions? Calvary is no country club ticket for members only. Calvary impacts the world. Calvary impacts the universe. For Calvary says more about God than anything else, and so Calvary is the most important evidence about God in the cosmic controversy. No wonder Satan and his fiends strive to keep that vision away from human minds.

There "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor 5:21). Here "God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ" (2 Cor 5:19). Even the Old Testament prophets understood. "Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isa 53:4-6).

Calvary was an eschatological event. It was God's determinative victory over Satan and his rebels. It decided their destiny (Rev 12:9-1). Christ's victory at the cross was the completion of a life that revealed what God is really like (John 14:9). At Calvary the universe saw that God was willing to die for those who rebelled against Him. They gazed into the depths of His justice. He the Sinless One (cf. John 13:2) took the place of sinners. Satan's lie about God being unjust was exposed. By contrast they saw who worked behind the scenes to crucify Christ. Satan had dogged His footsteps throughout life to get Him to sin and come under his control. He fiendishly worked through Jewish leaders, Roman authority, and the rabble to crucify Him. On Calvary redemption and rebellion met head on. Christ died for sinners. Satan crucified the Sinless One. What a stark contrast. Calvary was the revelation of God and of Satan. Not God, but Satan was exposed as unjust at Calvary. The universe watched and understood. And in that double revelation at Calvary, Christ answered the charge in the cosmic controversy.

Calvary was also God's judgment of sin. There Christ tasted "death for everyone" (Heb 2:9). There He was judged for the sins of all in their place (cf. 2 Cor 5:21). Christ was the Substitute for mankind (John 3:16-17). There, "the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isa 53:6). Belief in and acceptance of that sacrifice determines destiny. Calvary is the greatest revelation to the universe that God had one destiny in mind for all mankind. He died to save all. Calvary shatters the myth of a hidden eternal will of God that chooses only a few and passes by the rest. For what God is in His revelation at the cross He is antecedently from eternity. From eternity God loved the world. From eternity

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He willed to save the human race. Calvary is the ultimate manifestation of His eternal will and love for all mankind. The Augustinian-Lutheran-Calvinistic predestinarian views do not belong to the Christ who hangs on the cross.

The Final Judgment

Eschatology moves toward the Final Judgment (Rev 20:11-15) and the new creation (Rev 21-22). Why is there a need for a Final Judgment if God has predetermined human destiny? If He knows from eternity who are the elect and who the reprobate, and if He has known this through predetermining the outcome, and if this is a part of His incomprehensible plan that humans should not pry into, then why does He even bother with a Final Judgment?

Here is a logical inconsistency in predestinarian theology. For if one merely accepts that God is just, not questioning the fact, even calling reprobation to eternal hell torment just, as salvation is merciful, then on these grounds one would not expect or need a Final Judgment. For if one accepts what God does in hidden decrees of election/reprobation as appropriate because He is God and has a right to do what He pleases with His created beings, then that same logic should be appropriate for the final destiny of these two groups, without the need of a judgment.

On the other hand, if it is deemed necessary to have a Final Judgment (as Scripture teaches), then there must be more to the importance of human destiny than a mere faith in a predetermining God who is just. If it is necessary for God to allow all created beings to know something about their destiny, then it would appear that He is not above human questioning in this matter, so that all appeal to His inscrutable decrees being off limits to human understanding is inappropriate. For after all, it is these inscrutable decrees that will be actualized in the Final Judgment.

As Gordon R. Lewis and Bruce A. Demarest put it, "If God's will prevails in the world, how could a person justly be judged for his actions?"¹³¹ James D. G. Dunn observes, "The trouble with such a strong view of election and rejection without reference to subsequent deeds and misdeeds is that it makes God's judgments on these deeds and misdeeds seem unfair. 'If he hardens whom he will, why does he find fault? For who has resisted his will?' The two perspectives on human life from opposite ends of the time scale (election and judgment) seem to conflict."¹³²

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¹³¹Gordon R. Lewis and Bruce A. Demarest, *Integrative Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987), vol. 1, 293.

¹³²James D. G. Dunn, *Word Biblical Commentary: Romans 9-16* (Dallas, TX: Word, 198), vol. 38b, 564.

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ary. He has served as Chair of the Religion Department at Madison College and of the Theology Department at Japan Missionary College. He was also founding Dean of the Graduate Seminary in the Philippines. He has written extensively for leading SDA journals, authored four Sabbath School quarterlies, and written five books—most recently, Christ Our Refuge (Pacific Press, 1996) and Christ is Coming! (Review and Herald, 1998). He is currently working on a three volume systematic theology. A charter member and founder of ATS who has been an officer ever since, Gulley has been president of the society, and is currently general vice president for global outreach. He is taking ATS Bible Seminar teams to different parts of the world, and he also conducts last day events seminars throughout the world and speaks at campmeetings and ministerial worker's meetings. ngulley@southern.edu

Cosmic Metanarrative for the Coming Millennium¹

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During the past few years I have been reflecting on the best theological approach to reach out to the increasingly secular, postmodern society that has little or no regard for the authority of Scripture and hardly any acquaintance with the Bible. The Christian church in general, and the Adventist Church/Adventist Theological Society in particular, have a mission to reach the world with a biblical theology that will attract and allure an increasingly relativistic and biblically illiterate society. In reading literature on postmodernism and talking to gen-Xers with a postmodern mindset, I have discovered that on one hand the very idea of a big picture of reality—a grand metanarrative—is rejected as impossible to discover from our limited and provincial perspectives; and yet at the same time there is a hunger among postmoderns for a story, a narrative, with which they can identify and in which they can find meaning.

I see this as the opportunity for a new and exciting application of biblical theology for evangelism: to show that the biblical metanarrative does give meaning to life like none other. As postmoderns are introduced to the beauty and harmony of the biblical metanarrative, I believe the Holy Spirit will bring conviction that this overarching metanarrative is indeed a comprehensive and normative picture of reality. The old proof-text methods and logical discourses are not very effective with the postmodern mind. They need to hear anew the “big picture” of Scripture.

I believe the grand metanarrative of Scripture must be employed more intentionally in the new millennium for the purpose of presenting truth in a winning and relevant way. In fact, this way of presenting truth has an appeal far beyond the postmodern mind. A student of mine, a returned missionary from the

¹This article was presented as the Keynote Address for the Annual ATS Convention, June 23, 2000, in Toronto, Canada.

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jungles of Papua New Guinea, now working for Adventist Frontier Missions, recently shared with me a personal story of his largely unsuccessful attempts to preach the Gospel to the animists of New Guinea through the traditional topical Bible-text methods. They simply could not pass on the message to others, and when a crisis came, they went back to their old animist ways; the attrition rate was phenomenal. But after earnest agonizing in prayer for divine wisdom to know how to present the Gospel message effectively to this people group, he followed God's deep impression upon his soul; he started sharing in detail the grand metanarrative from Scripture, concentrating on the opening chapters of Genesis where he found the biblical metanarrative summarized. What a difference he experienced with this new method! Now there was a total transformation of worldview on the part of the jungle people; the doctrines and the gospel message were viewed in light of that metanarrative; and in crisis they responded from within that biblical worldview. Their conversion was complete and wholistic.

The Biblical Metanarrative: Twin Foci

What is this biblical metanarrative that calls for our renewed attention in theology and mission in the new millennium? In answer to this question, I believe we still have some growing and further theological grappling to do as a Church and a Theological Society in the months and years ahead before Jesus comes. Let me share my own pilgrimage to date on this topic.

The Cosmic War. For almost twenty years now I have been teaching two of my favorite classes in the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary—Theology of the Old Testament and Doctrine of the Sanctuary. In the Old Testament theology class, and even before as I taught undergraduate OT classes, I have regularly urged my students to study the Scriptures from the perspective of its overarching central theme. After surveying the many and varied suggestions for what constitutes the “center” of Scripture, I suggest that as in any other book of non-fiction, where one discovers the major thesis of the book by reading its introduction and conclusion, so the central thrust of the Bible appears in its opening and concluding chapters. Genesis 1–3 reveals a multi-faceted “center” of Scripture, including the following: (1) divine creation and God's original design for His creatures; (2) the character of the Creator, as the transcendent Elohim and personal Yahweh (in the complementary chapters Genesis 1–2); (3) the rise of a cosmic moral conflict concerning the character of God (Genesis 3); and (4) the Gospel solution to this ongoing conflict with the coming of the Promised Seed to bare His heel over the head of the venomous snake, i.e., to voluntarily lay down His life in substitutionary atonement in order to crush the head of that ancient Serpent and bring an end to evil (Gen 3:15). In the final chapters of the book of Revelation (especially 20–22) we find the repetition of this same multi-faceted metanarrative, with the wind-up of this cosmic warfare (Revelation 20; 21:6), the creation of a new heavens and earth, and restoration of humanity

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through the second coming of the Messiah (Revelation 21–22), a final revelation and vindication of the character/name of God (esp. Rev 22:4, 6; cf. 19:1–2), and the Gospel promises of redemption centered in Jesus the Lamb (esp. Rev. 21:6, 22, 23; 22:16–17).

Adventists have followed Ellen White’s lead in summarizing this multifaceted biblical metanarrative under the rubric of the “Great Controversy.” Ellen White urges the study of the Bible in light of this “grand central theme”:

The Bible is its own expositor. Scripture is to be compared with scripture. The student should learn to view the word as a whole, and to see the relation of its parts. He should gain a knowledge of its grand central theme, of God’s original purpose for the world, of the rise of the great controversy, and of the work of redemption. He should understand the nature of the two principles that are contending for supremacy, and should learn to trace their working through the records of history and prophecy, to the great consummation. He should see how this controversy enters into every phase of human experience; how in every act of life he himself reveals the one or the other of the two antagonistic motives; and how, whether he will or not, he is even now deciding upon which side of the controversy he will be found.²

Recent evangelical studies have begun to recognize this “warfare worldview” as permeating and even central to Scripture. Most notably, Gregory A. Boyd’s recent book, *God at War: The Bible and Spiritual Conflict*³ has caught the attention of the scholarly evangelical community.⁴

The Sanctuary as Cosmic Battleground. Over the same period of time as I have taught Old Testament theology at the Seminary, I have also co-ordinated the team-taught course Doctrine of the Sanctuary. While teaching this course over the span of nearly two decades, I have been impressed by the immense amount of material in the Bible related to the Sanctuary. Some 45 chapters in the Pentateuch are devoted exclusively to the Sanctuary building and rituals; some 45 chapters in the Prophets deal directly with the Sanctuary; and the whole book of Psalms—the Temple Hymnal—with explicit references to the Sanctuary averaging one per psalm. The New Testament has similar Sanctuary saturation, with profuse allusions to Sanctuary terminology and ritual as fulfilled in Jesus. Whole NT books are structured around the Sanctuary, such as the Gospel of John, the book of Hebrews, and the Book of Revelation. It could be forcefully

²Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1903, 1952), 190.

³Downers, Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997.

⁴While I have become convinced that the multifaceted metanarrative encapsulated in the opening and closing portions of the Bible constitutes the “center” of Scripture, I hasten to add that I do not see it as a center in the sense of an “organizing principle” or “grid” into which all the other themes, motifs, and concepts of Scripture are to be fitted. Instead, I see this “center” more as an “orientation point” in light of which the whole of Scripture makes ultimate sense. It is a warfare *worldview*, as Boyd rightly points out.

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argued that there is more material on the Sanctuary in Scripture than any other subject.

I have been especially intrigued by Ellen White's recognition of this all-pervading Sanctuary theme and her suggestion that the Sanctuary provides a heuristic key to the whole system of biblical truth: "The subject of the sanctuary was the key which unlocked the mystery of the disappointment of 1844. It opened to view a *complete system of truth*, connected and harmonious . . ." ⁵ Again, "Those [early Adventists] who received the light concerning the sanctuary and the immutability of the law of God were filled with joy and wonder as they saw the beauty and harmony of the *system* of truth that opened to their understanding." ⁶ Again, "The tabernacle and temple of God on earth were patterned after the original in heaven. Around the sanctuary and its solemn services mystically gathered the grand truths which were to be developed through succeeding generations." ⁷

As a team lecturer in our seminary Doctrine of the Sanctuary class, and in recent scholarly publication, Fernando Canale of our systematic theology department has given special emphasis to this role of the Sanctuary as (in his terms) a "heuristic key" into the biblical system of truth. ⁸ A recent article in *JATS* by Winfried Vogel further demonstrates how the Sanctuary concept encompasses the core of the Christian message. ⁹

The Cosmic Controversy and the Sanctuary—these are the two main areas where Seventh-day Adventists have made unique contributions to Christian theology, and as the Bible's self-testimony suggests, these are the dual foci of the grand metanarrative of Scripture. For years I have been pondering the relationship between these two central foci of Scripture and reality. Until recently I have been able to comfortably compartmentalize my deliberations within the confines of two separate courses which I taught, and thus I have never really been forced to come to grips with their interrelationship. I have sometimes suggested that the Great Controversy was the orientation point for biblical theology, while the Sanctuary constituted the organizing principle for systematic theology. But I have increasingly felt dissatisfied with separating these two disciplines too far apart (especially now that I am married to a systematic theologian!).

Some helpful studies have appeared analyzing the Cosmic Conflict motif and the Sanctuary concept separately, ¹⁰ but very little work has been done thus

⁵Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911), 432 (emphasis supplied).

⁶*Ibid.*, 454 (emphasis supplied).

⁷Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, March 2, 1886 (= *The Faith I Live By*, 194).

⁸See Fernando Canale, "Philosophical Foundations and the Biblical Sanctuary," *AUSS* 36/2 (1998): 183-206.

⁹Winfried Vogel, "Man and Knowledge: The Search for Truth in a Pluralistic Age," *JATS* 7/2 (1996): 180-218.

¹⁰On the Great Controversy motif, see especially Norman Gulley, "The Cosmic Controversy: World View for Theology and Life," *JATS* 7/2 (1996): 82-124; Boyd, *God at War: The Bible and*

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far in exploring the interrelationship between the two, and how these two foci conjoin to encapsulate the grand metanarrative of Scripture.”¹¹

How the “Cosmic War” and “Sanctuary” Motifs Interrelate in Scripture

In the remainder of this paper, I would like us to consider the broad strokes of how the “Cosmic War” and “Sanctuary” themes interrelate in Scripture and some practical implications that follow from this interlinking.

The Beginning of the Cosmic War and Its Sanctuary Setting. In Rev 12:7–8 the rise of the Cosmic Controversy in heaven is clearly spelled out: “And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer.” Here the heavenly participants are revealed in the first cosmic battle: Michael (or Christ) and his angels and the dragon (Satan) and his angels. V. 4 indicates that the angels of the dragon included a third of the heavenly hosts, and also indicates that the Great War spread to this earth. V. 9 indicates the involvement of this earth in the Cosmic War: “So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.” Vs. 10–11 hint of a Sanctuary setting—“Satan is called “the accuser of our brethren,” probably alluding to the trial of a malicious witness at the Sanctuary, as described in Deut 19:15–21. The saints are said to overcome him “by the blood of the Lamb”—the Sanctuary sacrificial animal *par excellence*.

The implicit linking of the start of the Cosmic War and the Sanctuary in Revelation 12 becomes explicit and even emphatic when we go to the two OT passages that form the counterpart to Revelation 12, namely Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28. Here we see a spotlight upon the heavenly Sanctuary setting for the rise of the cosmic conflict.

As a college student and aspiring theologian, I wrote my first research paper on Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28—passages that Adventists have traditionally regarded as referring to Satan and the origin of evil in heaven. Following the lead of various higher-critical commentaries, I came to the unsettling conclusion that

Spiritual Conflict; and Joseph Battistone, *The Great Controversy Theme in the Writings of Ellen G. White* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, self-published, 1976). On the Sanctuary, see the studies by Fernando Canale and Winfried Vogel mentioned in previous footnotes.

¹¹A recent helpful *JATS* article by Alberto Timm on the central message of Ellen White suggests that in her thinking the Great Controversy provides the “framework” of the “entire drama of human existence,” while the Sanctuary serves as the “organizing motif of Bible truth.” Alberto R. Timm, “Ellen G. White: Side Issues or Central Message?” *JATS* 7/2 (1996): 168-179 (citations, 172-173). For further elaboration of these suggestions see his 1995 Andrews University Ph.D. dissertation, “The Sanctuary and the Three Angels’ Message, 1844-1863: Integrating Factors in the Development of Seventh-day Adventist Doctrines,” 397-420, 476-477; and his syllabus in Portuguese, “Desenvolvimento Da Doutrina Do Santuario No Contexto Do Conflictio Cosmico,” Material de Classe para o Programa de Doutorado em Teologia, Seminario Adventista Latinoamericano de Teologia Universidad Adventista del Plata, Argentina, 1997, 1-27.

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neither passage made any reference to Satan or the origin of evil in its original context. Thus in my thinking major biblical supports for the Adventist understanding of the rise of the Great Controversy crumbled.

Since that time, I have rejoiced to learn that the traditional Adventist interpretation of Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 was the standard Christian interpretation throughout church history till the rise of historical criticism at the time of the Enlightenment. More importantly, to my delight I have found fresh and compelling exegetical evidence that Isaiah and Ezekiel were indeed referring to Satan in these passages. Much of this evidence is set forth in an Andrews University dissertation by José Bertoluci entitled “The Son of the Morning and the Guardian Cherub in the Context of the Controversy between Good and Evil.”¹² Bertoluci has dealt a devastating blow to the critical views that Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 only describe earthly, historical enemies of Israel and not Satan. He shows how in each passage there is a movement from the local, historical realm of earthly kings to the heavenly supernatural realm describing Lucifer/Satan and the rise of the Great Controversy. My own study has uncovered further evidence supporting this conceptual shift in Ezekiel 28—from earthly “prince” (*nagîd*, the king of Tyre, vs. 1–10) to cosmic “king” (*mele*, the supernatural ruler of Tyre, Satan himself, vs. 11–19)—and I have discovered that this judgment upon the Fallen Cherub comes at the climactic center of the whole book.¹³ The origin of evil in Lucifer the Covering Cherub is thus solidly supported from Scripture.

What I did not pay close attention to until very recently is how these OT portraits of the first cosmic battle are so intricately linked up with the heavenly Sanctuary. Note how these two chapters are suffused with Sanctuary imagery. Ezek 28:14 introduces the antagonist as “the anointed cherub who covers,” a description that (in light of the parallel with its earthly Sanctuary counterpart) ushers us into the Holy of Holies of the heavenly Sanctuary, “the holy mountain of God.” In v. 13, the language of Lucifer’s decoration with precious stones recalls the precious stones of the anointed high priest, and the timbrels and pipes the music of Sanctuary worship. As we will note shortly, even the mention of Eden, the garden of God, has Sanctuary connotations. Isa 14:12 calls the heavenly Sanctuary the “mount of the congregation”—implying the original worship function of the Sanctuary before sin. The heavenly Sanctuary, on the holy

¹²José Bertoluci, “The Son of the Morning and the Guardian Cherub in the Context of the Controversy between Good and Evil,” Th.D. dissertation, Andrews University Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, 1985 (available from University Microfilms, University of Michigan, P.O. Box 1346, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346). See also Boyd, 157-162, who concurs with Bertoluci’s major points.

¹³Richard M. Davidson, “The Chiastic Literary Structure of the Book of Ezekiel,” in *To Understand the Scriptures: Essays in Honor of William H. Shea*, ed. David Merling (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Institute of Archaeology/Siegfried H. Horn Archaeological Museum, 1997), 71-93; cf. *idem*, “Revelation/Inspiration in the Old Testament,” *Issues in Revelation and Inspiration*, Adventist Theological Society Occasional Papers, vol 1, ed. Frank Holbrook and Leo Van Dolson (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventist Theological Society Publications, 1992), 118-119.

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mountain, was the location of the throne of God, and here the unfallen universe came to worship the Most High God.

It was on the mountain of God, in the very throne room of the universe, in the Holy of Holies of the heavenly Sanctuary, that sin first arose in the universe. Lucifer, the covering cherub, was lifted up because of His beauty, and standing in the very presence of God, aspired to be like the Most High, to exalt his throne above the stars. Ezek 28:16 states that by the abundance of his “trading” the celestial cherub became filled with violence within. I have shown elsewhere that the term *rekullah* indeed means “trading” or “peddling”—going about from one to another to trade—either goods or gossip. In this context the meaning is probably slander—Lucifer’s pride and jealousy led to slandering the character of God, until it ripened into open revolt—“violence” (Ezek 28:16).¹⁴ Lucifer’s pride led him to rebel against the obedient, humble worship of God and to aspire to equality with God, to receive worship and adoration himself instead of God. Rebellion against God and rivalry with God. The Great War had begun! The issue was worship, and a Cosmic War dealing with worship had as its natural battlefield the *place* of worship—the celestial Sanctuary.

Ezek 28:16, 18 declares that the Fallen Cherub was cast out of the heavenly Sanctuary to this earth, in harmony with the depiction of Revelation 12. V. 18 seems to further develop the Sanctuary setting of the Great Controversy on earth: “You have defiled your sanctuaries by the multitude of your iniquities.” Sanctuaries—plural! On earth, the Fallen Cherub is portrayed as possessing rival sanctuaries to that of the Most High, sanctuaries that he defiles by his iniquities.

In this Ezekiel passage, we seem to have the pattern for Satan’s activity in the Great Controversy. The issue is worship. The setting of worship is the Sanctuary—the throne room of the Most High. The battle rages in the Sanctuary. The Fallen Cherub rebels against the Most High—directly challenges and maligns and even violently attacks Him—in the setting of His Sanctuary, and when expelled from the divine Sanctuary, he seeks to rival the Most High by receiving worship in a rival sanctuary. A two-fold battle strategy: direct attack against God and His loyal subjects worshipping in His Sanctuary, and rival worship in a counterfeit sanctuary.

The Cosmic War in Eden, the First Earthly Sanctuary. When we come to the opening pages of Scripture, Lucifer has already become the dragon, that ancient serpent, Satan. And we find him lurking in the Garden of Eden, ready to channel his messages through a beautiful serpent God has made. It is a commonplace to recognize that the moral conflict on earth arose at the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the Garden of Eden—so states Genesis 3 emphatically. What is not so widely recognized is that Moses under inspiration of God clearly depicts the Garden of Eden as the first earthly *Sanctuary*.

¹⁴Richard M. Davidson, “Satan’s Celestial Slander,” *Perspective Digest*, 1/1 (1996): 31-34.

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There are numerous intertextual hints throughout Scripture that the heavenly Sanctuary had a counterpart on earth even before the Mosaic tabernacle. In fact, the language of Genesis 1–2 points toward the Garden of Eden as the earthly counterpart of the heavenly Sanctuary! As we compare the portrayal of Eden with the descriptions of later divine instructions for the building of God’s Sanctuary/Temple by Moses and Solomon, beautiful insights begin to emerge.¹⁵ I will list the major intertextual parallels I have seen so far.

1. Notice how the Garden of Eden was situated with an eastward orientation, as were the later sanctuaries (Gen 2:8; cf. Exod 36:20–30, 1 Kgs 7:21, Ezek 47:1).

2. God “plants” (*nāta’*) the garden in Eden (Gen 2:8), and He will “plant” (*nāta’*) Israel on His holy mountain, the place of His Sanctuary (Exod 15:17; cf. 1 Chr 17:9).

3. The tree of life was “in the midst” (*betwk*) of the garden (Gen 2:9), and this is the precise term for the presence of God “in the midst” of His people in the Sanctuary (Exod 25:8).

4. The description of God “walking around” (*Hithpa’el* of *hālak*) is found only twice in the Old Testament, once in connection with God’s walking in the garden (Gen 3:8) and the other His walking in the midst of the camp of Israel (Deut 23:14 [Hebrew 15]).

5. There was a four-headed river flowing from the central location in the Garden (Gen 2:10), parallel to the river of life flowing from the Sanctuary shown to Ezekiel (Ezek 47:1–12) and from the throne of God as shown to John (Rev 22:1).

6. The precious metals mentioned in the Eden narrative (gold, bdellium, and onyx, 2:12) are mentioned again in connection with the wilderness Sanctuary (bdellium, only elsewhere in the Old Testament in connection with the manna [Num 11:7]; onyx, upon the shoulder pieces and breastplate of the high priest [Exod 25:7, 28:9, 20; 35:9, 27; 39:6, 13]; and gold throughout, overlaying the walls and articles of furniture in the Sanctuary [Exod 25:9, etc.]).

7. On earth after creation there were three spheres of space, in ascending degrees of holiness (“set apartness for special use”): the earth, the garden, and the “midst of the garden.” These three spheres are seen again at Sinai: in the camp, the place where the seventy elders could go on the mountain, and the im-

¹⁵For more detailed discussion, see William J. Dumbrell, *The End of the Beginning* (Homebush, New South Wales: Lancer, 1985), 35-76; Michael Fishbane, *Text and Texture: Close Readings of Selected Biblical Texts* (New York: Schocken, 1979), 12-13; Jon D. Levenson, *Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible* (Minneapolis, MN: Winston, 1985), 142-145; Gordon J. Wenham, “Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story,” *Proceedings of the World Congress of Jewish Studies* 9 (1986): 19-25; and Eric Bolger, “The Compositional Role of the Eden Narrative in the Pentateuch” (Ph.D. dissertation, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1993), especially 205–266.

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mediate presence of God where only Moses could go.¹⁶ They are repeated in the court, the Holy Place, and the Most Holy Place in the Sanctuary.

8. Numerous parallels may be noted between the accounts of Creation as a whole and the construction of the Mosaic Sanctuary. For example, there is a series of key verbal parallels: Gen 1:31; 2:1; 2:2; 2:3 with Exod 39:43; 39:32; 40:33; 39:43, respectively. Just as “God saw everything that he had made/done [*‘āśah*],” “finished his work” and “blessed” the seventh day, so “Moses saw all the work” which the people “made/did [*‘āśah*]” in constructing the Sanctuary; “and Moses finished the work” and “blessed” the people for their labors.¹⁷

9. Again, as the creation of the world is said to occupy six days (each introduced by the clause “And God said”), followed by the seventh day Sabbath, so God’s instruction to Moses regarding the construction of the tabernacle in Exodus 25–31 is divided into six sections (introduced by the phrase “The Lord said to Moses”), followed by a concluding seventh section dealing with the Sabbath.

10. In Eden the work assigned to man was to “till” (*‘ābad*, literally “serve”) and “keep” (*šamar*) the garden, and it seems more than coincidence that these are the very terms used to describe the work of the Levites in the Sanctuary (Num 3:7–8, etc.).

11. Note also how the term for light (greater and lesser light) used to describe the sun and moon in Gen 1:14–16 is elsewhere in the Pentateuch used *only* for the light of the menorah in the Holy Place of the Sanctuary (Exod 25:6; 35:14; 39:27, etc.).

12. The references to the portrayals of nature in the Sanctuary are fascinating. In both the Solomonic and Mosaic Sanctuaries, the lampstand was a stylized almond tree (Exod 25:31–40; cf. 1 Kgs 7:49). Carved in the Solomonic architecture—on the walls round about, and on the doors, were palm trees and open flowers (1 Kgs 6:29, 32, 35). Lily work appeared on the tops of the two free-standing pillars, and representations of oxen, lions, and more lilies and palm trees in the laver (1 Kgs 7:26, 29, 36). Could these artistic portrayals be representative of the return to the lost Garden? The earth’s original Sanctuary?

When we move to the post-Fall depiction of the Garden of Eden, we have confirmation of its Sanctuary character.

13. Before Adam and Eve’s expulsion from the garden, God “clothes” (*la-baš*, *Hif’il*) them with “coats” (*k’tonet*), Gen 3:21, and these are the very terms used to describe the clothing of the priests—Aaron and his sons (Lev 8:7, 13; Num 20:28; cf. Exod 28:4; 29:5; 40:14).

14. After Adam and Eve are expelled, in their sinful state they are no longer able to meet with God face to face in the Garden. But at the *eastern* entrance to the Garden (as with the eastern entrance to the later sanctuaries), we encounter

¹⁶See Angel Rodríguez, “Sanctuary Theology in the Book of Exodus,” *AUSS* 24/2 (1986): 131–137.

¹⁷See Fishbane, 12.

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cherubim—the beings associated with God’s throne in the heavenly Sanctuary (Rev 4–5; Ezek 1:10).

15. These cherubim are “placed” (Hebrew *šākan*), the same specific Hebrew verb for God’s “dwelling” (*šākan*) among His people (Exod 25:8).

16. It is also the same root as for the *Shekinah* glory, the visible presence of God in the Sanctuary.¹⁸

17. To this eastern entrance of the Garden, guarded by the cherubim with flaming swords, Adam and Eve and their children came to worship God, built their altars, brought their sacrifices; here the *Shekinah* glory was manifested as God came down to hold communion with them.¹⁹

If indeed the Garden of Eden was the earth’s original Sanctuary, and the trees in the midst of the Garden comprised its Most Holy Place, then Satan, upon his expulsion from the Holy of holies of the heavenly Sanctuary, gains access to Adam and Eve at a place that is none other than the Holy of holies of the earthly Sanctuary! Here we see him conducting the same strategy as in the heavenly Sanctuary, attacking and slandering the character of the God in His Sanctuary. He urges Eve to set up herself as equal with God, just what Satan himself had aspired to in the celestial Sanctuary. Rebellion against God, and rivalry with God—the earthly battle lines again are drawn, and the battlefield is the earthly Sanctuary. Adam and Eve capitulate to the enemy’s side, and the Great Controversy enters human existence.

The Cosmic War and Sanctuary Battlefield Outside the Garden of Eden. The first Gospel promise in Gen 3:15 predicts the continuation of the conflict till the end—the enmity between the spiritual descendants of Satan and of Eve. It also promises ultimate victory by the Seed of the woman—now a singular He—who would stand as humanity’s Representative and voluntarily lay down His life—step on the head of the venomous serpent—so that humanity might be saved in Him and the serpent finally dealt a mortal crushing blow to the head.²⁰ The outcome of the Great War is announced and assured!

This prediction in Gen 3:15 of the course of the Great Controversy on earth must be seen in connection with the Sanctuary ritual presented a few verses later. In v. 21, the record states that God clothed Adam and Eve with skins—implying the sacrifice of animals. Instead of the fig leaves of their own works with which they unsuccessfully tried to cover their nakedness, God covered them with the robes of a Substitute. The blood of an innocent victim is shed

¹⁸The name *Shekinah* does not appear in Scripture, but is used in the later Jewish literature. See also White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 349, etc.

¹⁹That Adam’s children brought their sacrifices to the gate of the Garden is probably implied in the narrative of Cain and Abel in Genesis 4. See Joaquim Azevedo, “At the Door of Paradise: A Contextual Interpretation of Gen 4:7,” *Biblische Notizen* 100 (1999): 45-59. Cf. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 62, 83-84.

²⁰For discussion and substantiation of the Messianic interpretation of Gen 3:15, see, e.g., O. Palmer Robertson, *Christ of the Covenants* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1980), 93-100.

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instead of theirs. Here is intimated the Messiah's substitutionary sacrifice on behalf of man. God instructs Adam and Eve in the rudiments of the sacrificial system of the Sanctuary.

After Adam and Eve are expelled, in their sinful state they are no longer able to meet with God face to face in the Garden. But, as we have already seen above, the Gate of the Garden becomes the Sanctuary where Adam and Eve and their descendants were to meet with God, worship Him, and bring their sacrifices. Here the Shekinah glory was manifested as God came down to hold communion with them.

Outside the garden, Cain and Abel are aware of the sacrificial system and bring their offerings to the gate of the Garden (implied in Gen 4:7). But here at the Sanctuary the Great Controversy rages—again over the issue of worship and rebellion/rivalry. Cain refuses to worship in the way prescribed by God, by bringing a bloody sacrifice, representing the atoning blood of the coming Messiah. He continues the alternate, humanly-devised methodology demonstrated by Adam and Eve when they constructed the fig leaves. He introduces a counterfeit ritual at the true Sanctuary. A recent article in *Biblische Notizen* has shown that the best translation of the word usually translated “sin” in Gen 4:7 should in this context probably be “sin offering.”²¹ God points Cain to the appropriate sin-offering available at the gate of the Garden, but Cain persists in rebellion which, as in Lucifer's rebellion in heaven, leads to violence, even to murder. The battle rages in the story of Cain and Abel; the issue is true worship, and the battlefield is the place of worship, the Sanctuary.

Rival Sanctuaries Throughout the Cosmic Conflict in OT Salvation History. There is not space in this article to trace the interlocking of Great Controversy and Sanctuary themes in detail throughout the rest of the OT. We briefly note that at those crucial junctures in the OT where the spiritual forces of evil—concentrated in the demonic being called Azazel or Satan—are mentioned, there is almost always a Sanctuary setting. In Leviticus 16, which describes the Day of Atonement, the high-point of the Hebrew Sanctuary rituals,²²

²¹Azevedo, 45-59.

²²That the Day of Atonement came at the highpoint of the Hebrew Sanctuary ritual services is indicated by the Hebrew name for the day. Its more accurate name (from Scripture) is not *yôm kippur*, but *yôm hakkippurim*—the Day of Atonements,” the “Day of Complete or Final Atonement.” All during the year, atonement was made for sins, but this day was the climax of the yearly ritual, in which final atonement was made “for all the sins of Israel” (v. 16) and for the entire Sanctuary, which had been defiled during the year. The climactic nature of the Day of Atonement is also underscored by its literary placement in the exact chiasmic center of the book of Leviticus. See William H. Shea, “Literary Form and Theological Function in Leviticus,” in *The Seventy Weeks, Leviticus, and the Nature of Prophecy*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, vol. 3 (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Research Institute, 1986), 131- 168. Cf. Wilfred Warning, *Literary Artistry in Leviticus* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), *passim*, who also arrives at Leviticus 16 as the literary center of the book by means of analyzing the 37 divine speeches that structure the book—18 on each side framing the divine speech in Leviticus 16.

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we find the ritual of the two goats, representing respectively Yahweh and Azazel, the Protagonist and Antagonist in the cosmic drama.²³ In Job 1–2, when Satan brings accusations against God, it is in the place where “the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord” (Job 1:6; 2:1)—most probably a reference to the “mount of assembly” or heavenly Sanctuary (cf. Isa 14:13 and Ezek 28:14, 16).²⁴ In Zech 3:1–10, where Satan is God’s enemy and malicious witness accusing Joshua, again the setting is the Sanctuary—Joshua as the high priest of the Sanctuary stands in the presence of the Angel of the Lord and receives pardon/vindication, symbolized by the change of priestly garments.

Alberto Timm, in an unpublished class syllabus in Portuguese, has briefly shown how throughout salvation history, there has been a true Sanctuary and a counterfeit—either a frontal attack/distortion of the true or a separate rival sanctuary.²⁵ We also know from archaeology that throughout the OT period of the patriarchs, judges, and kings, there were pagan sanctuaries in existence in the ancient Near East. Often these sanctuaries remarkably resembled the Sanctuary designs given by God to Moses, Solomon, Ezekiel, and Zerubbabel. But despite amazing similarities, two striking differences in the layout and ritual stand out.

The first difference is in the Sanctuary layout. In the floor plans of other ancient Near Eastern sanctuaries, the worshipers had immediate access directly into the holy of holies, into the presence of the deity, whereas in the sanctuaries of Yahweh such access was restricted to the high priest, and only once a year. Thus a stark difference in the theology of the two systems was underscored. In the true sanctuaries of the Bible, copies of the heavenly Sanctuary, Yahweh was holy and utterly transcendent, and humans were finite sinners, unable to endure the immediate glory of the Holy One of Israel. There was need of a mediator, the high priest, to approach the Shekinah glory. By contrast the pagan sanctuaries had no such lofty conceptions of the deity’s holiness/transcendence and the worshipers’ inherent defilement/sinfulness.

The second major difference is in the ritual of the sacrifice. While animal sacrifices were used throughout the ancient Near East, in the pagan sanctuaries the purpose of the sacrifices was to placate or appease the deity. In contrast, the sacrifices of Israel’s Sanctuary services were provided by the gracious Yahweh Himself, to propitiate His own wrath (Lev 17:11). These sacrifices pointed forward to God’s self-sacrificing gift of the Lamb—His son—to atone for the sins of the world. In summary, Satan’s counterfeit sanctuaries copied the outer trappings of the heavenly Sanctuary, but distorted the two essential features that revealed the heart of God’s character and the true nature of worship—the holy

²³See Boyd, 82, 319, for discussion and bibliography supporting Azazel as a demonic power and the ritual performed upon him an elimination ritual.

²⁴See Boyd, 143-149, for a helpful discussion of the cosmic warfare motif in these chapters.

²⁵See Timm, “Desenvolvimento Da Doutrina Do Sancturio No Contexto Do Conflictu Cosmico,” 1-60.

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transcendence of Yahweh in distinction to man's sinfulness, and the covenant love of Yahweh in providing for a substitute and mediator to bridge the gap between His holiness and human sinfulness.²⁶

Cosmic War and Sanctuary Setting in the NT. When we come to the NT, we once again find the Great Controversy centered in the Sanctuary. Jesus' ministry involves a double cleansing of the earthly Temple, and much of His ministry was spent at the Temple. In a broader sense, Scripture presents this earth as the outer court of the heavenly Sanctuary, and thus Jesus' entire ministry was Sanctuary-centered (see Rev 11:2). Boyd has provided a comprehensive survey of the "warfare worldview" that permeates Jesus' life and ministry.²⁷ Not only His life and ministry, but most importantly, Christ's atoning death and resurrection is presented in Scripture as the part of the "*Christus Victor*" motif. On the Cross Christ has "disarmed principalities and powers" and "made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it" (Col 2:15). Gustav Aulén and Boyd have provided lavish biblical substantiation of this motif.²⁸ Scripture also gives Christ's death and resurrection a Sanctuary setting. According to Heb 8:3–5 and 13:10, Calvary was the altar of the heavenly Sanctuary. Christ's death on the cross was as Antitype of the sacrifice of the Passover Lamb at the Sanctuary (John 1:29; 19:33–36; cf. Exod 12:46), as well as the fulfillment of all the sacrificial services prescribed in the OT (Ps 40:6–8; Heb 7–10). On Calvary we find the greatest battle of the Cosmic Conflict—the "D-Day" of the Cosmic War. And the Battlefield, the "Normandy" of that Cosmic Battle, was the Sanctuary.

Beyond the Gospels, the New Testament writers continue to present the gospel realities against the backdrop of the Cosmic War and within a Sanctuary setting. Christ the Victor in the Cosmic Battle of Calvary takes His seat as King/Priest in the heavenly Sanctuary (Heb 1:3; 8:1); "D-Day" of the Cosmic War is over, but Christ still awaits the final "V-E Day" victory over His enemies (Heb 1:13, citing Ps 110:1). He is seated "in heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion" (Eph 1:20–21), while the church, Christ's body and Temple of the Holy Spirit (Eph 1:23; 1 Cor 3:16; 6:19), also "wrestle . . . against principalities, against powers, against the rulers

²⁶For further discussion (with bibliography) of the similarities and dissimilarities between the Sanctuary/Temple of the Hebrews and their ancient Near Eastern neighbors, see, e.g., Lawrence T. Geraty, "The Jerusalem Temple of the Hebrew Bible in Its Ancient Near Eastern Context," *The Sanctuary and the Atonement: Biblical, Historical, and Theological Studies*, ed. Arnold V. Wallenkampf and W. Richard Leshner (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1981), 37–66.

²⁷Boyd, 171–237.

²⁸See in particular, Gustaf Aulén, *Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of the Atonement*, trans. A. G. Hebert (New York: Macmillan, 1969), and Boyd, 238–268.

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of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Eph 6:12).²⁹

The Cosmic War and Sanctuary Setting in Church History. The history of the Christian church, and especially the rule of the antichrist or “man of sin” predicted in Bible prophecy, constitutes the period of “mop-up” operations between the “D-Day” and “V-E Day” of the Cosmic Battle. Here again we find the fusion of the Great Controversy and Sanctuary themes. Daniel 8 predicts the work of the little horn in Sanctuary language: he would take away the *tamid* or continual heavenly mediatorial ministry of Christ as he tried to substitute a counterfeit priesthood and forgiveness of sins and a way of salvation by works. Thus, the Sanctuary would be trodden underfoot, along with the saints of the Most High (Dan 8:11, 13), and the abomination of desolation would be set up (Dan 11:31; 12:11). Rev 13:6 indicates that during the 42 prophetic months referred to in Daniel (7:25; 12:7), the apostate religious power would “open his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, *His tabernacle*, and those who dwell in heaven. And it was granted him to *make war* with the saints . . .” “Make war”—the Great Controversy; “His tabernacle”—the Sanctuary.

At the same time, this apostate antichrist power would seek to elevate himself “as high as the Prince of the host” (Dan 8:11). According to 2 Thess 2:4, the “man of sin” “opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God *in the temple of God*, showing himself that he is God.” The same two-fold battle strategy: rebellion against God and rivalry with God. The same issue: worship. The same battlefield: the Sanctuary.

End-time Cosmic Conflict Centered in the Sanctuary. When we move to the “time of the end” (Dan 11:40; 12:4), coming immediately after the 1260 prophetic days (Dan 12:4–7), once again we have the fusion of Great Controversy and Sanctuary motifs. Rev 12:17 portrays the end-time culmination of the Cosmic War involving the last-day “remnant” in language echoing Gen 3:15: “And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the remnant of her seed, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

In this wind-up of the Great Controversy, the sin problem is dealt with in the very place where it had its beginning—the Holy of Holies of the heavenly Temple. Daniel 7 depicts that heavenly Sanctuary scene and the pre-Advent activity of investigative trial judgment that takes place (vs. 9–10). Rev 14:6, 7 announces the arrival of this heavenly Sanctuary judgment to this earth: “Fear God and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment *has come*; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.” The issue again is worship. And the second and third angel’s messages clarify the Great Controversy over worship, as the battle lines are drawn between those who worship the

²⁹For a good overview of the profuse NT data featuring both the heavenly and earthly spiritual warfare in the NT, see Boyd, 269-293.

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Creator (implying a faithfulness to His commandments, especially the fourth, which is quoted in Rev 14:7),³⁰ and those who worship the beast and his image and receive his mark (implying a counterfeit worship). The issues in the pre-Advent cosmic judgment scene are set in the framework of the Great Controversy and the Sanctuary (see Rev 11:19).

The Broader Meaning of the “Great Controversy.” In this context of the cosmic covenant lawsuit or investigative judgment I would like to suggest that the term dear to Seventh-day Adventists —“Great Controversy”—perhaps has a more direct connection with the Sanctuary message than we have before realized. Recently I have been doing some in-depth analysis of the concept of the investigative judgment in the Bible. I have come to the conclusion that throughout Scripture *God’s regular procedure* in dealing with humanity before announcing the close of probation on a given individual or people is to first conduct an investigative judgment, throwing open all the books, as it were, so that all can see that He is just and fair, before pronouncing the verdict and sentence and executing judgment.

We find this divine procedure from the very first entrance of sin in heaven, summarized in Ezekiel 28. The description follows the precise structure of the legal trial of the ancient Near East. The one presiding at the investigative judgment in the heavenly Sanctuary is introduced (“Thus says Yahweh” v. 12); there is a historical prologue summarizing all that Yahweh has done in behalf of the Fallen Cherub (vs. 12–15a); then follows the indictments against him (vs. 15b–16a, 17a, 18a), the verdict and sentence (vs. 16b, 17a, 18a), and the reference to the witnesses in the legal proceedings (vs. 17c, 18c, 19).

The same divine procedure is found after the Fall in the earthly Garden of Eden, the first earthly Sanctuary. When God comes walking in the cool of the day after Adam and Eve sinned, He initiates a legal trial or investigative judgment before pronouncing the verdict and sentence. This insight is not one recognized only by Seventh-day Adventists. The famous liberal Protestant German scholar Claus Westermann points out that after the Fall God comes for a “legal process,” a “trial,” a “court process.”³¹ Adam and Eve are placed on the witness stand, as it were, and given opportunity to testify, and in their very testimony, they perjure themselves and reveal the truth of their guilt. God pronounces the verdict of guilty and sentence of judgment. But note that in the heart of that judgment is the first Gospel promise (Gen 3:15)! God’s investigative judgment is not to see who He can damn, but to make a way of salvation for all who will respond to His grace!

We see this same procedure all the way through the book of Genesis. God comes for a legal investigation before He brings the Flood (Gen 6:1–13). The same procedure is described in His coming down to investigate at the Tower of

³⁰See Jon Paulien, “Revisiting the Sabbath in the Book of Revelation,” *JATS* 9/1&2 (1998): 179-186.

³¹Claus Westermann, *Creation*, trans. by John J. Scullion (London: SPCK, 1974), 96.

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Babel (Gen 11:5–7) and in Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 18:20–21). In each of these cases, Biblical scholars of various religious traditions have recognized that a legal trial procedure, an investigative judgment, is involved.³² God comes to investigate, not because He needs to know, but so that it can be seen that He is fair and just in all His dealings. And in each case, there is at the heart of the judgment the element of grace, God's desire to save those who are under judgment.

This legal procedure is often given a technical name in the Old Testament—a *rib*, or covenant lawsuit—and it regularly includes *investigation* of the evidence before the verdict and sentence are pronounced upon God's professed covenant people and executive judgment is meted out. Of the dozens of cases of the divine *rib* in Scripture, we note, for example, the covenant lawsuits or investigative judgments described by Hosea and Micah upon the Northern Kingdom, and that of Malachi in the post-Exilic period.³³ A covenant lawsuit or investigative judgment is also clearly present in the New Testament with regard to the theocratic nation of Israel in 34 A.D. before their close of probation and divine executive judgment.³⁴

Now the interesting point for our purposes in this presentation is that the King James Version of the Bible often translates this term *rib* as “controversy.” For example, Micah 6:2—“Hear ye, O mountains, the Lord's controversy [*rib*] . . . ; for the Lord hath a controversy [*rib*] with his people, and he will plead with Israel.” Again, Jer 25:31: “A noise shall come even to the ends of the earth; for the Lord hath a controversy [*rib*] with the nations, he will plead with all flesh; he will give them that are wicked to the sword, saith the Lord.” (See also Deut 17:8; 19:17; 21:5; 25:1; 2 Sam 15:2; 2 Chron 19:8; Ezek 44:24; Isa 34:8; Hos 4:1; 12:2.) Ellen White actually quotes this latter passage with reference to the Great Controversy:

For six thousand years the great controversy has been in progress; the Son of God and His heavenly messengers have been in conflict with the power of the evil one, to warn, enlighten, and save

³²For example, regarding Sodom and Gomorrah, T. F. Mafico, “The Crucial Question Concerning the Justice of God,” *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 42 (1983): 13, points out that “Yahweh came down to make a *judicial investigation*” (emphasis supplied).

³³The word *rib* explicitly introduces the covenant lawsuits of Hosea and Micah: Hos 4:1; Mic 6:1, 2. Sometimes the prophets use a synonym, *mišpat* (“judgment”), as in Mal 3:5; Ezek 5:8, etc. The recent scholarly literature on the covenant lawsuit is immense. For introductory discussion, starting bibliography, and numerous biblical examples, see Herbert B. Huffmon, “The Covenant Lawsuit in the Prophets,” *JBL* 88 (1969): 291-304; the article on *rib* in the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, eds. R. Laird Harris, Gleason Archer, and Bruce Waltke (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 2: 845-846; and Kirsten Nielsen, *Yahweh as Prosecutor and Judge: An Investigation of the Prophetic Lawsuit (Rib-Pattern)*, JSOT 9 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1978).

³⁴See Wilson Paroschi, “The Prophetic Significance of Stephen,” *JATS* 9/1&2 (1998): 343-361; William Shea, “The Prophecy of Dan 9:24-27,” *The Seventy Weeks, Leviticus, and the Nature of Prophecy*, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, vol. 3 (Washington, DC: Biblical Research Institute, 1986), 80-82.

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the children of men. Now all have made their decisions; the wicked have fully united with Satan in his warfare against God. The time has now come for God to vindicate the authority of His downtrodden law. Now the controversy is not alone with Satan, but with men. “The Lord hath a controversy with the nations;” “He will give them that are wicked to the sword.”³⁵

Note that in a technical sense Ellen White understands that the Great Controversy through the ages has been between Christ and his angels and Satan and his angels—not with men. God has taken the side of humanity, expending every divine energy to rescue them. But when probation closes and the wicked are fully and inextricably linked with Satan, then God’s War is also against men—those who have become irretrievably settled in rebellion. This phase of the battle is described in Rev 19:11. Notice how the picture combines the imagery of *judgment* and *war*: “Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And he who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He *judges* and *makes war* And the armies in heaven clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations”

In light of this biblical legal usage of the term “controversy,” with which Ellen White was no doubt familiar when she coined (or popularized) the term “great controversy,” it seems appropriate to broaden the meaning of the term “Great Controversy” from that which we have usually employed—from regular armed combat terminology—to include the “legal battle” between Christ and Satan that climaxes in the investigative judgment, the close of probation, and the pronouncement of the verdict in the heavenly Sanctuary. This would also include the legal deliberations of the saints and Christ concerning the sentence upon the wicked during the millennium, the last Great White Throne Judgment and sentencing after the millennium, the execution of the sentence in giving just retribution upon the wicked, and the final cleansing of the earth. All of these latter activities, it should be noted, are conducted from the New Jerusalem, which has descended from heaven, that city which is called in Rev 21:3 “the tabernacle of God.” It is in the shape of a cube (Rev 21:16)—it is the counterpart of the Most Holy Place of the earthly Sanctuary. The New Jerusalem is portrayed in the final chapters of Revelation as the apocalyptic Sanctuary, with the ultimate Sanctuary—the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb—in its center. The saints are priests and kings in this eternal tabernacle of God (Rev 20:6).

The Wind-up of the Cosmic Conflict in the Ultimate Sanctuary. Then it can be truly said, the War is over—both the “armed conflict” and the legal Courtroom Battle. The cosmic V-E Day has come! And of this time Ellen White can pen those words in the last paragraph of her work *The Great Controversy*: “The great controversy is ended. Sin and sinners are no more. The entire uni-

³⁵White, *Great Controversy*, 656.

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verse is clean. One pulse of harmony and gladness beats through the vast creation.”³⁶

Only the Battle scars remain—the nail prints in the hands of the Chief Commander of the forces of heaven. And the Sanctuary—the New Jerusalem, can return to its original function of doxology—the place where the saints live and serve in the Father’s presence, and where the whole universe comes to worship the King of kings and Lord of lords. Revelation 21–22 describes the eternal life in the New Jerusalem in language referring to the Feast of Tabernacles. The earth made new will be an eternal festival celebration in the Sanctuary, with the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb.

Conclusion

What a metanarrative! The Grand Metanarrative of metanarratives. I’ve become convinced that in the coming third millennium of Christianity the Christian church must focus more on presenting this “big picture” of Scripture and then let the other doctrines naturally flow forth from this grand central theme. This “warfare/Sanctuary worldview” provides a Grand Story encapsulating the Christian message to share particularly with our postmodern friends, but also with our Enlightenment friends, with our animist, Buddhist, and Moslem friends. Indeed, the Bible presents this Grand Story to give to every kindred and nation, tongue, and people—centered in Jesus, mighty Protagonist of the Great Controversy and ultimate embodiment of the Sanctuary/Temple (John 2:19–21; Rev 21:22). God’s Spirit is promised to convict the honest in heart that this big picture of Scripture is truth—eternal, universal, normative, beautiful truth. This is the timeless and timely Cosmic Metanarrative for the coming millennium!

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³⁶White, *Great Controversy*, 678.

The Cultic Calendar for the Introductory Sanctuary Scenes of Revelation

William H. Shea

The book of Revelation is an evenly measured work from the literary standpoint. Four series of seven sections or septets divide up the body of the work. The seven churches, the seven seals, the seven trumpets, and the seven bowls or plagues are readily recognizable. Another section, chapters 12-14, occurs between the last two of these septets, and the balance of the book is divided into two or three more sections. Thus the book of Revelation divides into seven or eight major prophetic narratives. For a considerable length of time I followed Kenneth Strand in dividing the book into eight major sections. Strand spelled out his eight-fold outline for Revelation in a number of places. His study of “The Eight Basic Visions in the Book of Revelation”¹ is an example of that basic program, which he has also published in several other places.

The idea that there are seven basic lines of prophecy in the book has been advanced previously. Strand cited three studies to this effect in his presentation. These include E. Lohmeyer’s *Die Offenbarung des Johannes* (Tuebingen, 1926), J. W. Bowman’s *The Drama of the Book of Revelation* (Philadelphia, 1955), also reflected in the *International Dictionary of the Bible*, 4:64ff., and T. S. Kepler’s *The Book of Revelation* (New York, 1957). While each of these authors worked out the subsections of these lines of prophecy in different ways, they all maintained that there are seven major sections to the book as a whole. Part of the rationale for this approach is that it is evident that Revelation makes repeated use of the number seven and seven-fold schemes, even though they are not numbered, so it seems natural that there would be seven sections on the larger scale. Supplementary to that idea is the series of separate introductions to these major lines, and since seven of these appear more clearly, that should also divide the book into seven major sections between the prologue and epilogue. These intro-

¹ *AUSS* 25 (1987): 107-121.

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ductory scenes have been especially well isolated by Strand in the work cited above. In that work he labels them as “Victorious-Introduction Scenes.”

That title is reasonable enough, but in discussions of this matter with Strand while he was still alive I suggested to him that he could refer to them as introductory Sanctuary scenes, since all of them are set in the heavenly sanctuary, in contrast to the earth, where the details of the lines of prophecy in the book are worked out. Strand seems to have made some accommodation to that idea, in that he stated as a part of his work, “In some cases the temple in heaven is mentioned explicitly, as in the introductory scenes to visions IV and V; and in other cases, the allusion to temple furniture gives evidence of a temple setting, even though the word ‘temple’ does not occur, as in the scenes for visions I, II, and III. The only introductory scenes that do not have so obvious a clue to temple imagery are those for visions VI and VIII (o cit., p.118, n. 12).” Since a reduction in the number of basic sanctuary scenes has been suggested here, introductory scene VI has been discarded, but scene VIII has been retained, thus reducing the numbers of the last two scenes from VII and VIII to VI and VII for the basic seven visions and their introductions.

These introductory sanctuary scenes, it should be emphasized, are not unrelated to the lines of prophecy which follow them. They speak to each other in such a way that what is shown as occurring in the heavenly sanctuary relates directly to the nature of the prophecy that follows the opening scene. More of the details of this connection are spelled out in the following study.

The other major aspect of this study is to fit these opening sanctuary scenes into a chronological progression, a progression based in the religious calendar of the ancient Israelites, as spelled out especially in Lev 23 and Num 28-29. The basic idea underlying this part of the study comes from a journal article by M. D. Goulder, “The Apocalypse as an Annual Cycle of Prophecies.”² I am indebted to Jon Paulien of the SDA Theological Seminary for calling my attention to this work and his own elaboration of it in “Seals and Trumpets: Some Current Discussions,” in *Symposium on Revelation - Book I*.³ Paulien in turn has developed some of this idea from a study by Richard Davidson, “Sanctuary Typology,” in the same volume (121-125). While I am indebted to Paulien and Davidson for the basic idea underlying this part of this study, the working out of the details of that scheme presented here is my own responsibility and may differ in a number of respects from the way others have worked out this system in the antecedent literature.

These then are the two basic principles upon which this study rests: that each major line of prophecy in the book of Revelation is introduced by a sanctuary scene set in heaven, and the succession of those scenes follows the order of the festivals in the religious calendar of ancient Israel. In the working out of the

² *New Testament Studies* (1981): 355-356.

³ Ed. F. Holbrook (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1992), 190-192.

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details that come from these two principles, they are treated separately. First the sanctuary scenes are surveyed, and then, in the section that follows that, they are integrated into the Israelite cultic calendar.

The Introductory Sanctuary Scenes

No. 1—Revelation 1:12–20

After the prologue 1:1-10, John describes how he turned to see Jesus. The sight must have been most welcome, since he had not seen Jesus personally for approximately sixty years. He now sees Jesus not as the lowly itinerant preacher travelling the dusty roads of Galilee, but as a priest in resplendent robes from which radiated the glory of God. There are two antecedents for this vision: Dan 10:5-6 coupled with Dan 12:6-7 and Ezek 1:26-28. These two Old Testament visions of God correlate in terms of their descriptions with that of Jesus in Rev 1, indicating that Jesus is divine and is the figure behind these preceding visions.

In the case of Rev 1 Jesus is shown especially in his function as a priest. This is made clear by His location and His actions. John saw Jesus standing in front of the seven lampstands. The model for these lampstands was taken from the description of the lampstands in the tabernacle in the wilderness and in Solomon's temple. In the tabernacle constructed under the direction of Moses, there was one lampstand with seven branches (Exod 25:31-39), known as the Menorah. In Solomon's temple the configuration was different. In the holy place in Jerusalem, which was twice the size of the holy place of the tabernacle, there were ten individual lamps, five on each side of the holy place (I Kgs 7:49). They were all made of gold, and that gold was probably paid out as tribute to various conquerors, so that in the second temple they appear to have reverted back to the original form of but one lampstand with seven branches, like the original in the tabernacle. This we know from the Arch of Titus in Rome, where the Menorah is shown as tribute brought back from the conquest of Jerusalem in 70 A. D.

The picture of this piece of furniture from the holy place in Rev 1 partakes of both the nature of the Menorah in the wilderness, in that there are seven lampstands, and the nature of the lampstands in Solomon's temple, in that there are individual stands, not combined into one. This distance and spacing is necessary here for showing that each of the individual stands represents one of the seven churches of Asia Minor.

To anticipate the second section of this study, the function carried out here may be noted in terms of the Old Testament sanctuary. The lamps which rested atop the lampstands were tended by priests twice a day. In the morning a priest went into the holy place and trimmed the wicks and filled the lamps. Then in the evening a priest went in and lit the lamps for the night (Lev 24:1-5). Because they did this every day of the year, morning and evening, it is called the "daily" or "continual" ministry (Hebrew, *tamid*).

The continual care of the lamps by the priest in the Old Testament tabernacle represents Christ's continual care for the churches, especially the seven

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churches of Asia Minor mentioned in the text, and by extension, all the churches in the world. The churches have not been abandoned now that Christ is in heaven since His ascension. His continual care is still exercised on behalf of the churches. After this come the letters to each of the seven churches, which spell out the way care is exercised on their behalf. Thus, there is a direct connection between the introductory sanctuary vision and the messages to the seven churches that follow.

No. 2 A—Revelation 4:1–11

Following the messages Jesus gives to John for the seven churches, John is taken up to heaven in vision (4:1-2). There, in this case, he sees the great heavenly throne room. The throne of God is shown to him first, and God the Father, the Ancient of Days (Dan 7:9) is shown to him sitting on the throne (v. 3). Around the throne are the twenty-four elders seated on thrones. They wear white robes and are crowned with golden crowns of victory (*stephanoi*). Since the word for elders (*presbuteroi*) is used in the New Testament for human elders of the church and is not used for angels, these elders should be taken as human beings, not angels. The angels before the throne are represented by the four living creatures (vs. 6-7). The question arises as to where these human beings have come from to be assembled around the throne in heaven in John's time. Since the immortality of the soul is not a biblical doctrine, they should have come from some resurrection. Just such a special resurrection is mentioned in connection with the death of Christ on the cross (Matt 27:51-52). It is likely, therefore, that these elders around the throne came out of that special resurrection. Their function here is discussed further in the section on the cultic calendar.

The presence of the Holy Spirit is represented in this scene by the feature before the throne, the "seven torches of fire which are the seven spirits of God" (v. 5). The number seven represents completeness in this connection. This has a connection with 5:6 that is discussed further below.

The four living creatures are cherubim angels around the throne. This identification is made from Ezek 1 and 10. In Ezek 1:15-21 the four living creatures attend the throne of God wherever it goes. In Ezek 10:1-15 the same beings are referred to as cherubim, and their various characteristics are described in verse 14. These are the same four cherubim found in Rev 4.

Thus far, John has been shown God upon His throne and the Holy Spirit, the twenty-four elders, and the four cherubim around the throne. Then the elders and the cherubim begin to sing. Two of their songs are recorded here. The first is recorded in 4:8, the *trisagion* that is modeled after the holy, holy, holy of Isa 6:3. After celebrating the holiness of God, they also sing to His creatorship,

"Worthy art thou, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honor and power;
For thou didst create all things,
and by thy will they existed and were created."

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John was shown a scene of worship in heaven. He was shown those who participated in the worship, and he heard how God was celebrated in song there.

In particular he heard the song that praised God as Creator. Representatives of the angels and the human race, both created by God, sing to that Creatorship before His throne in this scene of worship. A fair share of the theology in this narrative focuses upon this song and the song sung in the climax to the worship scene.

No. 2 B—Revelation 5:1–14

The scene depicted here is a continuation of that described in Rev 4.

In another sense it stands as separate, so it is subdivided here. That subdivision becomes more important when the cultic calendar is considered in the second half of this study. This second scene set in the heavenly throne room begins by focusing upon a scroll in the right hand of Him who sits upon the throne. The scroll is sealed with seven seals. John is anxious to know what is in the scroll, but no one is found who is worthy to open the seals and unroll the scroll. Finally, one who is worthy is found.

He carries glorious titles—the Lion of the Tribe of Judah and the Root of David—but when John looks to see who this great and mighty being is he sees, instead, a little lamb (5:6). The lamb looks as if it has been freshly slain, probably due to a fresh scar upon its neck. The figure, of course, represents Christ, who, by His death, has obtained redemption for us.

He alone has the right to open the seals on the scroll because He has purchased redemption for the human race by His death. That redemption is then celebrated in song as the same cherubim and the elders bow down before Him and sing about the redemption He has obtained by His blood:

“Worthy art thou to take the scroll and open its seals, for thou wast slain and by thy blood didst ransom men for God from every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and hast made them a kingdom and priests to our God.”

In the Greek this song begins the same way as does the song sung to God the Father in 4:11, “Worthy art thou,” and the reason for the worship of both the Father and the Son is introduced with the same word, “For. . . (Greek *hoti*). In this scene of worship set in heaven, therefore, the Creatorship of the Father and the redemptive work of the Son are both celebrated in songs of praise, and much of the theology of both of these narratives comes from the aspects of the work of God that is celebrated in these songs.

The song of praise to the Lamb for His redemption is then extended to the whole of the angelic host (v. 11) and finally to the whole of creation (v. 13).

From the theology of the songs in these two narratives, therefore, it can be said that Rev 4 celebrates the Creatorship of the Father and Rev 5 celebrates the redemption obtained by the Son, represented here as the Lamb. These paired

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songs take on further meaning when another sanctuary scene toward the end of the book is examined below, Rev 19:1-10.

The connection between this sanctuary scene and the prophecy of the seals which follows is obvious, because each of the scenes in that following sequence of prophecy comes to light as the Lamb opens the seals, one by one.

While this is not a study of the historical fulfillments of the prophecies of the seals, that of the seventh seal deserves mention here. When the seventh and last seal is opened, the scroll can then be unrolled. That occurs in Rev 8:1. The statement there about this action is very brief, but it has led to considerable discussion about what is contained in the scroll. Three main theories have been advanced: 1) on the model of Greco-Roman wills it has been taken as title to the earth which Christ has obtained by winning back the human race and the world by His death on the cross; 2) Others take it simply as representing the opening of the scroll of the rest of the prophecies in the book of Revelation; 3) On the basis of the use of the phraseology later in the book, the scroll is taken as the Lamb's Book of Life. The third theory seems to carry with it the most direct link to the language of the book of Revelation. In this view, the scroll contains the names and perhaps the actions of all the saints of all ages who will be saved in the heavenly kingdom by the purchase of the blood of the Lamb.

The exact nature of the scroll is, however, a side issue here, and thus the study continues on to the next sanctuary scene.

No. 3—Revelation 8:2-5

The seven churches are mentioned in their introductory sanctuary vision (1:20). The seven seals are mentioned in their introductory sanctuary vision (5:1-4, 8). Now the seven trumpets are referred to here in their introductory sanctuary vision. First of all, the seven angels who receive the seven trumpets are located as standing "before God," which must be in heaven. More specific are the location and the actions of the eighth angel, who comes on the scene of action after them. This angel is located at the golden altar before the throne, and with his golden censer he burns incense on that altar. The incense he burns there goes up before God with the prayers of the saints. This makes them all the more acceptable to God, who answers those prayers.

The site of this action is the altar of incense, which in the earthly tabernacle was located just in front of the curtain that separated the holy place from the most holy place (Exod 30:1-8). The same article of furniture was found in the same location in Solomon's temple (1 Kgs 6:20b-22). In the New Testament, Hebrews 9:4 refers to the same feature in connection with the most holy place. Some have criticized this reference as inaccurate but the text requires a more careful reading.

It refers to the most holy place as "having" the altar of incense, it does not say that the altar of incense was "in" the most holy place. Although it was not topographically located in the most holy place, the function of the altar belonged

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to it. The smoke from the incense that was burned on the altar wafted over the veil, going into the presence of God, just as is described here in Rev 8:4. The language of Heb 9:4 has been inferred directly from 1 Kgs 6:22, which indicates that the golden altar “belonged to the inner sanctuary,” i. e., the most holy place.

From all these earthly connections it is clear that the golden altar of incense in Rev 8:3-5 should be thought of as functioning in the holy place of the heavenly sanctuary. The work carried on there in the earthly sanctuary was also considered as part of the “daily, continual” ministry (Exod 30:7-8). When the priest went in to tend to the lamps morning and evening he was also to burn incense on the altar at the same time. Thus the scene of Jesus among the lampstands and this view of the angel ministering at the altar of incense both belong to that daily or continual type of ministry which went on every day of the religious calendar year.

There is another aspect of this angel’s work at that altar. He is to take some of the fire from the altar and cast it down onto the earth. Obviously this part of the action of the angel was symbolic, as physical fire cast down from heaven would go out or burn up long before it ever reached earth. What this means is that judgments by fire are to occur upon the earth, and these judgments come by way of the actions described in the trumpets. Connected with this is the fact that the first three trumpet judgments include fire in their description. The first trumpet mentions fire mixed with hail and blood (8:7).

The second trumpet focuses upon a great burning mountain that is cast into the sea (8:8). The third trumpet describes a great star falling from heaven upon the earth, and it is blazing or burning like a torch when it does so (8:10). Thus the trumpet judgments minister the judgments by fire that come from the altar.

The ministry of the angel at the altar is twofold. For the saints there is incense burned for them so that its smoke may go up with their prayers. For the wicked there are judgments by fire sent down upon the earth. Unfortunately, these judgments do not result in the wicked turning to God, for the conclusion after the sixth trumpet indicates that the rest of mankind did not repent of their idolatries, immorality, or murders (9:20-21).

No. 4—Revelation 11:19

Given the nature of the sanctuary scene in this verse, it looks very much as if it belongs with what follows it more than with what precedes it. Rev 11:15-18 describes the activity under the seventh and final trumpet. That should bring that series to an end. It should be remembered that the chapter and verse divisions in the Bible were not located in the text by the original author, but were placed in manuscripts during the Middle Ages. In most cases the divisions placed at that time appear to be quite accurate and very useful. Occasionally, however, some mistakes have been made.

This appears to be one of those cases. It provides the introductory sanctuary scene for Rev 12-14, and its depiction connects it more with the shift toward end

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time events that occurs in these chapters than with the more historical succession of the seven trumpets.

The text refers to a time when the temple of God was opened in such a way that the Ark of the Covenant was seen. As an article of furniture in the tabernacle and temple on earth, the Ark of the Covenant was well known. In both it was located in the most holy place. In the instructions about building the tabernacle and the objects to be placed in it, it was the very first object about which instructions were given (Exod 25:10-22, 26:33-34). The same Ark of the Covenant was placed in the most holy place of Solomon's temple because the original was still in existence (1 Kgs 6:19). It rested there for another four centuries, until Nebuchadnezzar sacked Jerusalem (2 Kgs:25:8-17). The fate of the Ark at that time is not described in the Bible. Extra-biblical sources, including 2 Maccabees, suggest the Ark was hidden while Nebuchadnezzar's army was approaching. It has never been found, and it was not present in the second temple. No substitute for it was ever made.

In Rev 11:19 the text is dealing with the great heavenly original, not the earthly copy. In the case of the earthly sanctuary it was opened in this way only one day in the year, on the Day of Atonement, *yom hakippurim*, or more simply Yom Kippur. In this case it was when the temple was opened in this way that it was seen. Thus it refers to the commencement of the antitypical Day of Atonement rather than its conclusion.

Since the Day of Atonement occurred toward the end of the festivals of the cultic year, it is to be expected that the antitypical Day of Atonement should occur toward the end of the era. Thus, there is to be a time of judgment at the end of the age. That is the point made by the three prophetic narratives which follow this introductory sanctuary scene. Rev 12 gives the broad sweep of the Christian era, and specifically refers to the end time only in verse 17. Rev 13 divides in half, with the first half, dedicated to the sea beast, having been fulfilled through history. The second half of the chapter, which describes the actions of the land beast, is as yet unfulfilled, and its events lie in the future—they are eschatological in character. Rev 14 is completely eschatological in character, and the rest of the prophecies of the book of Revelation carry on through the future.

Thus there is a gradient that occurs here in this central prophecy of the book, and the shift takes place from history to eschatology. This demarcates the fulcrum of the book, in which the history of the era found in the churches, seals, and trumpets gives way to the more thoroughly eschatological character of the last half of the book.

Since these prophecies turn at this point to a more eschatological viewpoint, it is appropriate that the introductory sanctuary scene associated with these prophecies focuses upon the end of the cultic year. The daily ministry is in view in Rev 1 and Rev 8, whereas now the annual ministry is in view.

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No. 5—Revelation 15:5–8

The setting of this scene is specifically identified as “the temple of the tent of the testimony in heaven.” The phrase about the tent of the testimony is taken from the Old Testament, where the tent was the tabernacle or sanctuary tent and the testimony was the ten commandments written on stone and held in the Ark of the Covenant in the most holy place of that sanctuary. The Ark of the Covenant is also called the Ark of the Testimony (Exod 25:22), and Moses was given instruction that this Testimony was to be placed in the Ark under the Mercy Seat (Exod 25:21). In this way the temple in heaven is shown to be thematically connected with the wilderness shrine, and the witness given there through the ten commandments still speaks from heaven, even down to the time when ministry in the heavenly sanctuary closes.

The close of that ministry is what is depicted here. The angels who signify that end are clothed in a very similar manner to the way Christ is depicted in the introductory sanctuary scene. The phrase about their having golden girdles around their breasts is essentially the same in Greek as that which describes Christ’s golden girdle in Rev 1:13, except that here there are plurals, whereas in Rev 1 it is singular. The verb for being “clothed” with a robe is the same, but Christ’s robe is described more simply with one Greek word for a “long robe.” Here the angels are described as being clothed with “pure bright linen.” Thus there is a great similarity in terms of the dress of the priest who opened the daily ministry in the book of Revelation and the dress of the angels with which it closes.

They come out of the temple with their bowls with the plagues which were given to them by one of the four cherubim who stand before the throne of God. After they have departed on their mission of pouring out the plagues on earth, the glory of God flares up in such a way that no one can enter the temple until the mission of the plague angels is completed. This is another way of saying that all redemptive ministry in the heavenly sanctuary is now concluded. Probation for the human race has closed, and now it remains only to pour out these judgments before Christ comes a second time.

This flaring up of the glory of God is described on two other occasions in the Bible. The first time occurred with the dedication of the tabernacle in the wilderness (Exod 40:34-35). On that occasion the manifestation of the glory of God in the tabernacle was so intense that even Moses could not enter it. The same thing occurred at the dedication of the temple by Solomon. On that occasion, “when the priests came out of the holy place, a cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord” (I Kgs 8:10-11).

Thus there are three recorded instances upon which the glory of the Lord was manifested in this powerful way, when ministry commenced in the tabernacle in the wilderness, when ministry commenced in the temple in Jerusalem, and when ministry concludes in the temple in heaven. The same dramatic event oc-

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currs here for the conclusion of redemptive ministry as when it began in those earthly shrines.

Since the introductory sanctuary scene here has been delimited in Rev 15:5-8, some note should be taken of what precedes it. Once again, the chapter division is in the wrong place. Rev 15:1-4 belongs with the visions and messages of Rev 14. It is a concluding scene to that sequence. It relates most directly to Rev 14:1-5.⁴ There Christ and the 144,000 are seen on the heavenly mount Zion singing a new song, but the contents of that song are not disclosed. When one comes to Rev 15:1-4 the reader finds that this new song is the song of Moses and the Lamb, and the words of the song are given (15:3-4). The sequence begins with a revelation of the results of what the messages of the three angels will accomplish. Then the text of the three angels' messages are given. Following that, the second coming of Christ is depicted, and He reaps the harvest of the earth. That harvest results in the scene of the redeemed depicted in Rev 15:1-4. Thus the entire sequence of Rev 14 runs from 14:1 to 15:4.

The sanctuary scene of Rev 15:5-8 begins the next sequence, and it deals with the seven bowl plagues. Those plagues are specifically connected with that sanctuary scene, as their place of origin is given there.

The sequence of what follows this introductory sanctuary scene should be noted, as this is where lies the difference between the seven or eight vision outlines of the book. According to the outline presented here, the entire sequence of the plagues begins with this introductory sanctuary scene and runs through to the end of chapter 18. The outline of this section is as follows:

1. The introductory sanctuary scene—Rev 15
2. The description of the plagues—Rev 16
3. The reason for the plagues—Rev 17
4. The response to the plagues—Rev 18

The first two elements in this outline are reasonably clear. The reason given for the plagues in Rev 17 is that the impure woman is drunk with the blood of the saints. Thus she deserves the judgments described in the plagues. The response to the plagues comes especially in Rev 18, where seven songs of lament and mourning are sung over the woman who has been judged with these plagues. These songs come from the kings (v. 9), from the merchants (v. 11), and from the seamen (v. 17), who all sing songs of lament because they have done business with the woman, but now their time of commerce is over. These human songs of lament are enclosed by a song from an angel at the beginning of the narrative and another song by an angel at the end of the narrative (vs. 1-3

⁴ See William H. Shea & Ed Christian, "The Chiastic Structure of Rev 12:1-15:4: The Great Controversy Vision," *AUSS*, 38:2 (Autumn 2000), which reveals that the many verbal, synonymous, and thematic parallels between the first part of Rev 14 and Rev 15:1-4 tie them closely together as mirror halves of an elegant chiasm.

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and 21-24). Both of their songs have to do with how just and deserved are the judgments that fall upon the woman.

For these reasons it is not necessary to divide off a separate sanctuary scene in Rev 16:17-20 to introduce a new line of prophecy in Rev 17 and 18. This section connected with the seventh plague does, however, bring up an interesting connection through the sanctuary scenes that have been covered from Rev 4 up to this point. In each of them there is reference to phenomena that accompany their respective judgments. These are listed in a sequence, and in each case the sequence gets longer and more severe. The texts involved are:

- Sanctuary Scene 2—4:5, lightning, voices, and peals of thunder
- Sanctuary Scene 3—8:5, thunder, voices, lightning, and an earthquake
- Sanctuary Scene 4—11:19b, lightning, voices, thunder, an earthquake, and hail
- Sanctuary Scene 5—16:17-21, lightning, voices, thunder, a great earthquake (described), and heavy hail (described)

Each of these lists signals a judgment to come. The judgment with the seals is mild. The judgment with the trumpets is severe. The judgment with Rev 12-14 is still more severe, and the judgment with the plagues is most severe of all. The description of this list is given at the end of the plague sequence, and it forms an inclusio with the sanctuary scene of 15:5-8, it does not divide off another line of prophecy. There are two more sanctuary scenes to follow, but they do not include this list. The sequence is fully completed with the close of probation and the judgments issued from that sanctuary scene. The following two sanctuary scenes lie outside of a time when redemption is still possible, and hence those types of judgments are no longer issued.

No. 6—Revelation 19:1-10

The angels who join the songs of lament at the beginning and end of Rev 18 come down from heaven to earth to join the kings, merchants, and seamen who sing those songs here on earth. Thus the focus of those laments is here on earth. In Rev 19:1-10 there is a shift back to heaven for the next introductory sanctuary scene. The location in heaven is demonstrated by the presence of the twenty-four elders and the four cherubim before the throne of God (v. 4). Thus there is here a return to the scene of Rev 4-5. Not only is the same scene revisited, but the essence of the worship recorded there is carried out here, also, in the songs of praise that are sung to the Father and Son. The location of this singing is said to be in heaven (v. 1), and it is said to be sung there by a “great multitude” (vs. 1 and 6).

The first song sung in this introductory sanctuary scene is sung to the Father, as is the case in Rev 4, but in this case it celebrates His justice in judgment: “Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for his judgments are true and just;” (vs. 1b-2a). In particular His justice has been made

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manifest in His judgments upon the impure woman that are described in Rev 15-18. Thus the song sung to God the Father celebrates Him as Judge.

The song sung to the Son, referred to here as the Lamb, as in Rev 5 (and elsewhere after that chapter), celebrates His marriage: “Hallelujah! For the Lord God Almighty reigns, Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His Bride has made herself ready; It was granted to her to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints” (vs. 6b-8). The title Lord God Almighty that is used here also appears in Rev 4:8 in one of the first of the songs of the elders and cherubim. This song to the Son is sung to Him as he prepares to depart from heaven at the second coming (19:11-16).

Thus the songs sung to the Father and Son in this introductory sanctuary scene from the end of the age celebrate the Father as the Judge and the Son as the Bridegroom. This can be compared with the songs sung at the beginning of the age, as recorded in Rev 4-5.

Beginning of the Age	End of the Age
4:11 Creator God	Father Judge 19:1-2
5:9 Redeemer Christ	Lamb Bridegroom 19:7-8

The prophecies following this introductory sanctuary scene extend the line of salvation history on through the second coming to the beginning, the middle, and the end of the millennium, culminating in the Great White Throne Judgment of Rev 20:11-15. The final line of prophecy in the book is divided off at the end of Rev 20, and it begins with Rev 21:1, which brings up the final introductory sanctuary scene.

No. 7—Revelation 21:1–8

At first glance it appears as if all of Rev 21:1 to 22:4 deals with the same subject, the new earth and the New Jerusalem. In a sense it does, but there is actually a sharp division in this section. The division is marked off by the beginning of the vision, which is repeated twice. Rev 21:2 states that “I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” The same statement is repeated in 21:10. One of the angels with the seven bowls takes John to a great high mountain and shows him “the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God.” This means John saw the vision of the New Jerusalem twice. Each vision, of course, contains different descriptive elements with different associations.

It is interesting to see that the Bible begins with two interrelated narratives about creation and ends with two interrelated narratives about recreation. One may reasonably say, however, that the first of these two visions does not clearly identify the heavenly sanctuary like the previous introductory sanctuary scenes. In fact, Rev 21:22 says that there is no temple in the city. It is not needed anymore. The plan of salvation administered from the heavenly sanctuary is over; it

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has accomplished all it could accomplish. Now God can dwell directly and personally among His redeemed people.

While there is no temple in the city because it is no longer needed, there is a sense in which the whole city serves as a temple. This is manifested, for example, in the various stones that are used for the foundation of the wall of the city (21:18-20).

These resemble the twelve stones placed upon the breastplate of the priest who ministered in the Old Testament sanctuary (Exod 28:15-21). In the Old Testament system, only the temple and its immediately surrounding area was holy, in the midst of an unholy camp or city. In the new earth, the entire city will be holy, in fulfillment of the prophecy of Zech 14:20-21. Thus, the city itself will be the sanctuary, in a sense, and for that reason it is called the "holy city." This connection, however, is a general one. The question is, then, is there anything in the first of these two visions that connects it more directly with the heavenly sanctuary than the other. Following the pattern we have seen throughout the book, it should be the first of these two visions that should be more directly connected. Upon closer inspection, there is such a connection. While the vision begins with the new heaven and new earth and is followed by the view of the New Jerusalem descending to earth, this first vision then reverts back to heaven.

When this vision reverts back to heaven, John then hears "a loud voice from the throne" (21:3). This is followed up by the second statement that "he who sat upon the throne said," (21:5). This is different from the second vision in which John is told about the city by the angel who accompanies him, the angel who takes him to the great high mountain. That angel speaks to him about the city (21:15 and 22:1). Thus there is a distinct difference between these two visions about the source from which the information about the city comes. In the first vision that voice speaks to him directly from the throne, which, at that point in time, is still in heaven. In the second vision the angel interpreter accompanies John through his vision about the city and tells him about it.

This means that while the second vision is more earth centered, the first vision still issues from the throne of God in heaven, in the heavenly sanctuary, from which the conclusion to the plan of salvation is shown to his servant John. There is a more direct connection with the heavenly sanctuary in the first vision than in the second. That makes it another introductory sanctuary scene. This is the initial vision introducing the second and final vision about the New Jerusalem.

The first vision also has more direct connections with the Old Testament sanctuary in terms of the message that it gives. The main message here is given in verse three, supplemented by what follows. The message of verse three is that, "Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them."

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The word used here for dwelling is *skene*, and the verb used for his “dwelling” with them is derived from this root. In the Old Testament, and in the book of Hebrews in the New Testament in particular (chapter 9), the word *skene* is used for, among other things, the tent of the sanctuary in which the presence of God dwelt with his people. This was in fulfillment of Exod 25:8, “Let them make me a sanctuary that I may dwell in their midst.” This Old Testament instruction has now met its final fulfillment, not in a sanctuary that men built for God, but in a sanctuary---a city---that God built for them.

The second bicolon of this verse also has direct Old Testament connections. It presents the ultimate fulfillment of the most direct statement about what the Old Covenant was. Lev 26:12 gives the essence of the Old Covenant, “I will be their God and they shall be my people.” Initially, this Old Testament relation failed because of the failure of the people. The question can then be raised, did the promise fail completely? The answer here is no; instead, it finds its ultimate fulfillment in the New Jerusalem in the new earth. All this is announced from the throne of God in the heavenly sanctuary. The location of these statements has connections there, and the content of the statements has connections with instructions and promises related to the Old Testament sanctuary. Even the vocabulary used relates to that Old Testament tent. This first vision about the new heaven and the new earth and its New Jerusalem thus has more direct connections with both the earthly and the heavenly sanctuary than does the second vision following it. Thus the first vision of Rev 21:1-8 serves as the sanctuary scene which introduces the second vision, the prophecy of Rev 21:9-22:4 which follows it. Obviously, however, there is a direct connection and relationship between the two, just as there has been with the preceding sanctuary scenes and the prophecies they introduced.

The Cultic Calendar

Now that the seven introductory sanctuary scenes of Revelation have been isolated and described, they may be set into the scheme of the ancient Israelite religious calendar. The festivals of this calendar are identified in particular in Lev 23, and the list of the additional sacrifices that accompanied those festivals is outlined in Num 28-29. The function of this second section of this study is to see how well the events in the course of that calendar can be fitted to these sanctuary scenes. The theory presented here, and by others previously, is that the fit is quite compatible, perhaps even more complementary than has previously been suspected. In order to demonstrate this, the list of sanctuary scenes given above is reviewed again, now with an eye towards the particular connection of each scene with specific events in the religious calendar.

No. I—Revelation 1:12–20: The Daily or Continual Ministry

This has already been discussed in connection with the description of the lampstands before which Christ, as priest, ministers. The specific textual con-

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nection with the Old Testament daily ministry is made by the repeated use of the word for “daily, continual” in the Levitical instructions about tending the lamps (Lev twenty-four:1-4).

The daily ministry is not mentioned in the calendar of Lev 23, but it is the very first section of the instructions about the sacrifices in Num 28:1-8.

No. 2A—Revelation 4:1–11: Passover

The Passover sacrifice is not mentioned directly in this narrative. Nevertheless, there are elements present in this narrative which connect it here. First of all, there is the presence of the twenty-four elders. In the discussion of this sanctuary scene above, they were identified as human beings. Here now we can ask the question about their function in the heavenly temple. Some of that function derives from their number, twenty-four.

Why twenty-four? Why not one, or two or seventy (cf. Exod 24:1, 9)? The most direct connection available has to do with the number of priestly courses that served in the temple.

There were twenty-four of those priestly courses. Each one served one week in the first half of the year and one week in the second half of the year. Then, along with all other adult males of Israel, all twenty-four courses attended three of the festivals: Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. That made up their service for the levitical year.

Particular attention has been paid to the chronology of the order of these courses because of the reference to Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, as belonging to the priestly course of Abijah (Luke 1:5). If one could figure out when he ministered in the temple, one could determine the approximate time of John’s conception and birth. Then, since John was related to Jesus, if one could determine John’s birth date, Jesus’ birth date could also be determined, since John was six months older than Jesus (Luke 1:26). These calculations are complicated, however, because it is uncertain whether Zechariah was serving in his spring course or his fall term. In the most recent discussion of this matter J. Finegan points to Zechariah’s priestly course in the temple from Nov 10 through 17 as the time when the forthcoming birth of John was announced to him.⁵

Our purpose here is not to determine the birth date of either John or Jesus. Our purpose is to illustrate the function of the priestly courses through the calendar of the religious year. In the case of Rev 4, however, it is not one priestly course that is on duty, but all twenty-four. This happened only three times in the year, at the festivals of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. Since this is the first festival worship scene to which we come in the book of Revelation, this should be Passover. It occurs first in the list of Lev 23 and first after the daily and the Sabbath in Num 28. It is interesting to note that these twenty-four repre-

⁵ *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, rev. ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998), 130-134, 275-278.

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representatives of the priestly courses also show up later in the scenes from Pentecost and Tabernacles discussed below.

This worship scene with the representatives of the twenty-four priestly courses serving in the temple is thus identified best with the first major festival of the religious calendar. It is a Passover worship scene.

There is another element that is not here that argues for the same connection.

It is an argument from silence, but a glaring silence. Jesus is not in this scene. He does not come into it until the associated narrative of Rev 5, but that has another connection, as is discussed immediately following this discussion. Jesus is present in Rev 1. He is present all the way through all of the messages to the seven churches in Rev 2-3. He is present in Rev 5. But He is not here in Rev 4. Is there a reason why He would not normally be here? Jesus was the ultimate antitypical fulfillment of the Passover lamb. That is the way he shows up in Rev 5, as the Passover lamb whose wound had healed. But he is not present in Rev 4, which serves as a Passover scene. Is there a reason why the lamb would not be present during this service? Yes, there is. That was the time of His sacrifice. He was not in the temple because he was out in the courtyard, on the cross, being sacrificed. When he next appears, he shows the wounds of that sacrifice. Thus the presence of the representatives of the twenty-four priestly courses are shown ministering in the temple in this Passover-style service, and the Lamb is not shown there because this is the time of His sacrifice. Thus this first introductory sanctuary scene shown as occurring in the heavenly throne room is best identified with the first major festival of the ancient Israelite calendar, Passover

No. 2B—Revelation 5:1–14: Pentecost or the Feast of Weeks

While in one sense Rev 4 and 5 are connected, in another sense they are separate narratives. The twenty-four elders are still here, or perhaps it would be better to say they reappear here (5:8, 11). The next major festival in the Israelite religious calendar was Pentecost, referred to as the Feast of Weeks because it was measured off by the seven weeks following Passover. There is a major element in this narrative that points to it as a Pentecost type of festival, and that has to do with the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is present in the scene of Rev 4, “before the throne burn the seven torches of fire which are the seven spirits of God” (v. 5). The Holy Spirit serves a different function, however, in Rev 5. There it is mentioned, but it is mentioned as having been sent out into the world. The Lamb is shown standing there, “with seven horns and seven eyes which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth” (v. 6).

The presence of the Holy Spirit is manifest in heaven in a special way in the scene of Rev 4, the Passover scene. Now, with this new scene of Rev 5, the Holy Spirit has been sent from heaven into all the earth. When did this happen? The New Testament describes that event as occurring on Pentecost (Acts 2).

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There the Holy Spirit is depicted as tongues of fire descending upon the heads of the apostles as they preach on that day. In Rev 4, before they are sent out, they are described as seven torches of fire. When they are sent out they are described as seven horns, representing power, and seven eyes, representing knowledge. Seven is the number of completeness, and thus here, when the Lamb has sent the Spirit out into the world it represents the omnipotence and the omniscience of God that is active in the world. The time when it goes to work in that specific way is most directly on the day of Pentecost. Now, in this scene, the wounded but healed Passover Lamb that was not present in the Passover scene has sent His power and knowledge into the world through the Holy Spirit.

That is the earthly manifestation of this heavenly pentecostal festival, but there is another corresponding function of heaven: the inauguration of Jesus as King. That is the scene that is shown here. He is first identified by His earthly messianic titles, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah and the Root of David. The Messiah King was to come from the tribe of Judah (Gen 49:10), and more specifically he was to come from Bethlehem, David's own town (Mic 5:2). Thus Jesus is known here not by His heavenly divine titles, but by His earthly royal messianic titles, for here now He is inaugurated as King upon His return to heaven from the time he spent on earth between Passover and Pentecost. The same royal function of the Lamb is shown by the ever-expanding choir singing his praises in this heavenly scene.

The pentecostal function of this heavenly sanctuary scene is twofold. On the earthly side it represents the sending out of the Holy Spirit into the world. On the heavenly side it represents the inauguration of Jesus as King upon His return from His victory in the world.

No. 3—Rev 8:2–5: The Seven New Moon Festivals

The action in this introductory sanctuary scene takes place at the golden altar of incense in the holy place. It is, therefore, part of the daily service of the priestly function. Associated with it are the seven angels who blow their seven trumpets successively, and each of the prophetic scenes unfolds as they do so. The new moon of the seventh month, the 1st of Tishri, was the festival of trumpets *par excellence*. But the other new moons in the cultic calendar also had this signal associated with them, though in a lesser way. The festival calendar of Lev 23 mentions only the new moon festival of the seventh month (Lev 23:23-25). In the cultic calendar of Num 28-29, however, the new moon festivals of all of the months are referred to (Num 28:11-15).⁶ In both Old and New Testament times the month was lunar, in that the first day of the month was announced when the first crescent of the moon was observed. In both Old Testament and New Tes-

⁶ Today we give little thought to the new moon festivals, yet Isa 66:22–23 indicates that the new moon festivals and the seventh-day Sabbath will still be celebrated in the new earth, as all the redeemed come to the New Jerusalem to bow before God.

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tament times this was done by physical observation, it was not determined by astronomical calculation.⁷

A lunar month is 29.5 days and a fraction in terms of astronomical calculations. In practical terms this meant a month had either twenty-nine or thirty days, depending on when the crescent of the new moon was observed. Since this determination was observational in nature, it had to be signaled throughout the land once the determination had been made in Jerusalem. There was also the problem of signaling when the extra months were to be added. About every three years or so an intercalated thirteenth month was added to keep the lunar year even with the solar year. This too needed to be signaled, not only in Judea, but also in the diaspora throughout the Roman empire. Messengers were sent out to accomplish this. The seven trumpets of Rev 8-11 provide a fitting symbol for this kind of signal.

This does not mean each trumpet should be taken as signaling a period of thirty days or thirty years. It is simply that the figure of the signal, drawn from the idea of signaling the beginning of each month, was used for this prophetic series of symbols. It should also be noted that there are seven of them, not twelve for all twelve months. These seven monthly signals take one, in the cultic calendar, from 1 Nisan, to 1 Tishri, from the new moon of the first month to the new moon of the seventh month. The new moon of that seventh month is also, of course, the Festival of Trumpets. It announces the fall festivals to follow.

Thus, these seven trumpet symbols take one from the spring festivals, utilized in figure in the first half of the book (Passover and Pentecost), to the fall festivals, those of Yom Kippur and Tabernacles or *Sukkot*. In this way one finds the spring festivals in the first half of the book of Revelation and the fall festivals in its second half. The bridge between them are the seven trumpets, the figure for which was drawn from the signaling of the seven months between the Spring New Year and the Fall New Year.

Thus, the sanctuary scene of Rev 8:2-5 not only represents the continuation of the daily ministry, but is also connected more specifically with the seven new moons signaled between those two main focal points in the calendar.

No. 4—Revelation 11:19: The Commencement of the Day of Atonement

The connection of the view of the Ark of the Covenant with the Day of Atonement is quite obvious and has been discussed above at some length. The point that should be emphasized here is that the reference in this verse is to the opening of the temple: i. e., it refers to the commencement of that work. In the camp of ancient Israel this was a day of judgment, and anyone who did not enter into the spirit of the day was to be cut off from the camp. In like manner, the

⁷ R. T. Beckwith, "Cautionary Notes on the Use of Calendars and Astronomy to Determine the Chronology of the Passion," in *Chronos, Kairos, Christos*, ed. J. Vardaman and E. M. Yamauchi (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1989), 186-188.

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antitypical Day of Atonement is a time of judgment. That work is seen as beginning in this introductory sanctuary scene.

No. 5—Revelation 15:5–8: The Conclusion of the Day of Atonement

The sanctuary scene described here as associated with the sending forth of the plague bowls uses language that indicates that all mediatorial work in the heavenly sanctuary has ceased, both from the daily service, as described in Rev 1 and 8, and from the yearly service, described in 11:19. Probation has closed for the human race. More immediately, the work of investigative judgment carried on in the antitypical Day of Atonement has also ceased. That is the more direct connection here, although the daily ministry is also involved.

No 6—Revelation 19:1–10 - The Commencement of the Feast of Booths

This scene has been described above as an introductory sanctuary scene, and so it is. The question about it is, however, when and where should it be located in the course of the flow of the prophecies of Revelation? Above, the connection with the heavenly sanctuary has been made, because the voice comes out of heaven and the elders and the cherubim are there in the scene singing along with the “great multitude.” Who belongs to the great multitude and where do they come from? The position adopted here is that they represent the redeemed, not angels, and they are represented as being in heaven at this time.

Two lines of evidence lead to this conclusion. The first is the linguistic association of the phrase, “great multitude.” The Greek word for multitude is *ochlos* in the genitive. It is modified in both instances, verses 1 and 6, with the same adjective, *pollou*, which yields the meaning “great multitude.” The same phrase is also found in Rev 7:9, where the great multitude gathered around the throne clearly are the redeemed. They have been gathered from every nation, tribe, people, and tongue.

They celebrate before the same throne in heaven also encircled by the cherubim and the elders. In addition, the text says of them, “Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night within his temple, and he who sits upon the throne will shelter them with his presence” (v. 15). Clearly then, these are the redeemed in heaven, and they celebrate there after having been taken there at the second coming of Christ. Some were translated and some were resurrected, but none of them were immortal souls who went there at death, since the Bible does not know of that kind of a state of immortality. In this case the phrase “great multitude” is spelled *ochlos polus*, which makes this group linguistically equivalent to the great multitude in Rev 19:1 and 6.

The group in Rev 7:9ff is also directly connected with a celebration that is identified through Old Testament connections to the Feast of Tabernacles. The connection comes through the fact that they celebrate before the throne of God “with palm branches in their hands” (v. 9). This is a reflex from Lev 23:40, where the saints who gathered to celebrate the Feast of Booths or *Sukkot* were to

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“take on the first day the fruit of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook.” The purpose of the reference to the palm branches in heaven in Rev 7:9 is to show that this is the antitypical fulfillment of the Feast of Booths. Since that is the case in 7:9, it should also be the case with the great multitude in 19:1, 6.

They also sing with a great voice in both 7:10 and 19:1. In 19:6 that voice is described as the voice of a great multitude without the modifying adjective for voice. There, however, additional clauses are added to tell how mighty that voice is. It is “like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunderpeals.” This phrase also has connections elsewhere in Revelation, for in 14:2, which depicts Christ and the 144,000 on the heavenly Mount Zion (Heb 12:22), the voice heard from heaven is “like the sound of many waters, like the sound of loud thunder.” Thus the voices of the multitude heard in 14:3 and 19:6 are essentially the same, and that is another link to the Feast of Tabernacles, for the earthly procedure for that feast was to gather in Jerusalem, living in booths for the week of the celebration.

The scene in Rev 14:1-4 is in turn connected with the scene in Rev 15:1-4, where the song those redeemed sing is now identified and quoted.

The thematic connection is made here with all these scenes of the righteous redeemed in heaven for the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles. This occurs during the millennium, as described in Rev 20:4-6. There are, however, four antecedent and related scenes, and they have been mentioned above: Rev 7:9-17, 14:1-5, 15:1-4, and 19:1-10. Thus, there is considerable evidence from Revelation that the millennium will be spent in heaven, along with the depiction of the New Jerusalem coming down from there at the end of the Millennium (Rev 21:2, 10). These five Feast of Tabernacle-like passages combine to point out a Sabbatical-like millennial theology.

During the Feast of Tabernacles the Israelites left their homes in the land and went to live in Jerusalem during the eight days of the feast. In like manner these saints leave their home here on earth to live in Jerusalem in heaven during the antitypical Feast of Tabernacles. The land they left behind lies fallow during that period, just as it did during the Sabbatical year.⁸

From linguistic links and thematic connections elsewhere in Revelation, it may be concluded that the introductory sanctuary scene of Rev 19:1-10 gives an anticipatory or proleptic view of the redeemed in heaven when they begin to celebrate the antitypical Feast of Tabernacles there.

No. 7 A—Revelation 21:1–8: The Conclusion to the Feast of Booths

The sanctuary introduction has been isolated from the body of the prophecy in Rev 21-22 by the two references by John to his view of the city of God com-

⁸ On this subject see R. M. Johnston, “The Eschatological Sabbath in John’s Apocalypse: A Reconsideration,” *AUSS* 25:1 (Spring 1987): 39-50.

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ing down to earth from heaven. The first of these scenes introduces the sanctuary prophecy and the second introduces the main body of the prophecy. After its view of the city of God coming down out of heaven, he returns to listen to the message of God from His throne in the temple in heaven. That voice tells how God will come to dwell with His people forever and they will be His people, in fulfillment of two texts in the OT, Exod 25:8 and Lev 26:12.

This is the reverse of the scene found in Rev 19:1-10. There John sees the scene in the heavenly sanctuary and listens to the redeemed people singing praises to their God. If that tells of the beginning of the antitypical Feast of Tabernacles, then the reverse should describe its end. That end comes when the people of God come back to earth, and that is what is decreed in Rev 21:1-8. After the introductory view of the city coming down, all of the statements which follow tell about God's relation with His people and who will be in the eternal kingdom (the blessed) and who will not (the cursed). The decree is, therefore, that the people of God return home to earth after their time dwelling where Jerusalem is, in heaven.

There is one new feature here, however, and that is that the city itself accompanies them as they return to earth. In the Old Testament festival the people went up to Jerusalem for the week, they lived in booths there, and then they returned home when the festival was over. Jerusalem stayed where it was. In this case the city accompanies them back to their earthly home so the people and the city will dwell together in the earth made new. All of this occurs at the end of the millennium, according to the order of the text of Revelation.

Supplemented by other passages in Revelation, cited above, this section toward the end of the book gives three views of the antitypical Feast of Tabernacles. The first, the sanctuary introduction of 19:1-10, shows the saints after they have arrived in heaven, celebrating in the temple there. The second scene, Rev 20:4-6, shows them at the work of judgment on thrones with Christ during the millennium. The third scene shows the city coming down to the earth after the millennium and after the antitypical Feast of Tabernacles is over. As the city comes down the voice of God from the throne decrees the eternal welfare of the righteous.

No. 7B—Rev 21:9-22:4: The Great Sabbath of the Festival of Tabernacles

I have given the body of this prophecy a separate section because it too has connections with the last festival of the cultic calendar. The celebration connected with the Feast of Tabernacles lasted eight days, a day longer than the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The legislation in Lev 23 describing the Feast of Tabernacles speaks several times to the fact that the feast was seven days long (vs. 39, 40, 41, 42). Only once does it speak of the eighth day (v. 39), indicating it was to be a ceremonial Sabbath. The cultic calendar of Num 29 lists separate offerings for each of the eight days for this festival and indicates, as does Lev 23, that the first and eighth days were to be ceremonial Sabbaths (vs. 12-38). It

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also indicates that the Feast of Unleavened Bread was to be only seven days (Num 28:16-25). Its first day and seventh day were to be especially holy days.

Thus, the eighth day of the Feast of Tabernacles was something unique and set apart that was not replicated in any of the other festivals of the entire religious calendar year. That last day of the feast was also called its “great day” and was observed by Jesus during the last Festival of Tabernacles in His earthly ministry in a special way (John 7:2, 37-39). On that day He stood up and gave His great appeal about the Water of Life, “If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink” (v. 37).

A major part of the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles involved the use of water. Each morning of the feast the priest led a procession down to the Gihon spring on the east side of Jerusalem, the spring that filled the Pool of Siloam through Hezekiah’s water tunnel. As the priest filled the golden pitcher with water from the spring, the choir accompanying him sang Isa 12:3. Then the procession returned to the altar of burnt offering in the courtyard of the temple. The crowds that accompanied him carried the *lulab*, which consisted of myrtle and willow twigs tied together with strips from palm branches. This was in fulfillment of the instruction in Lev 23:40 and is reflected in antitypical fulfillment in Rev 7:9. When they reached the courtyard, the people walked around the altar singing Ps 118:25 while the priest went up the steps of the altar to pour the water down a silver tube. On the seventh day of the festival the people walked around the altar seven times.⁹

The reflection here was twofold. It looked back to the times when God miraculously provided the people with water in the wilderness, and it looked forward to the rains that began in the fall after the festival, as they were necessary for the production of a good crop. There is also the messianic prophecy of Zech 14, which tells how all the nations will come up to Jerusalem to keep the Feast of Booths (vs. 16-19). When those conditions have come there will be a perpetual flowing of waters from Jerusalem, some to the east and some to the west (v. 8).

On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stands up in the midst of the people and invites them to drink of the water that He provides, the water of life. It is not so much the water that God provided in the wilderness for your fathers that is important. Nor is it the waters that you have used daily in this festival that are important. What is really important is the water of life that I provide for you.

Light also played a very great part in the celebration of this festival, as it reflected upon the time in the wilderness when God led His people by the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire. The pillar of fire illuminated the camp in the wilderness during the nighttime. This was celebrated in the temple precincts by the use of four great golden bowls placed atop four large golden lampstands. These

⁹ For this description of the ceremonies see R. E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John I–XII* [Garden City: Anchor Doubleday, 1982], 327.

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were placed in the court of the women. The lampstands were so tall that the priests had to use ladders to reach their tops, and the bowls placed atop them were so large that the wicks used in them were the worn out garments of the priests. These were probably lighted each evening, but especially on the opening day of the festival (Ibid., 344).

At His final Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus also reflects upon this practice. In John 8, while still in Jerusalem for the Festival, Jesus proclaims, “I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (v. 12).

Again, Jesus is saying it is not the light God gave your fathers in the wilderness that is so important. Nor is it the light you are supplying to Jerusalem during this festival that is important, either. I am the light of the world, and I fulfill this feature of the festival in an even greater way. The messianic prophecy of Zech 14 also refers to this feature, for when the nations come up to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Booths (vs. 16-19) they will find the light of perpetual day there (v. 7).

These features of light and water are especially prominent in the body of the prophecy about the New Jerusalem in Rev 21-22. It has already been mentioned above that there will be no temple there (21:22), because the whole city has become the sanctuary where God dwells with His people with no more need of separation between them. All of it is holy, in fulfillment of the prophecy of Zech 14:20-21. The stones of the foundation resemble the stones on the breastplate of the OT priest (21:18-20, cf. Exod 28:17-20). Now there is also stress upon the nations that will come into that city, as they were to come to the festival of booths, according to Zech 14. The nations walk into the city through the gates by the light of the glory of God, and the kings of earth come in with them (21:24). The leaves of the tree of life are for the healing of the nations (22:2).

The same major features of light and water found with the Feast of Tabernacles also show up in the description of the New Jerusalem. “The city has no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light shall the nations walk; . . .and its gates shall never be shut by day—and there shall be no night there” (21:23-25). “And night shall be no more; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light and they shall reign for ever and ever” (22:5).

Between these two major statements about light is the major statement about water, “Then he showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river” (22:1-2). These two features can now be compared, as they are found through the course of salvation history. First, God supplied light and water in a miraculous way to the fathers in the wilderness. Then Zechariah prophesied about the use of these features in the future feast of booths, when the nations would come to Jerusalem. In Jesus’ time, at His last Feast of Tabernacles, He proclaimed that He Himself was the Water of

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Life, and in association with that He also described Himself as the Light of the World. In the final fulfillment of all things, as described in this passage in Revelation, light and water again show up as vital and miraculous ingredients of life in the New Jerusalem.

The prominence of these features of water and light in the description of the New Jerusalem come together to emphasize the connection of this description with the Feast of Tabernacles in an ongoing way. But it was not the festival proper that finds its fulfillment here, for its beginning, middle, and end have been described in Rev 19:1-10, 20:4-6, and 21:1-8. In other words, the body of the festival is now over by this time, but one thing remains: the eighth day, the great day of the feast, the Great Sabbath of the feast. That is fulfilled antitypically in the New Earth and the New Jerusalem.

Summary

The results of this correlation of the cultic calendar of ancient Israel with the introductory sanctuary scenes of Revelation can now be summarized by use of the following table:

Revelation Text	Sanctuary Scene	Calendar Correlation	Following Prophecy
1:12-20	Lampstands	Daily	7 Churches
4:1-11	Throne Scene I	Passover	(7 Seals)
5:1-14	Lamb Appears	Pentecost	7 Seals
8:2-5	Incense Altar	New Moons	7 Trumpets
11:19	Ark of the Covenant	Day of Atonement Begins	Rev 12-14
15:5-8	Temple Closed	Day of Atonement Ends	7 Plagues
19:1-10	Throne Scene II	Tabernacles Begins	Rev 19b-20
21:1-8	New Jerusalem I	Tabernacles Ends	Rev 21:9-22:4
21:9-22:4	New Jerusalem II	8 th Day / The Great Sabbath	Eternity

Appendix: Effect upon “the Lord’s Day” in Revelation 1:10

John says he received these visions when he was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day. The Greek phrase used in this case is unusual, *kuriake hemera*. This is the standard form of the noun for Lord, *kurias*, plus an adjectival ending.

It is this adjectival ending that has made this word unusual and occasioned a considerable amount of discussion. This form occurs only one other place in the New Testament, in 1 Cor 11:20, but there it is connected with the Lord’s supper, not the Lord’s day. While other theories have been advocated, the discussion of the occurrence in Rev 1:10 has generally been narrowly based. Sabbatical advocates have pointed to biblical texts such as Isa 58:13 and Mark 2:27-28 to show that the Sabbath was the day above all others that was claimed by the Lord as especially His. Dominical advocates have pointed to the use of this phrase by the church fathers in the late second and third centuries to apply its use to Sunday.

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Possibilities. As can be seen from the above survey of the calendar connections of the sanctuary scenes in Revelation, a number of other possibilities could be considered. These include Passover (Rev 4), Pentecost (Rev 5), the Day of Atonement (Rev 11), and some date in the Feast of Tabernacles (Rev 19-21). There is a sense in which each of these festival days could also be claimed as a special day of the Lord. Sabbath, however, lays claim to being a special day of the Lord in a more direct sense, and the use of the cultic calendar in Revelation emphasizes the position of the Sabbath as the head of the calendar.

Sabbath. First, there are those texts above which indicate the Sabbath was a special possession of the Lord. Isaiah 58:13 refers to it as “my holy day.” The same claim is reiterated in the New Testament in Mark 2:27–28, where Jesus says he is “Lord also of the Sabbath day.” These claims can now be reinforced in light of the religious calendars of Lev 23 and Num 28–29. The calendar of Lev 23 starts directly with the Sabbath. After announcing that what follows is a list of the appointed feasts of the Lord (Lev 23:1), the text goes on to refer to the Sabbath in the first position, “Six days shall work be done; but on the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation; you shall do no work; it is a Sabbath to the Lord in all your dwellings” (Lev 23:3). The Sabbath is identified as a special day in three different ways, the third of which indicates it is a Sabbath to the Lord. Then, after this reference to the Sabbath, the main introduction to the festivals is given again (Lev 23:4), and the legislation about the Passover comes immediately after that. One could say the Sabbath is set aside in a particular way by the envelope of this main introduction, which is given twice, before and after the Sabbath.

The same thing can be said for the cultic calendar of Num 28–29, which provides the list of the special sacrifices for the feast days. Numbers 28 follows a more strict calendric approach. It starts with the daily, then goes to the weekly, then to the monthly, and finally to the yearly or annual festivals. In this case the Sabbath comes in second place (Num 28:9–10), after the daily (vs. 1–8). In Revelation, however, the daily is represented by the vision of Jesus before the lampstands. That should put the Sabbath at the end of Rev 1, but instead it precedes it in v. 10. Thus it takes its place here at the head of the sacrificial calendar, too.

In addition to the texts in which the Sabbath is claimed as a special possession of the Lord, therefore, both the major cultic calendars place the Sabbath at the head of the list. It comes first in Lev 23, set apart in a special way, and it comes at the beginning of the calendar, along with the daily, in the calendar of Num 28. One would expect, on this basis, therefore, that the Sabbath would also come at the head of the liturgical calendar that proceeds through the book of Revelation. With the Sabbath identified as the Lord’s Day in Rev 1:10, it does just that. Thus, the Sabbath is the prime candidate for the nomination for that day in that passage.

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Caesar's Day. A couple other days from the festival calendar might be considered here. One of those is the Day of Atonement, also viewed in Rev 11:19. The reason this date could be taken into consideration has to do with the use of the word *kuriake* in connection with objects and events possessed by Caesar. This occurs a number of times in the first and second centuries. The problem here is that this word for Caesar's possessions is never used with a day. While there were days celebrated as special days for the deified Caesars, this word for possessions is never used with them.

Nevertheless, there is an interesting calendrical connection with Domitian. Domitian received royal orders on September 13, 81 A.D. He was assassinated on September 18 in 96 A.D. In that particular year, therefore, his death date fell only five days after his accession date. His accession date was known in Latin as his *Dies imperii*, which could readily be translated into Greek as *kuriake hemera*, the Lord's or Emperor's day. The reason this is of interest in connection with the Israelite cultic calendar is that the Day of Atonement fell directly between these two days in 96 A.D. According to the Jewish calendar calculated in *The Book of Calendars*,¹⁰ the first day of Tishri, the fall New Year, fell on Monday, September 5 in that year. This means the tenth day of Tishri, the Day of Atonement, fell on Wednesday, September 14.

In 96 A.D., the year to which the early church pointed for the imprisonment of John, Domitian's *Dies imperii*, or his *kuriake hemera* in Greek, fell on September 13, and the Day of Atonement fell on September 14. There is a connection that is closer still. Roman days were figured from midnight to midnight. Jewish days, like the Sabbath, however, were figured from sunset to sunset. This means the Jewish day of September 14 began at sundown on September 13, which was also Domitian's date of accession. Thus, if John's vision on the *kuriake hemera* was Caesar's accession date, and if that vision came in the evening of that day, it would also have fallen on the Day of Atonement.

This is of interest because the Day of Atonement was a day of judgment in the camp of Ancient Israel. The person who did not enter into the spirit of the day both mentally and physically was to be cut off from the camp. This was the day upon which the final judgment on sin was carried out in the sanctuary with the atonement made by the blood of the Lord's goat (Lev 16). As a day of judgment, one might expect it could, on occasion, be connected with a judgment made against one or more of the Lord's enemies, like Domitian, who imprisoned John for his witness for the Lord.

There is at least one vision in the prophets which was given on the day of Atonement, and that was the final vision of restoration in the book of Ezekiel. It was given on the 10th day of Rosh Hashanan, ten days after the fall New Year. That puts this vision of Ezekiel on the Day of Atonement. This was a day of judgment, too, but judgment can cut both ways. In this case it was a judgment on

¹⁰ Ed. F. Parise (New York: Facts on File, 1982), 15.

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behalf or in favor of the Lord's people, that they would be restored to their land and that the land would be built up again. Thus, if there is a parallel here between Ezekiel and John, Ezekiel's last vision was given on the Day of Atonement, and John's overall vision, the final one of the era, could also have been given on the Day of Atonement, a day of judgment upon the Christian era and the Christian church as a whole.

There is at least one case known when this worked out this way in Old Testament times. It had to do with the fall of Babylon in the time of Nabonidus and Belshazzar. According to the Nabonidus Chronicle, the city of Babylon fell to the army of Cyrus without a battle on Tishri 16 (539 B.C.) This date was favorable for the Persians because the Euphrates River was at its lowest ebb at that time of year, and the river bed provided them with access to the city. It also fell just six days after the Jewish Day of Atonement. This is interesting in view of the way Daniel came to interpret the mysterious handwriting on the wall to Belshazzar. He said, "You have been weighed in the balances and found wanting." He also said God had "numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end." The act of weighing in the balances was, of course, an act of judgment. As a result of that judgment, God had numbered the days of Belshazzar's rule, and on the night that Daniel appeared before Belshazzar, those days had come to an end. That night fell on Tishri 16, as we know from the Nabonidus Chronicle. The kingdom was taken by the Persians that night, and Belshazzar was slain. With the Day of Atonement just six days before this description of the pronouncement of judgment, the pronouncement of that judgment and the number of days left to Belshazzar could easily have been given six days earlier, on the Day of Atonement.

Thus, there are some precedents for a vision on the Day of Atonement and a judgment pronounced upon the Day of Atonement. Since Caesar's accession day or *kuriake hemera* overlapped with the Day of Atonement, the judgment carried out against him by the assassin's hand five days later could be seen as the carrying out of a divine judgment against him, established on the Day of Atonement. Given how Domitian exalted himself to the status of deity and persecuted saints like John, that judgment would have been most appropriate.

The Spring New Year. A third possibility is that this date in Rev 1:10 could be connected with the Spring New Year's Day, which is not otherwise mentioned in Revelation (or in the cultic calendars of Lev 23 and Num 28–29). That date does not appear to have been of very great importance in ancient Israel, however, perhaps to avoid the connections with the fertility cult practiced across the ancient Near East in the spring, to bring fertility to the harvest of the crops. It may have been in order to avoid those connections, to which the Israelites were susceptible through Baal worship, that the Spring New Year was not emphasized in ancient Israel. Passover took the place of the Spring New Year celebration, and it was set off from it in the calendar and had other historical connections. Given this lack of emphasis on the Spring New Year in the Old

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Testament and in the practice of ancient Israel, it seems unlikely that it would be emphasized here in Revelation

Sunday. As one can see from the description of the sanctuary scenes above and their connections with the dates in the ancient cultic calendar of Israel, Sunday obviously is a very unlikely candidate for the Lord's day in Rev 1:10 because Sunday had no place in that ancient cultic calendar.

Summary. In summary, Sabbath remains the most likely connection of this reference to the Lord's day of Rev 1:10, both on the basis of explicit statements about it elsewhere in the Bible and on the basis of its connection with the head of the Israelite cultic calendar. The interpretation that this phrase could be translated as the Lord's Day, referring to Caesar, holds some interesting potential connections with the Day of Atonement in 96 A.D., but this interpretation probably should still occupy only second place in the list of possibilities for the Lord's Day on Rev 1:10. The Spring New Year remains a more remote possibility on the basis of its calendar connections. To the extent to which the calendar connections have been elucidated correctly above, Sunday is ruled out as a possibility, since it had no such calendar connections.

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Job as Paradigm for the Eschaton

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The fourteenth chapter of the Apocalypse describes a company standing on Mount Zion bearing on their consciousness the permanent stamp of deity (Rev 14:1-5; cf. Ezek 9:4; Eph 4:30). The group's members are remarkable for chastity of conduct (v. 4) and blamelessness of speech (v. 5). Their purity provides the ultimate testimony to the justice of God and the efficacy of Christ's grace. This memorable apocalyptic picture of heaven's prize purchase from the human race (v. 4) sounds a distinct echo of that Old Testament depiction of saintliness first encountered in the character of Job, perfect, upright, God fearing, and eschewing evil (1:1). The present essay reflects upon a possible relationship between several themes of the book of Job: Job's integrity, Eliphaz' revelation, Yahweh's appearance, the character of Leviathan, Job's recantation, and the virginal company of Rev 14. The themes I mention from the book of Job are not conventionally discussed in the context of last things. Their analysis will not include attempts to resolve all questions on the manner and time of the parousia, the character and schedule of the Antichrist, the battle of Armageddon, or the final judgment. However, their study does attempt to stimulate discussion on whether a paradigmatic reading of Job's character might properly be viewed as typical of the 144,000 of the Apocalypse. I raise the question because what is said of that company is first said of Job, that at the end of their trial they are of blameless lips, that in a unique way they are God's exemplary representatives (Job 1:22; 2:10; 42:7-9; Rev 14:5).

Character Portrayal in Job

The book of Job offers commentary on a series of contrasts: between integrity and cowardice (compromise, incompetence), between justice and power, between independence and submissiveness, between wisdom and tradition (knowledge), between loyalty and self-preservation, between honesty (candor) and rationalization. The speakers preoccupy themselves with these dichotomies,

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define themselves, and are defined, by their attitude to these values and their antitheses.¹ Paramount among the values considered in the book is the virtue of integrity. It is the basis, first of all, for introduction of the book's principal human interlocutor (1:1). Later, in conjunction with other virtues, it justifies repeated divine celebration of his character (v. 8; 2:3). It inspires adversarial abuse and spousal insult, and, in the end, draws forth resounding vindication. Extraction of the book's definitive statements on this value is, simultaneously, extraction of the author's characterization of Job, after whom the book is named. Integrity both describes his conduct and constitutes the foundation of his structure of understanding. For reasons yet to be cited, the book's characters may all be seen to be defined by their relation to him as the paradoxical personification of this virtue.

Job & Integrity

Job, the book's paragon, perfect and upright (1:1, 8; 2:3), according to God and narrator, is to be known, if nothing else, as a man of integrity (*tummâ*—2:3, 9; 27:5; 31:6). The author presents him as the book's only man of integrity, one who displays "in a vivid and unforgettable form what it is to be a man of integrity."² Robert W. E. Forrest considers that the word also refers to Job's "physical wholeness, or bodily integrity, which Satan continually assaults."³ Given this view, the goal of the adversary would appear to be to undermine Job's moral integrity through the violation of his physical integrity. Albert Cook views this integrity, and specifically, Job's moral wholeness, as "Of common concern to both prose tale and verse drama in their juxtaposed unity, and central to [Job] the man at the center of both . . ."⁴

In contrast with Cook, Paul Weiss insists that in the exchange with the Satan and the trial that follows "God does not want to show that Job will stand firm in goodness, virtue, or decency. All that He wants to show is that if Job is cut off from the fat of existence he will not blaspheme in the face of God."⁵ But accepting Weiss' explanation requires either a denial or a disemboweling of the import of the Hebrew term *tām*. Derived from a verbal root *tmm*, used in more than two hundred forms and functions in the Old Testament, the adjective speaks of "that which is complete, blameless, just, honest, perfect, peaceful,

¹Conspicuous for its absence is any explicit debate on love, though Job does lament the treachery of friends and experience the abandonment of spousal support.

²Albert Hofstadter, "That Man May Not Be Lost," (unpublished manuscript), quoted in Albert Cook, *The Root of the Thing*, (Bloomington & London: Indiana UP, 1968), 14.

³Robert W. E. Forrest, "The Two Faces of Job: Imagery and Integrity in the Prologue," in *Ascribe to the Lord: Biblical and Other Studies in Memory of Peter C. Craigie*, JSOTSup 67, Lyle Eslinger & Glen Taylor, eds. (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988), 385-98, 389.

⁴Cook, *ibid.*

⁵Paul Weiss, "God, Job, and Evil;" in Nahum Glatzer, ed., *The Dimensions of Job: A Study & Selected Readings*, (New York: Schocken, 1969), 181-93; 182-83.

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etc.; hence an attribute or an attitude that reflects genuineness and reliability.”⁶ The manipulative insincerity implicit in Weiss’ explanation is incompatible with this understanding.⁷

The term *tām*, descriptive, from the outset, of Job’s perfection, is of limited biblical usage but of ample range of meaning. Seven of its fifteen biblical occurrences appear in Job.⁸ Various understood to mean blameless, innocent, sincere, quiet, peaceful, pious, pure, or healthy,⁹ its contrasting applications include Solomon’s lover, his “perfect one” in Cant 5:2, and 6:9, and Jacob, “a plain man, dwelling in tents” (Gen 25:27).¹⁰

Jacob, the last of these examples, may pique our interest most, for Jacob we remember as the quintessential deceiver. How could he be *tām*, if *tām* is explicative of Job’s perfection? Or is it the other way around? And are we to remember Job, too, as a deceiver? The answer to this double query, seems to lie in a comparison of at least three environments in which the term is used, viz., 1) generally, 2) with regard to Jacob, and 3) with regard to Job.

***Tām*: Three Meanings**

***Tām*: General Usage.** Two aspects of general usage cast significant light on the proper understanding of *yāšār*. One of these, already noted, concerns Solomon’s idealistic portrait of a woman whom he contemplates through the rose tinted eyes of love. She is, of course, perfect, as the encomiums of Cant 4:1-5, 12-15, and 7:1-9 make clear, a usage which relates to Forrest’s application of *tām* as signifying physical wholeness.¹¹

The frequent combination of the adjective *tām* with a second, *yāšār*, must also be instructive as a general rule for interpreting the first of these. Fully one-third of the fifteen uses of *tām* find it accompanied by *yāšār* (Job 1:1; 1:8; 2:3; Ps 37:37; Prov 29:10). And interpretation of *yāšār* is not exposed to the potential ambiguity of the more broadly applied term *tām*. *Yāšār* means “straight,

⁶J. J. Olivier, “*tmm*,” *NIDOTTE* 4:306-308; 306.

⁷David Penchansky’s feminist treatment, “Job’s Wife--The Satan’s Handmaid” (National SBL, Fall 1989), offers a variant yet vigorous representation of Job’s *tām*. For Penchansky Job’s integrity is finally established through the power of his wife’s character. Her challenge (“Curse God and die!”) forces him to “face the precariousness of being human . . . robbed of everything . . . tasting the absence at the heart of things and the utter fragility of all human knowledge.” She frees him to blaspheme: And not die. In this triumph over tradition, docility, and fear is his integrity. This view of integrity, more resilient than that of Paul Weiss, nevertheless disagrees with the divine portrayal of Job as speaking soundly (*n’cônâ*) about Him (42:7, 8). Neither servility nor blasphemy is included in God’s understanding of Job as *tām*.

⁸The 15 occurrences are as follows: Gen 25:27; Exod 26:24, 29; Job 1:1, 8; 2:3; 8:20; 9:20, 21, 22; Cant 5:2; 6:9. Ps 37:37; 64:4; Prov 29:10.

⁹Olivier, *ibid*.

¹⁰The related *tāmîm* describes Noah (Gen 6:9; v. 10 in Gk). LXX translates *teleios*, “without blemish”.

¹¹See n. 3.

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level, right, just, righteous.”¹² God created man “*yāšār*” (Eccl 7:29); He Himself is “*yāšār*,” since, in the explanation of the antithetically parallel line, “there is no unrighteousness in Him” (Ps 92:15). Especially because *tām* is not used of God, this elaboration, which comments upon its occurrences in parallel with *yāšār*, assumes greater interpretive significance.¹³

***Tām*: Applied to Jacob.** With regard to Jacob, the modification *tām* contrasts with the description of Esau, Jacob’s brother. In Gen 25:27 the phrase “the cunning hunter,” as applied to Esau, evokes the compelling image of one of humanity’s earliest great rebels against God, Nimrod, “a mighty hunter” before the Lord (Gen 10:9). As the temperamental and spiritual opposite of his first-born twin Esau, Jacob, dwelling in tents, develops and exhibits kinship with the feminine, whereas Esau, macho man of the field, develops kinship with the masculine (v. 28); Esau is recognizable as the moral descendant of Nimrod. Jacob is *tām*. I shall return for greater elaboration on this second usage of the term after some comment on the third.

***Tām*: Applied to Job.** The third area of analysis, which concerns usage of the term in relation to Job, leaves little room for dispute. Three of the combinations of *tām* and *yāšār* describe him (1:1, 8; 2:3). Two of these occur as expressions of divine pride in God’s own servant (1:8; 2:3), suggesting that *tm* may stand for virtue such as deity treasures, virtue deemed so commendable that God here dares to confidently exhibit its possessor before his adversary. Apart from the narratorial voice (1:1) it is the deity himself who first expresses then repeats his conviction that Job is *tām* (1:8; 2:3). Again, whereas Job’s wife plays no conspicuous role in the drama, it should not be overlooked that it is she, his most intimate human acquaintance, who follows God in confirming this testimony about Job’s character (2:9). Admittedly, Job’s goodness is for her a significant irritant. Even as she attests it, she can be heard simultaneously venting rage at him, in her own confusion at his suffering, for continuing to be so, for continuing to hold fast to his integrity (2:9).¹⁴ But Job will not be shaken. He

¹²Hannes Olivier, “*yāšār*,” *NIDOTTE* 2:563-568, 563.

¹³The LXX *amemptos* (*yāšār*) is evidently synonymous with *amōmos*, the term describing the 144,000 as blameless in Rev 14:5. The Philippians are encouraged to prove that God has transformed their lives by being “*amemptoi*,” which would show them to be irreproachable or blameless (*amōmoi*) among the Gentiles (2:15). In 2 Pet 3:14, the saints are urged to be diligent that they may be found “*amōmētoi*” (a variant) at the parousia. Because the same root (*amōmos*) describes Christ as the spotless lamb whose blood purchases our redemption (1 Pet 1:19), we may acknowledge connections between the perfection of Job (*tām w’ yāšār*), of the paschal lamb (*tāmīm*—Exod 12:5), of Christ’s sacrificial body symbolized by that perfect lamb (*amōmos*—1 Pet 1:19), and of the eschatological company of Rev 14:5 (*amōmoi*).

¹⁴Her quarrel with his faithfulness confirms that faithfulness. Thus she serves a significant purpose identified by Uriel Simon for minor characters who often function “as a means for the moral evaluation of the main character.” Uriel Simon, “Minor Characters in Biblical Narrative,” *JSOT* 46 (1990): 11-19, 16. Beyond furthering the plot, these characters “have a definite expressive role—the indirect characterization of the protagonist and the implied evaluation of his deeds.”

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avers in reply that he will never let go of his integrity (27:5) and concludes by insisting that God knows him to be a man of integrity (31:6).

The term *tām* is not otherwise used in Job. By God, by his frustrated wife, by himself (including under oath—chap. 31), Job is established as *tām*. None of the foregoing characters ever questions this fact. When Bildad much later also affirms it (8:20), he effectively strengthens his own credibility.

Integrity as Perfectible

The foregoing elaborations on *tām* invite a major caveat on the issue of Job's integrity. The concert of narratorial prose, divine acclaim, spousal affirmation, and personal conviction may seem to support the conclusion that *tām* in Job is synonymous with absolute or infinite virtue. This is not, however, the case. The plaudits of which he is recipient do not amount to a depiction of the Joban character as idealized deity. Job's final statement on repentance does not allow this (42:6). This statement has been the focus of considerable controversy. Interpretations range from an expression of repentance "in dust and ashes" (42:6), to the cry of outrage which John Briggs Curtis hears as "I am sorry for frail man!"¹⁵ Similar to Curtis is Marvin Pope's rendering, "Therefore I despise my words, and recant concerning humanity."¹⁶ Pope translates this way ("I recant") because for him the verb *m's* is not used for self-loathing, and could not therefore signify "abhor myself," as rendered by the Authorized Version.¹⁷ William L. Holladay's similar understanding produces "disavowal (thus rejection) of earlier words." Holladay does include the sense "despise" in his definition of *m's*, but so does Francis Brown.¹⁸ Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner accept "despise" as one sense of the verb, though 42:6 is explained as "reject" or "retract."¹⁹

¹⁵John Briggs Curtis, "On Job's Response to Yahweh," *JBL* 98 (1979): 497-511, 505.

¹⁶Marvin Pope, *Job*, Anchor Bible, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1973), 348.

¹⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁸William L. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971), s.v. *m's*, I; also Francis Brown, ed., *The New Brown, Driver, & Briggs Hebrew & English Lexicon* [BDB], (Oxford: Clarendon, 1951), s.v. ???, I.

¹⁹Ludwig Koehler, and Walter Baumgartner, eds., *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros* [KBL], (Leiden: Brill; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958), s.v. *m's*. So also ["reject oneself"] H. van Dyke Parunak, "A Semantic Survey of *rhm*," *Bib* 56 (1975): 512-32, 519; and ["reject"] Lester J. Kuypers, "The Repentance of Job," *VT* 9 (1959): 91-94, 94. Samuel Terrien, "Exegesis of the Book of Job," *IB*, 3:875-1198, 1193, translates "abhor," but explains that *m's* is here equivalent to the parallel verb *mss*, "to flow," "melt;" (see BDB, KBL, Holladay, s.v. *m's*, II; Kember Fullerton, "The Original Conclusion to the Book of Job," *ZAW* 42 (1924): 116-36, 125, believes that Job was in "a melting mood." Gustav Holscher, *Das Buch Hiob*, HZAT 17, ed. Otto Eissfeldt, (Tubingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1952), 98, similarly renders "dissolve into tears," (*zerfliesse ich in Tränen*), equivalent to the understanding (melt) he attaches to *m's* at 7:5 [see *ibid.*, 24]; Abraham Even-Shoshan, *A New Concordance of the Old Testament Using the Hebrew and Aramaic Text*, (Jerusalem: Kiryath Sepher, 1985), here followed, finds only one *m's*, explained as *bz*, *Pršhw* in the qal, and *nt'b*, *hyhlzr'* in the niphil.

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This survey of the variety of opinions on the appropriate translation of Job 42:6 supplies effective demonstration of Job's growth from prologue through to epilogue. The contrasting interpretations of rage at divine callousness and humble submission before a wise omnipotence both show Job as yielding a position he has vigorously maintained through most of the dialogue. James Crenshaw refers to the concession of 42:6 as "the drowning of doubting questions in a rushing crescendo of praise," a "masochistic response . . . so prevalent in the Judeo-Christian world" which confirms, for him, the disjuncture between the poetry and the frame story of the book of Job.²⁰ The fact that the consensus of Job scholarship now accepts the book as a unified whole²¹ does not diminish the validity of Crenshaw's insight that the words of 42:6 express a prostration before the deity which radically differs from what has gone before. Job is no divinity, and he is clearly perfectible. Whether the language of repentance is employed or not, commentators concede that the drama has been, for Job, a major learning experience. As Matitiah Tsevat points out, "the hero, precisely because of his ignorance [of the celestial dialogue], will experience problems and gain insights before which our superior knowledge pales."²² R. A. F. MacKenzie, in "The Transformation of Job,"²³ speaks similarly: "it is not correct to say that the hero is put through a severe test, which he passes successfully and after which he finds himself just as before. . . . He is not the same man at the end of the book as at the beginning."²⁴

The preceding quotations indicate that if Job is *tām*, it is not because there is no room left for him to grow. On the other hand, no putative connection need be made between the *tām* of Jacob's adolescence and the deceptions of his later years. More probably, Gen 25:27, 28 provides the reader with an explanation of why or how the birthright quarrel becomes such a *cause célèbre*. Elaboration upon that passage in the light of *tām* as applied to Job permits us to recognize, in Jacob's unaffected innocence,²⁵ the timidity of the wimp before the force of Esau's aggressions; Jacob's *tām* is the unknowingness of an *ingénu* before the astuteness of Esau the hunter; it is the humility of a shepherd instead of the

²⁰James L. Crenshaw, "The Problem of Theodicy in Sirach: On Human Bondage," in James L. Crenshaw, ed., *Theodicy in the Old Testament*, Issues in Religion and Theology, 4 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 119-140, 129, 128.

²¹See particularly Willem A. M. Beuken, ed., *The Book of Job* (Leuven, 1994); also Walter L. Michel, *Job in the Light of Northwest Semitic*, vol. 1 (Rome, 1987); Norman Habel, *The Book of Job: A Commentary* (Philadelphia, 1985).

²²Matitiah Tsevat, *The Meaning of the Book of Job, and other Biblical Studies: Essays on the Literature and Religion of the Hebrew Bible*, (New York: Ktav, Dallas, TX: Institute for Jewish Studies, 1980), 3.

²³R. A. F. MacKenzie, "The Transformation of Job," *BTB* 9 (1979): 51-57.

²⁴MacKenzie, *ibid.*, 51, 52. MacKenzie's language is more grandiose at times: "He has become Man, in a way that he was not before." (*ibid.*, 52). But Job is not transformed into a new order of being. The lessons of his experience make no less or more palpable or accessible, the virtue or humanity he exhibits in the epilogue.

²⁵The literal meaning of *aplastos*, the LXX word for *tām* in Gen 25:27, is "unaffected."

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excitement of the chase; the vulnerability of a mother's boy before the mean caprice of a bully. Esau's contempt of Jacob may well include contempt for his gentleness, the very virtue which, in itself and by its consequences, endears him to the woman who is his mother. She can see, in his traits, that the oracle was right to prefer him (as she understands it, Gen 25:23). Her instincts awakened, she becomes a holy warrior, determined, against all the odds, to secure the future of her meek and quiet son.

Integrity as Radical Commitment to Goodness

To be *tām* then, is not to be flawless. For Jacob, with or without Rebekah, displays gross flaws. But these do not discount the truth of Gen 25:27. They do underline the complex tissue of reality which is human character. And integrity in Jacob, read as desirable character traits, enables us to appreciate the finite but still more admirable portrait of integrity that is Job. To be *tām*, as Job is, is to singlemindedly commit to goodness, come what may. Apart from Job, the word *tām* is never applied in the book to anyone else, or for any other reason. And there is good reason why it should not be. For no one else exhibits the unmodified spiritual commitment to which this term may point.

And yet, integrity notwithstanding, a question remains to be answered: How does the recanting Job relate to the redeemed company of Rev 14? And what does his retraction mean for integrity? The answers to these queries are all directly related to the theophany, the immediate context of Job's dramatic surrender.

The Role of the Theophany in Job

Confrontation in Job in the Light of the Theophany. According to John Day, Job's repentance results from coming to recognize that God alone owns and wields mastery over the might of Behemoth and Leviathan:²⁶ "The conflict between the dragon and God provided an apt parallel to the book's theme of Job's conflict with God."²⁷ Day's remark, presenting God as Job's nemesis, contrasts with the alternative view as expressed by Edwin and Margaret Thiele and John C. L. Gibson. These interpreters relate the climax of Yahweh's second speech to the story's opening salvos where Job's trial is initiated through a confrontation between Yahweh and the adversary of the prologue. They see a specific structural and rhetorical purpose in the description of Leviathan (40:25-41:26) as the climax of the final divine speech. "There is none like him on earth" states Yahweh (41:25), a terror to all, afraid of none, "king over all the sons of pride" (v. 26). Thiele, Thiele, and Gibson accept this description as a further reference to the Satan, the great adversary of the prologue, whose con-

²⁶John Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea: Echoes of a Canaanite Myth in the Old Testament*, (Cambridge, London, NY, New Rochelle, Melbourne, Sydney: Cambridge UP, 1985), 181.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 49.

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quest prophet and psalmist celebrate in such passages as Isa 27:1, and Ps 74:13, 14.²⁸ Gibson finds allusion to this link between Leviathan and the adversary of the prologue in the great reformation hymn “A Mighty Fortress.” Note the following lines:

That ancient prince of hell
Hath risen with purpose fell;
Strong mail of craft and power
He weareth in this hour;
On earth is not his fellow.

Gibson laments that no Luther scholar has been able to confirm that his [Gibson’s] understanding was Luther’s intention.²⁹

Day believes the dominating imagery of God’s second speech is what brings about Job’s capitulation. But this is because he considers the book to be a battle between God and Job, a position the prologue shows to be doubly mistaken: First, Job is clearly God’s friend and hero. Job habitually lives out his faith in and fear of God, who in turn makes his boast on Job. Second, the adversary is the source of open repudiation of God’s verdict on Job. As such, the equation of Leviathan with the adversary shows not only the height of his power, but also why he, and not Job, should be seen as God’s true antithesis. In this view, the divine speeches aim to enlighten Job rather than to break him; to expose him to his error, rather than to humiliate him; to mark his finitude, rather than to condemn him.

The Supernatural in Job in the Light of the Theophany. The notion that God does not intend to break Job by the theophany may appear difficult to accept because Job is rebuked by God and does seem to experience and accept abject humiliation. The theophany also seems somewhat atypical of wisdom literature, as well as of human experience, because neither of these realms usually features divine visitations which conveniently dissolve the cruxes of human frustration. We are, however, aware that the irregularity of supernatural intrusion does not first occur at the climax of the book. The early scenes of the divine council do remain hidden from human eye. But the supernatural invades the human plane right from the onset of the dialogue, through a vision or dream experience related in Eliphaz’ opening speech.³⁰

Taken back to that experience, the reader now recognizes it as foreshadowing the climactic self-presentation of God at the end of the book’s speeches. James E. Miller’s comparison of these two supernatural visitations reveals a number of contrasting features: The first is characterized by hiddenness, night,

²⁸Edwin & Margaret Thiele, *Job and the Devil*, (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1988), 124-129; John C. L. Gibson, “On Evil in the Book of Job,” in Lyle Eslinger & Glen Taylor, eds., *Ascribe to the Lord: Biblical & Other Studies in Memory of Peter C. Craigie*, JSOTSup 67, (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988), 399-419; 415.

²⁹Gibson, *ibid.*, n. 12.

³⁰Whether vision or dream remains unclear.

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fearful stillness, exclusiveness, and privacy. The second, the theophany, is a public fury, a storm from which God addresses not only Job, but later, and in harsh condemnation, Eliphaz himself (42:7-9).³¹ In Eliphaz' private experience he is not addressed, but struggles to hear what is being said. So that, as Miller wryly observes, "Even Eliphaz receives more personal attention in Job's theophany than he did in his own vision."³²

Despite its general indeterminacy, Eliphaz' vision plays a pivotal role in Job's story. Its content becomes determinative for all three of his speeches. By the end of the dialogue with Job, it has become the definitive position of the three friends. The perspective of this vision is so peculiar as to be unmistakable: Briefly summarized, it represents humanity as an untrustworthy object of no esteem before God: "Can mere humans be justified before God (*m'lwh*), or even a mighty man before his Maker (*m'shw*)? Behold he trusts not even his servants, and charges his angels with error" (4:17, 18).

Though the LXX reads *apo tōn ergōn autou* ("in regard to his works") for *m'shw* ("than his maker"), Eliphaz' general import is not in dispute.³³ The preposition *min* here stands for "in the presence of."³⁴ Eliphaz doubts that "mortal man [can] be just before God,"³⁵ as Job has striven to be and even to have his children be (1:1, 5). His cynical view influences Zophar's first speech (9:7-10), and he himself so insists upon it in subsequent speeches (15:14-16; 22:2) that the orthodox Bildad finally surrenders to the same despairing pessimism (25:4).

This opinion that God despises humanity both illustrates and explains the difference in spirit between the two stories of supernatural revelation in Job: Eliphaz' uncomplimentary view of all God's human creation appears to contradict everything God shows himself to be from beginning to end of the book: There is never any doubt that He is proud of at least one member of his creation. He is pleased with Job (1:8; 2:3; 42:7-9). This patent contradiction between the views of God and Eliphaz sharpens the significance of the latter's visitation for interpretation of the book's dénouement. It now appears that Eliphaz' mysteri-

³¹James E. Miller, "The Vision of Eliphaz as Foreshadowing in the Book of Job," *PEGLMBS* 9 (1989): 98-112, 102, 103.

³²*Ibid.*, 107.

³³The preposition *min*, read as comparative (AV, NIV, TOB [La Bible, traduction oecuménique]), produces sarcasm too harsh for its inconsequential import: "Can mortal man be more just than God?" Job has not sought to best God in goodness.

³⁴Num 32:22; Jer 51:5.

³⁵Francis I. Andersen, *Job: An Introduction & Commentary* (Downers Grove, 1974), 114; David J. A. Clines, *Job 1-20*, Word Biblical Commentary, ed. David A. Hubbard, Glenn W. Barker (Dallas, 1989), 107; Edouard Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, trans. H. H. Rowley, with a preface by Francis I. Andersen (Nashville, 1984), 52; Moses Bottenweiser, *The Book of Job* (New York, 1922), 95, 162; so also LXX, NASB, NRSV. We may also safely reject the reading of *min* in *m'shw* as "from his maker," where Eliphaz might be considering God as the source of his creatures' justification. Creaturely justification is just what Eliphaz so firmly denies.

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ous account functions as fundamental justification for the theophany: His supernatural revelation informs the thinking and shapes the conviction of those who stand for God against Job throughout the dialogue. K. Fullerton describes Eliphaz as “a certain kind of dogmatic theologian whose presuppositions are supposed to be divine revelation . . . and whose eyes are therefore blind to all that does not fit into the preconceived pattern.”³⁶ Given the source of his position, his battle with God’s servant Job appears as but an expression, on the natural plane, of the prologue’s supernatural confrontation between God and the adversary.

Job as Paradigm for the Eschaton

Because of Eliphaz and his “inspired” lie, God must come, though when he does it is still a surprise. Biblical justifications for the parousia are very much a part of the Joban theophany: It is tempting but unnecessary to convert the prologue’s personalized havoc into a type of the end time chaos of wars and rumors of wars. But the apparent ascendancy of evil, the flawed representations of the divine character, the persecution of the saintly Job, his longing for vindication, the supernatural support of Eliphaz’ falsehood, *inter alia*, all find meaningful parallels in Christ’s predictions in Matt 24 and 25, Luke 21, Paul’s warning on the man of sin in 2 Thess 2:1-12, and the descriptions of souls under the altar in the fifth seal who cry “How long O Lord?” (Rev 6:9-11). So God must come to vindicate his servant and clear his own name.

His Joban parousia brings executive judgment upon the debate’s participants. Eliphaz’ vision and the arguments it inspires receive their ultimate condemnation, while God’s servant and God’s own character receive their ultimate vindication. God’s position and clarification, at the end, support this essay’s earlier claim that every character in the drama is defined in accordance with his relationship to Job, the personification of the virtue of integrity.

The theophany is the immediate context of Job’s recantation. But it is also the means of his vindication and restoration. Our review of the context for the theophany has prepared us to expand upon a question posed earlier. We have asked how the recanting Job relates to the redeemed of Rev 14. But the question may with good reason be put in different terms: What of the seemingly strange coincidence of humiliation and vindication, prostration and triumph which Job experiences in the theophany? And what does this paradox suggest for end time saints?

These expansions of our earlier question open the way for an answer which is basic to both Testaments, consistent throughout Scripture. Moreover, this answer, to be noted shortly, points out that the reaction of Job, the man of in-

³⁶K. Fullerton, “Double Entendre in the first Speech of Eliphaz,” *JBL* 49 (1930): 320-74, 336-337.

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tegrity, to the revelation of divine glory, constitutes nothing exceptional in the biblical record. I quote at length from John R. W. Stott:

All those men of God in the Bible who have caught a glimpse of God's glory have shrunk from the sight in an overwhelming consciousness of their own sins. *Moses*, to whom God appeared in the bush that burned but was not consumed, 'hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.' *Job*, to whom God spoke 'out of the whirlwind' in words which exalted his transcendent majesty, cried out, 'I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees thee; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes.' *Isaiah*, a young man at the threshold of his career, had a vision of God as the King of Israel 'sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up', surrounded by worshiping angels who sang of his holiness and glory, and said, 'Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!' When *Ezekiel* received his strange vision of living winged creatures and whirling wheels, and above them a throne, and on the throne One like a man, enveloped in the brightness of fire and of the rainbow, he recognized it as 'the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord', and he added, 'When I saw it, I fell upon my face.' *Saul of Tarsus*, traveling to Damascus, mad with rage against the Christians, was struck to the ground and blinded by a brilliant light which flashed from heaven more brightly than the noonday sun, and wrote later of his vision of the risen Christ, 'He appeared also to me.' The aged *John*, exiled on the island of Patmos, describes in detail his vision of the risen and glorified Jesus, whose 'eyes were like a flame of fire' and whose 'face was like the sun shining in full strength', and he tells us, 'When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead.' [emphasis original]³⁷

And Stott summarizes: "If the curtain which veils the unspeakable majesty of God could be drawn aside but for a moment, we too should not be able to bear the sight."³⁸

In the light of the foregoing quotation, Job's integrity may be less than full warrant for peculiar status. Yahweh's rebuke and Job's prostration may no longer be characterized as inexplicable in a person of integrity. Rather they are the measure of his integrity and fear of God. As Moses must obey when commanded "Take your sandals off" (Exod 3:5), so too, it seems, must Job the god-fearing bow when reminded, "You are but human, Job. I am Yahweh." And as glorified beings veil their faces to yield in total deference before the presence of the Almighty God, so Job and humanity must bow in prostration in the presence of divine glory. Read in the light of *tota scriptura*, Job's character now appears exceptional only insofar as it reveals the same miracle which grace desires to accomplish in the redeemed of all ages.

³⁷John R. W. Stott, *Basic Christianity*, 2nd ed., (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 72.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 73.

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While the book of Job may be *sui generis*, Job's character, perfect and upright, godfearing and evil avoiding, is not. It is typical of the saved, of those who know God. It is typical not only of their integrity, but also of their fear of God, a parallel theme of high relevance to both Job and Revelation. Beside four references to the fear of God or Shaddai (6:14; 15:4; 28:28; 37:24), divine awe is four times paired with integrity in Job (1:1, 8-10; 2:3; 4:6). And its defining relevance for the saints in Revelation (11:18; 14:7) is indisputable (see also 15:4; 19:5). Further elaboration may take us beyond the scope of this article. But the coexistence and mutuality of these terms suggest that the revelator's depiction in Rev 14:1-5 relates to his consciousness of the Old Testament portrayal of Job's character. Evidently, it is his desire to indicate that that same balanced perfection of character long ago displayed by the patriarch Job, will be reproduced at the end in a host who wait for God, longing for deliverance, and hide their faces when he appears to vindicate them.

Summary & Discussion

The intellectual power, artistic appeal, and philological fascination of the book of Job have been the object of millennia of celebration. In this essay we connect the Old Testament narrative to the end time picture of the 144,000 who stand perfected on Matt. Zion. To judge by the Old Testament type, theirs is a perfection which, despite their guilelessness, is yet perfectible. Their guilelessness is their faultlessness. As Job illustrates, faultlessness is not omniscience. The theophany is for him a learning experience, as he freely acknowledges. Even by such acknowledgment he demonstrates the thoroughgoing integrity which is his hallmark throughout the drama.

In the study of last things the themes of divine judgement and human integrity are inextricably joined. As grace would have it, God's decision on those who compose the company of the redeemed is consistently associated with acknowledgment of their faithfulness (Matt 25:14-30, esp. vv. 21, 23; Rev 2:8-11; 3:9-11; 6:9-17; 7:1-3, 13, 14, etc.). Divine judgment and human integrity are also very present in the book of Job. Indeed, the book is at least as concerned with human integrity as it is with any of the major issues generally associated with it, such as the suffering of the innocent, theodicy, or the character of God in general. Andrew E. Steinmann may overstate the case in his essay on "The Structure & Message of the Book of Job."³⁹ Steinman's interpretation departs from the norm in several ways. First he downplays the issue of suffering in a work remembered by most for its holocaustic pain. Second, he dismisses the question of theodicy in the book considered by most as the Old Testament's supreme discussion on theodicy. This interpretation constitutes an even more radical departure from convention. Finally, having discarded these prominent options, Steinmann chooses to represent the book of Job as a work on integrity.

³⁹Andrew E. Steinmann, "The Structure & Message of the Book of Job", *VT* (46): 85-100.

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Rather than dismiss the element of God's fairness as Steinmann does, I view theodicy as directly related to the issue which he correctly highlights, viz., integrity. For it is the issue of integrity, whether human or divine, which serves as the vital germ of the book's dialogues, as well as the *casus belli* of the book's supernatural debate, the very issue highlighted in the characterization of the redeemed in Rev 14.⁴⁰ It is God's pride in Job's integrity which provokes the horrors of the prologue, as well as all the commiserations, lamentations, harangues, oaths, humiliations, and vindications of the book. God and Job, divine and human integrity, stand or fall together at the end of this story.

We do not violate caution by saying Job's faithfulness will prove God right. Nor do we impugn omniscience by granting that if God is mistaken we shall know because Job fails. Therefore theodicy, God's fair resolution of the confrontation with the adversary, relates directly to the confrontation between Job and his friends. By the same token, one aspect of God's final disposition of rewards, rendering to every one according to what she has done (Rev 22:12), involves discrimination between committed theological camps. For some, as for Job, vindication waits. But not for all. Many New Testament passages confirm this argument, including Matt 7:21-23; Eph 6:12; and 2 Thess 2:1-12.

John A. T. Robinson has said that "Every truth about eschatology is *ipso facto* a truth about God."⁴¹ Robinson also correctly points out that "all statements about the End . . . are fundamentally affirmations about God, and *vice versa*."⁴² In Job, Eliphaz' supernatural visitation mounts a significant assault upon the divine integrity by the statement it makes about God's role in the world, his attitude to sin and sinners, the manner of his judgments, and the nature of his justice. The debate becomes as much a conflict about the character of God as it is about Job's integrity. The friends' assault on Job revolves around their understanding of God, based not merely on tradition, as universally affirmed, but upon special revelation as communicated by their leader, the dialogue's first contributor, Eliphaz. And Job's opposition to the friends revolves around his understanding of the divine character. His recantation is surely not designed to prove that he should have acquiesced in their distorted views of God. God's own anger at their misrepresentation of him makes this much clear (42:7-9). Nor is Job's recantation in the epilogue the first time he gives in.

When in agony Job proclaims surrender to capricious destruction (9:22, "It is all the same thing: That's why I say he destroys both perfect and wicked"), he does not surrender because he is wrong. His proof that God is capricious is his rightness—He is incensed that he is badgered into surrender to God although he

⁴⁰On integrity as the question at issue in Job, see Lael O. Caesar, "Job: Another Thesis," *IT* (49): 435-447.

⁴¹John A. T. Robinson, *In the End God*, Religious Perspectives, ed., Ruth Nanda Anshen (New York, Evanston, & London: Harper & Row, 1968), 47.

⁴²*Ibid.*, 22.

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is right (9:21).⁴³ Thrice in three verses he uses the term *tām*. Twice he hypothesizes (“If I were righteous, . . . if I were perfect . . .”), anxious yet hesitant, caught between truth and fear. But then he boldly declares himself a perfect man. And, because he knows he is upright and yet undone, he holds that he can prove it, and so insists that God equally destroys both good and bad.

These terms of perfection (*tām*, *tummā*) in Job, when specifically applied, refer only to the character of Job, to whose mind the antithesis of this condition of uprightness is wickedness (*rāšāʿ*). Hence the cry of 9:22. Unlike Job’s word choice, the biblical antithesis of *rāšāʿ* is not *tām* but *šaddīq* (righteous). And since Job is the only one who is *tām*, his cry against indiscriminate destruction is exceptionally personal. Because he is the only *tām* of the book, 9:22 should not be taken as axiomatic. Job here argues that *he*, *tām* or *šaddīq*, and the wicked, both suffer destruction from God. It is a more particular insight than Job is sometimes allowed, sharpening the reader’s sense of Job’s guiltlessness in any particular. It teaches the text’s idealization of Job’s uncompromised rightness and his unflinching insistence upon it. Job asserts his rightness so adamantly that by implication he chooses to stand in judgment on deity rather than concede personal fault; he will impugn deity (27:4, 5; 22:13, 14) rather than alter his own conduct. Because the text leaves us no alternative, no dissenting voice, no comparable character, and because the concert of so many voices attests it, we are obliged to accept this definition of *tām* even when it issues from Job’s own lips. For him the man who is *tām* consistently maintains that the God of a fair universe would know he did not deserve punishment. The God he worships would not inflict upon him his present wretchedness. For though no one in this book may say as much, Job still knows that the God whom he knows is a God of love.

The theophany shows that Job’s insight into the divine character is correct. That the friends’ direct temporal correspondence between suffering and guilt is untenable. God himself is as outraged as is Job at the friends’ gross distortion of his character. And because of God’s actions at the climax of the book, the reader may better understand why Job may be both adamant and yielding, daring and godfearing, recognizing his finitude and still *tām*. Job may be adamant because his principle is correct. God’s coming confirms this. And yet, Job may yield before the lesson of the theophany because he respects God. The theophany is a learning experience. So will the parousia be for godfearing people, however much their integrity, at the end of history. Judging from Job, the climax of the end may feature a far more intriguing complex of emotions than might at first appear: The coming of God with devouring fire (Ps 50:3; Heb 12:29; Rev 19:11ff). The ecstasy of saints who have overcome the world, the flesh, and the

⁴³H. H. Rowley, “The Book of Job and Its Meaning,” *BJRL* 41 (1958-59): “It is . . . more likely that in his thought Job was supremely honoured [sic] by God, in that God had staked Himself on his unflinching integrity. Nor did Job let God down. For despite all his complaint, Job never for one moment regrets his integrity of character” (175).

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devil, who have waited long for deliverance and vindication, ecstasy mingled with cries of dismay, “the great day of the Lord has come. Who shall be able to stand?” (Rev 6:17). The glorious, awesome roar of a voice like mighty seas that reverberates to eternity, “My grace is all you ever needed” (2 Cor 12:9).

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Sodom and Gomorrah from an Eschatological Perspective

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Eschatology is not found only in such Bible books as Daniel and Revelation. It permeates and dominates the entire message of the Bible, including Biblical narratives recording events in the history of Israel. Therefore, as T. Vriezen writes, “the true heart of both Old Testament and New Testament is the eschatological perspective.”¹ Consequently, the Bible reader should try to understand what eschatological message these narratives convey beyond the historical information they provide.

This paper looks at Genesis 18-19 from an eschatological perspective. This will lead to the recognition of the common eschatological expression and climax conveyed by the selected passages.²

Brief Analysis of Genesis 18-19

The narrative begins with the unexpected arrival of the three strangers. The visit of the messengers is of vital, decisive importance for the one visited. The messengers come from another world and have a message from it. This is the starting point of a progression in which one coming from afar sets an event in eschatological motion.

¹ Theodorus Christiaan Vriezen, *An Outline of Old Testament Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1970), 123.

² Special attention will be given to Rev 14:6-12. Other passages briefly discussed are: Lam 4:6; Isa 1:9-10; 13:19-22; Matt 10:15. It may be asked why the Sodom narrative is a better paradigm of wickedness and destruction than the Flood story. The Flood story describes a total destruction of all the creation, and the process of destruction is described in much more detail. Following the Flood God promises that such destruction will never be repeated again (Gen 8:21-22; 9:8-17; Jer 31:35-36; 33:19-20). But it does not apply to Sodom, which is the best candidate pointing to the later destructions. Gordon Wenham, *Word Biblical Commentary: Genesis 16-50* (Dallas: Word, 1994), 49-50.

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The visitors in Gen 18 and 19 are termed as *hammalākīm* (messengers) and *'anāšīm* (men). It should be noted that the three *'anāšīm* who are entertained by Abraham at Mamre are not called *hammalākīm* in the account of that event. Yet, he addresses only one of them in the following verse, as *'adōnāy* (My Lord, v. 3). Somehow Abraham has figured out that one of the three is YHWH. *wayyar'* (and he saw), *wayyārās* (and he ran), *wayyištaḥû* (and he bowed himself/worshipped). Obviously we have here a worship motif. In the LXX Gen 18:2 reads *proskúnēsen*. Compare it with Rev 14:7d *kai proskunēsate to poiēsanti tou ouranōn kai tēn gēn kai phálassan kai pēgàs hudatōn* (and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water, NKJV).

The messengers play an important function in the development of the events and the communication of the message. They have not come to inspect whether the indispensable ten righteous actually continue living in the city.³ Their forewarning (19:12-13) and their forceful withdrawal of Lot (19:16) illustrate that the destruction of the city is a predetermined and unavoidable decision.

The indictment of Sodom lies entirely in the moral realm. Gen 13:13 hints at the terrible fate of Sodom to be revealed in Gen 19. The phrase *ḥattāīm me'ōd* (great sinners) is used only here. The rare phraseology implies the extreme seriousness of Sodom's sin (Jer 23:14; Ezek 16:49). As the wickedness of the city appears to reach intolerable proportions, God personally investigates the situation.

The opening words of 18:21 contain an expression in the direct volative *'ēradā(h)-nā' we'er'e(h)* (Let me go down and see).⁴ The divine "coming down" presupposes prior knowledge of human affairs from on high, and God's subsequent action testifies of His absolute sovereignty.

He already knows what to do with Sodom (18:17), and He knows about its sin (18:20). Yet He announces his intention to make a judicial inquiry about the state of affairs in the city (18:21). The matter of his investigation is *za'aqaṭ* (a cry, crying out, outrage, 18:21). YHWH's investigative judgment begins with a judicial inquiry and his intention to support that observation with a fact-finding mission (18:22-33), where Abraham plays the role of a witness and intercessor. T. J. Mafico points out that YHWH comes down "to make a judicial investigation for purposes only of assessing the punishment."⁵

The patriarch's plea that the innocent should not be made to suffer along with the guilty is clear enough. Abraham makes a six-fold plea for the city, each time accepted by the Lord. Each time he asks, "Suppose there were x righteous .

³ According to the Rabbinic tradition, the ten are: Lot, his wife, two unmarried daughters, two married daughters, and two sons-in-law (Gen R. 49.13).

⁴ For the idea of God "going down" see Gen 11:5-7; Exod 3:8; Num 11:17; 2 Sam 22:10; Ps 18:10; Isa 63:19; 64:2; Mic 1:3

⁵ T. J. Mafico, "The Crucial Question Concerning the Justice of God," in *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 42 (1983): 13. See also Exod 3:7; Judg 3:9, 15, etc.

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. . .” (18:24, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32). Every time God answers, “If I find . . . I shall spare” (18:26, 28, 30), or “I shall not do it . . . for the sake of” (18:29, 31, 32).⁶ Three times Abraham lowers the number of the righteous by five (50 to 45 to 40), and three times by tens (40 to 30 to 20 to 10). However, nowhere does Abraham challenge God’s evaluation of Sodom’s moral condition. That judgment is not up for debate any more, nor does he at any point turn to Sodom to urge repentance. Now events move rapidly toward a horrifying but retributive climax.

On one hand, Gen 18 reveals the fundamental principles of *sedāqā(h)* *ūmišpāt* (righteousness and justice, 18:19) which are characteristic to God himself and should be observed by his creation. On the other, it demonstrates this judicial investigation as a prototype of eschatological judgment

The commands given by the heavenly messengers to Lot and his family were both positive and negative. Positively, the messengers command Lot and his family to leave the city. Negatively, they are not to “look back.” Both commands are important in the development of the story. The obedience to the former command results in their rescue. The disobedience results in the death of Lot’s wife (Gen 19:26). Lot and his family are to be found first within the city.⁷ However, almost immediately the narrative makes it clear that the city was not the safe place it normally should have been. The city becomes for Lot and his family the place of destruction, not only because of the threatening masses,⁸ but because it stood under a sentence of destruction,⁹ since *kī-gādelā(h)* *ša‘aqāṭām* *’et-penē(y)* *yhwā(h)* (for their outcry is great before YHWH, Gen 19:13).¹⁰ Thus, Sodom was a place of danger from two standpoints: (1) wickedness of inhabitants, and (2) doomed future. Wickedness is the chief characteristic of the Sodomites as they are portrayed in Genesis 19:4-11.

Lot is instructed to flee to the mountains for safety.¹¹ The message the *hammalākīm* (messengers) convey to Lot is clear and unambiguous. Outside the

⁶For elaborate information on this point see G. Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 50.

⁷ The use of *yōšēb beša‘ar-sedōm* in Gen 19:1, combined with the use of *yōšēbē* in Gen 19:25, 29, indicates that Lot had permanently settled in Sodom. Pasturing his herds, he reached Sodom and he built himself a house in Sodom and settled in it. See Bastiaan Jongeling, C. J. Labuschagne and Adam. S. van der Woude, trans., *Aramaic Texts from Qumran*, Semitic Study Series, 4 (Leiden: Brill, 1976), col. 21, 104-105.

⁸ Often in the Bible a city is represented by its king, but in Gen 19 Sodom is represented by the mass of people who gather before the house of Lot.

⁹ The status of the root *šht* in the Sodom story hints that it could be a heading for the whole story (Gen 18:28, 31, 32; 19:13, 14, 29). The word also occurs frequently in the flood narrative (Gen 6:11, 12, 13; 9:11).

¹⁰ This phrase occurs only in 1 Sam. 2:17. The outcry is the protest to God made by others who are outraged at the Sodomites’ perverted and evil deeds.

¹¹ Mountains often symbolize protection, cover, and refuge.

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city you can be saved;¹² inside you will be destroyed together with its wicked inhabitants.

The verb the messenger uses for “flee” or “escape” is the Niphal imperative *himmālēt*, which comes from *mālaṭ*. It is used five times in this section (vs. 17 twice, 19, 20, and 22). The command to Lot not to look back as he flees seems to be, at the very least, in the nature of a prohibition of emotional attachment.¹³ Safety requires total separation—both physical and emotional.

Time Elements

In the Sodom narrative time elements play a very important role. For example, the nuances given to the story by messengers’ coming to Abraham at noon *keḥōm hayyôm* (in the heat of the day, Gen 18:1) are absolutely different from the nuances imparted by the messengers who arrive at nightfall in Sodom. Chapter 19 not only begins with *bā’ereb* (in the evening), but it is continually punctuated by contrastive chronological notices,¹⁴ which can be summarized under two general headings: (1) evening, night, darkness; and (2) dawn, sunrise, morning, light.

It is obvious that the events leading up the destruction of Sodom are linked with the temporal emphasis on night and darkness (19:1, 2, 3, 5, 33, 34). Dawn is highlighted (19:2, 15, 23, 27) only as a contrast with darkness or, simply, a period of transition from darkness to light (Gen 19:15-22).

The use of an evening/night background imbues the narrative with an evil foreboding, trepidation, anxiety, and fear. Night and violence, danger and darkness are inseparably joined together.¹⁵ After Lot and the messengers have reached their destiny, all of a sudden out of darkness comes a wicked mob bent on disgusting immoral deeds.¹⁶ The threatening atmosphere is enormously heightened by constant reminders that it is night—it is dark.

In contrast to this nighttime setting of the Sodomites’ threats and the events coupled with it, the narrative starts the rescue of Lot and his family from the condemned city and its destruction in daylight.

¹² In both cases, the flood and the destruction of Sodom, the judgment was brought by a natural catastrophe. Here as there the salvation of a remnant is not due to merit on the part of the remaining survivors but to the grace of YHWH. The imagery of preserving life is an essential part of the future aspect of the remnant motif. Compare with Rev 14:12.

¹³ Among the many explanations of the prohibition against looking back is the suggestion that Lot was attached to the city and looking back would show he wanted to return there. Rashi proposes: “You sinned with them but are saved through the merit of Abraham. It is not fitting that you should witness their doom while you yourself are escaping” (ad 19.17), but Ramban, following Pirke Rabbi Eliezer 25, submits that the punishment of Lot’s wife resulted from her seeing the divine presence (ad 19.17).

¹⁴ Claus Westermann, *Genesis 12-36* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1985), 300-301.

¹⁵ Gordon Wenham, *Genesis 16-50* (Dallas: Word, 1994), 56-57. See also 1 Sam. 26:7-12, 30:17, 31:12; 2 Kgs 6:14, 8:21; Jer 39:4.

¹⁶ The imagery of depravity turns up in one form or in another in each of the two passages being discussed here. Compare Gen 19:5, 8, 33, 35 with Rev 14:8.

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Destruction of Sodom by Fire and Brimstone

It is not only the judicial investigation and the call to come out that contain the prototype of eschatological judgment. The destruction of Sodom by fire and brimstone also points to it. In the account concerning Sodom the destruction is clearly a punishment. As Alter points out, “this story of the doomed city is crucial not only to Genesis but to the moral thematics of the Bible as a whole...because it is the biblical version of anti-civilization, rather like Homer’s islands of the Cyclops monsters where inhabitants eat strangers instead of welcoming them.”¹⁷ Such an antagonistic attitude toward the heavenly messengers at Sodom results in destruction by fire and brimstone.

The description of the burning devastation that visits both cities is so astonishing, unusual, unparalleled, and total¹⁸ that later biblical accounts of destruction by fire are expected to remind the later generations of this significant obliteration.

No city is judged and destroyed by God in a more dreadful way than Sodom when fire comes down on it like burning rain, leaving no survivors. The choice of words used to depict the destruction is unique. It creates an impression of an extraordinary, shocking conflagration. Fire rains upon the cities *himeʿîr ʿal-sedôm weʿal-ʿamôrâ(h) gāp(e)rîṭ wāʿēš mēʿēṭ yehwāh min-haššāmāyîm* (Then the Lord rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the Lord out of the heavens, Gen 19:24). A similar possible implication can be seen in the raining of thunder, hail, and fire on Egypt (Exod 9:22-24).

God sends upon the inhabitants of these destined cities ʿēš (fire) combined with *gāp(e)rîṭ* (brimstone, burning sulfur). The word *gāp(e)rîṭ* is rarely used in the Bible, occurring only on six other occasions (Deut 29:22; Job 18:15; Isa 34:9; 30:33; Ps 11:6; Ezek 38:22). Ps 11:6 and Ezek 38:22 reverse the order to ʿēš *gāp(e)rîṭ*. The rare use of the word, coupled with the fact that it serves as an especially graphic representation of the means of divine destruction, suggests that where *gāp(e)rîṭ* recurs it is reminiscent of the Sodom story in every case. The supernatural origin of the brimstone and fire, “from heaven, from God” is repeatedly emphasized, underlining its unique nature *mēʿēṭ yehwāh min-haššāmāyîm* (from YHWH out of heaven, Gen 19:24).

The destruction of Sodom is seen as prototype of eschatological divine judgment upon wicked cities, nations, or peoples with regard to its suddenness and spectacular manner, totality, and finality. There is no event in the whole of

¹⁷ Robert Alter, “Sodom as Nexus: The Web of Design in Biblical Narrative,” *Tikkun* 1 (1986): 30-38.

¹⁸ Not only were the inhabitants of the wicked cities destroyed, but also all the plants. The destruction included even the *we šemaḥ hāʿadāmā(h)*. This is the only occurrence of this expression in the Bible, but it may be compared with the expression *wšmḥ hšdḥ* in Ezek 16:7, a chapter in which Sodom is also mentioned. *šmh* is a generic term for all kinds of vegetation.

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Genesis so frequently mentioned in the rest of the OT as the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.¹⁹

Sodom the city, in its sin, in the images of its punishment and destruction, has become a universal symbol of rebellion, wickedness, and judgment. This narrative enshrines the nature of the fate of sinners who reject the way of YHWH (Gen 18-19), and incur the just wrath of the Judge of all the earth (Gen 18:25; Rev 11:8).

Intertextuality

The sins of Sodom and Gomorrah were notorious, and the cities suffered total destruction for their wickedness (Gen 19:24-28). Accordingly, when the prophets pick up the imagery of Sodom and Gomorrah, in one way or another, they refer to the day of eschatological judgment.

For example, the condemnation of Jerusalem in Lam 4:6 emphasizes two aspects of the Sodom's destruction: 1) destruction came *suddenly* (*kemô-rāga'*, "in a moment") and 2) without human help (*welô'-ḥālû bāh yādāyîm*, "no hands laid on it"). The point made by the writer of the book seems to be that Sodom, while totally destroyed, was destroyed without any human efforts. The destruction was divinely initiated and divinely carried out.

The *totality* of destruction as divine judgment over Sodom is picked up by number of prophets and applied under various situations to the future (Isa 1:9-10; Hos 11:8; Zeph 2:9; Amos 4:11). Jeremiah employs Sodom as a prototype of destruction against Edom (Jer 49:18): *hinnē(h) ke'aryē(h) ya'ale(h) migge'ôn* (behold, as a lion coming up from the jungle). In fact, Jeremiah describes Edom's destruction in a similar way to that of Isaiah's description of the destruction of Babylon in terms of total annihilation (Isa 13:19-22).

Sodom as a prototype of the *finality* of destruction is found in Isaiah's description of the future destruction of Babylon. It is similar not only in regard to the totality of Sodom's destruction, but also similar to the finality of the destruction of Sodom (Isa 13:19-22): *kemahpēkaṭ 'elōhîm 'et-sedôm we'et-'amōrā(h)* (when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah).

The description of finality of the destruction of Sodom does not contradict the restoration promised by Ezekiel (Ezek 16:53; 47:8-12). Such total and final destruction clearly points to the fate of Babylon.

In Matthew 10:15 Jesus emphasizes that the wickedness of those who reject the message of the kingdom will be greater on the Day of Judgment than that of Sodom and Gomorrah. *En hēmēra kriseōs*, (in the day of judgment) clearly re-

¹⁹ In one way or another the following references contain allusions to the Sodom narrative: Gen 19:24; Deut 29: 22-23; Isa 1:7, 9; 13:19; 30:33; 34:9; Job 18:15; Jer 20:16; 23:14; 49:18; 50:40; Ezek 16:46; 38:22; 50:53-55; Amos 4:11; Zeph 2:9; Lam. 4:6; Ps 11:6; Hos 11:8. NT references are found in Matt 10:15; 11:23-24; Mark 6:11; Luke 10:12; 17:29; Rom 9:29; 2 Pet 2:6; Jude 7; Rev 11:8.

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fers to the day of eschatological judgment.²⁰ Jesus strengthens His Judgment oracle by *amēn*, “verily, truly.” The final destruction will be much greater for those who have refused to accept the message of salvation. The same analogy, but mentioning Sodom only, is made later in reference to the unbelief of Capernaum (Matt 11:23-24).

Finally, the judgment upon Sodom in history has been paralleled, by its fate, to the final judgment. The saying is not designed to hold out hope for Sodom. Rather, it suggests that the present situation created by the coming of Jesus means that what is involved in rejecting his messengers and message is much more serious sin than the wickedness of Sodom.

Revelation 14:6-12

The structural parallels with the Sodom and Gomorrah narrative are especially intense in Revelation 14:6-12. We see, first, the parallels with the three heavenly messengers and their role.

Like Abraham, John sees three heavenly messengers: *állon ággelon* “another angel” (v. 6), *állos ággelos deuterós* “another angel, a second” (v. 8), and *állos ággelos trítos* “another angel, a third” (v. 9). Three *ággeloi* (Rev 14:6-12) form especially strong links with the LXX, where it also reads *ággeloi* (Gen 19:1, 15, 16), or, in Hebrew *hammalākīm*.

The three heavenly messengers of Rev 14:6-12 function similarly to those of the Sodom and Gomorrah narrative. The theme of v. 7 is judgment, which confirms that the gospel announcement of v. 6 highlights the same message. Judgment involves an act of sorting out, and the one who does the sorting out is God, the Creator of heaven and earth (Ps 9:8; 110:5-6). This is “good news”²¹ to the saints because it means the downfall of the ungodly system headed by the beast and ultimately Satan. The bad news is for the unrepentant who, just as in the Sodom’s narrative, do not “give God glory.”

In the vision “another angel followed” (14:8) with a declaration of judgment, which drew out more explicitly the judicial nature of the first angel’s announcement in vs. 6-7. Babylon has made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries so that they have become incapable of heeding the first angel’s declaration of the gospel.²²

²⁰ See also Matt 11:22, 24; 12:36; Rom 9:29; 2 Pet 2:6; Jude 7.

²¹ The “eternal gospel” is the final call prior to the judgment, directed to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people. This is a universal message. Fear God rather than the triumvirate of beasts. Give glory to him rather than to the transient glitter of culture. Worship him rather than the beast. The central issue is worship. It is similar to the summons issued by John the Baptist and by Jesus: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt 3:1; Mark 1:14). Repent = fear God, give him glory, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand = for the hour of his judgment has come.

²² The repeated verb “fallen” (*épesen*, twice) is an aorist functioning like a Hebrew prophetic perfect in expressing the future occurrence of Babylon’s fall as though it has already occurred. This futuristic use of the aorist underscores the prophetic certainty of Babylon’s future

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Like the first two, the third angel also announces judgment. He declares that if people give ultimate allegiance to the beast, they will suffer death. While the second angel pronounced a collective verdict against Babylon, the third angel warns individuals (“If anyone worships the beast...”). Worship is the issue. The punishment fits their crime.

Thus, the presence of the three heavenly messengers does not precipitate the destruction of Sodom or in this case Babylon, but it occasions the final demonstration of the depravity of the Sodomites (Babylon), which serves to vindicate the justice of God’s judgment upon it. The primary function of the three heavenly messengers is to announce and instruct.

“Come out of her . . .”

Intertextual parallels between the Narrative of Sodom and Gomorrah and Revelation 18 highlight another aspect of the context of the three messengers’ message.

Like the messenger in the Sodom narrative (Gen 19:17, 20, 22), the messenger (*állon ággelon*) in Rev 18:4a²³ summons God’s people to flee, *Exélthate ho laós mou ex autēs*.²⁴ *Exélthate*, “come out,” is the second person plural aorist imperative. The command “come out of her” is followed by the reason for the command, namely, *hína mē sugkoinōnēsēte tais hamartíais autēs, kai ek tōn plēgōn autēs hina mē labēte*. (4c, “lest you participate in her sins and in her plagues lest you share”). Babylon has become the embodiment of the sinful place, forbidden desires, and wickedness, the epitome of all evil (Rev 18). The heavenly messenger urges God’s people to separate themselves physically, emotionally, and ideologically from it (compare with Isa 48:20; Jer 50:8; 51:6, 45). In spite of the fact that the events described in the book of Revelation are global, “coming out” also involves the “space” concept. Moreover, “safety” and “space” aspects are inseparable. Separation is vitally important because association with the doomed Babylon and its followers entails total destruction.²⁵

Other intertextual bridges involving time elements should also be noted. Rev 14:9-11 contains such terms as *hēmeras kai nuktós* (“night” and “day”), as in the Sodom narrative. However, the context here is different, namely, the

demise. Like in Sodom’s case Babylon’s destruction is decreed. From the perspective of heaven, it is an accomplished fact.

²³ The message of Rev 18:2-4, which is directly related to Rev 14:8, announces the complete downfall of Babylon and calls upon God’s people who are scattered throughout Babylon to separate from it. “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great” (18:2).

²⁴ Behind *Exélthate ho laós mou ex autēs* (stands both the Old Testament motif of the departure of the righteous from Sodom (Gen 19:12-22) and Babylon (Jer 50:8; 51:6) and the early Christian apocalyptic tradition that commands flight from Jerusalem and Judea in view of the signs of the end (Mark 13:14).

²⁵ The Christians, as citizens and members of the city of God (Rev 21:2, 10), divorce themselves from the way of living of the evil city and, against every temptation to conform to it, remain obedient only to their Lord (Rev 14:4-5).

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torment of the worshippers of the beast with fire and brimstone. The time of day matters not; the torment is continuous. According to Aune, the terms form a hendiadys meaning a twenty-four-hour day, which by extension means “without ceasing” or “without interruption.”²⁶ Another term referring to time element is *hōra* (“hour”).²⁷ Rev 14:7 gives the reason why the inhabitants of earth should worship God, *hóti ēlthen hē hōra tēs kríseōs autou* (“because the hour of his judgment has come”). The urgency of the call for repentance, conversion, and worship of God in v. 7a implies that the “day,” “time,” “hour” of God’s judgment of the world has already arrived. *He hōra tēs kríseōs* refers to the final eschatological judgment.²⁸ The “hour of his judgment” has a beginning and end. In Rev 18:10 the kings of the earth are shocked at the sudden fall of Babylon: *hoti mia hōra ēlthen he krísis sou* (“in one hour your judgment came”).

Destruction of Babylon by Fire and Brimstone

The major intertextual bridge between the Sodom and Gomorrah narrative and Babylon of Revelation is demonstrated in the destruction of Babylon by fire and brimstone.

The “destruction by fire and brimstone” motif is vividly described in Rev 14:9-11. When the third heavenly messenger (*állos ággelos trítos*) appears in the vision (Rev 14:9), like the first two, he also announces eschatological judgment. He declares that if people give ultimate allegiance to the beast, they will suffer a much worse death than that which the false prophet decreed for believers (Rev 13:15).

Very strong language is used in Rev 14:11: *Kaì ho kapròs tou basanismou autōn eís aiōnas aiōnōn anabaínei* (“And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever”). According to Beale, this expression describes “eternal torment and suffering.”²⁹ However, the compound phrase, *eís aiōnas aiōnōn*, literally means “unto the ages of the ages,”³⁰ and the term *aiōnios* (“age lasting”) expresses permanence or perpetuity within limits.³¹ The duration signified by the term *aiōnios* must, in each case, be determined by the nature of the person or

²⁶ Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 302. See also Rev 4:8; 7:15; 12:10; 14:11; 20:10.

²⁷ “Hour” or “time,” not a literal hour. Compare this use of “hour” in John 4:21; 23; 5:25, 28; Rev 14:15. The phrase “hour of his judgment” is referring to the general time when the judgment takes place.

²⁸ Gregory K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 751-753. David E. Aune, *Revelation 6-16*. Word Biblical Commentary 52B (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 827-828. See also Colin Brown, *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 3:845-849.

²⁹ Beale uses this text as one of many to prove “a real, ongoing, eternal, conscious torment.” See Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 763.

³⁰ Compare with Matt 18:8; 19:16, 29; 21:19; 25:41, 46; Mark 3:29; Luke 1:33, 55; Rom 1:25; 11:36.

³¹ Francis D. Nichol, ed., *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1953-1957), 5: 513.

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thing it describes.³² We note in particular that the fire that annihilated Sodom and Gomorrah completed its work. When all that could be burned up had been burned up the fire went out. That fire has long since ceased to burn, but its effect will continue throughout eternity. It is in this sense that these cities were destroyed by “eternal fire” (2 Pet 2:6; Jude 7). Thus, the figure *eis aiōnas aiōnōn in tēis chase* in this case denotes complete and final destruction (Mal 4:1).

As it was emphasized earlier, usually the expression *gāp̄(e)rīt wā’ēš* refers to the Sodom and Gomorrah narrative. Therefore, there is a high degree of probability that the context in the book of Revelation in which Greek translation of these terms is employed (*theon*, “sulphurous,” and *pur*, “fire,” Rev 9:17) will also be allusive to Sodom: “...fire, smoke and brimstone” (*pur kai kapnōs kai theion*), “...fire, smoke, and brimstone” (*ek tou purōs kai tou kaprou kai tou theiou*, Rev 9:17-19), “burning brimstone” (*pur kai théō*, Rev 14:9-10), “the fiery lake of burning brimstone” (*tēn límnēn tou purōs tēs kaloménēs en theiō*, Rev 19:20), “the lake of burning brimstone” (*tēn límnēn tou purōs kai theiou*, Rev 20:10), “the fiery lake of burning brimstone” (*en tē límnē tē kaiménē puri kai theiō*, Rev 21:8).

Thus, the theme of future divine punishment was best described in terms of the most spectacular destruction of all time, namely, the total annihilation of Sodom and Gomorrah by a deluge of fire and brimstone. The situation of Lot and his family is typical of the situation of Christians living in the final evil days before the Parousia.

Finally, the Sodom narrative serves as an archetype of wickedness and prototype of eschatological judgment which transcend historical reality and provides a tool to prefigure the depth of sin into which the peoples had sunk and the severity of the punishment they would receive.

Two related passages containing the Sodom and Gomorrah imagery are Jude 7 and 2 Pet 2:6. In both cases the context speaks about false teachers. However, in both texts outrageous sexual lust is a major issue, and in both cases it is related to the Sodomites.

2 Peter 2:6 reminds us, *kai póleis Sodómōn kai Gomórras tephōsas [katasrophē] katékrinen hupodeigma mellóntōn asebé[s] in tepheikōs* (“he reduced the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes and condemned them to extinction. Making them an example of what is going to happen with the ungodly”). *Hupodeigma* means a “warning example,” “copy,” “image.”

Jude 7 contains the term *deigma* (“That which is shown,” “proof,” “example”). Both texts serve as prototypes of an eschatological judgment. Undoubt-

³² In the New Testament *aiōnios* is used to describe both the fate of the wicked and the future state of righteous. Accordingly, the reward of the righteous is life to which there is no end, and the reward of the wicked is death forever (John 3:16; Rom 6:23). In 2 Thess 1:9 the wicked are said to be “punished with everlasting destruction.” The expression does not signify a “process” that goes on forever, but an act whose “results” are permanent.

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edly the author sees the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah by fire as a pattern for the fiery judgment of the ungodly at the *Parousia* (2 Pet 3:12).³³

In summary, Sodom, in its sin, in the images of its judicial investigation, in the coming out of a remnant, and in the destruction of the city by fire and brimstone, has become a universal symbol of rebellion against the Judge of all the earth, of wickedness, of judgment, and of salvation of the remnant.

The study of intertextuality shows that when the prophets pick up the imagery of Sodom and Gomorrah, in one way or another they refer to the day of eschatological judgment. However, Sodom as a prototype of the suddenness, totality, and finality of destruction is best seen and understood and reaches its eschatological expression and climax in Rev 14:6-12.

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³³ Jude 7 speaks about "the neighboring towns." Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim and Zoar, but Zoar was spared the judgment (Gen 19:20-22).

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Looking at the End from the Beginning: Studying Eschatological Concepts in the Pentateuch

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Eschatology, the study of last things,¹ has been mostly studied from two distinct viewpoints: either by doing a systematic study of the question—as can be seen in systematic theologies of all colors, which predominantly focus upon NT texts²—or by concentrating upon specific books relevant to eschatological teachings—predominantly the apocalyptic literature of the OT (including the book of Daniel) and the NT (as found in the book of Revelation).³

¹S. H. Travis, “Eschatology,” in: *New Dictionary of Theology*, ed. S. B. Ferguson and D. F. Wright (Leicester/Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1988), 228. S. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 780, suggests the doctrine of the last things has two main focal points, namely personal and individual eschatology and the corporate aspect of eschatology which is based upon the social nature of humankind and focuses God’s purpose and plan for humanity in general. W. Grudem, *Systematic Theology. An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester/Grand Rapids: InterVarsity/Zondervan, 1994), 1091, calls the two aspects *personal* and *general eschatology*.

²See here, for example, Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1092ff. It is interesting to note that Grudem utilizes mainly NT references in his discussion of the visible return of Christ, the church’s waiting for this return, the time of the return, etc.

³To this list we can add some sections in Isaiah, Zechariah, and sections in the synoptic Gospels. Compare here Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 787. Concerning the two main lines of research see also the recently published articles in *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 8/1-2 (1997), which study eschatology mainly from the viewpoint of systematic theology (see here P. M. van Bemmelen, “The Millennium and the Judgment,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 8/1-2 [1997]: 150-160) or book-specific studies (such as B. Norman, “The Restoration of the Primordial World of Gen 1-3 in Rev 21-22,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 8/1-2 [1997]: 161-169).

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In this article I want to look at eschatology⁴ in the first five books of the Bible, the Pentateuch—a corpus of literature which has not been studied extensively from this perspective. The study of the biblical concept of eschatology in any given book can be undertaken from two different perspectives. Firstly, one could study the distinct *lexicon* (or vocabulary) of eschatological writings, taking one's cue from specific terms found in books or sections of the Bible which are undoubtedly eschatological in their perspective. An example for this category in the OT is the book of Daniel, with its frequent use of vocabulary related to the specific semantic domain denoting "end." Secondly, eschatological *concepts* in a given book or section of the OT/NT could be studied—an undertaking which is obviously much broader and provides less methodological control for the researcher.⁵ In this study I will focus predominantly upon the eschatological lexicon contained in the Pentateuch.

History, Eschatology and the Macro-structure of the Pentateuch

Looking at the nature of the Pentateuch—being primarily a body of narratives about the beginning, the first steps and missteps of humanity, the call and creation of a special nation, its liberation from slavery, and finally its experiences and wanderings in the desert prior to the conquest—the books are actually prone to contain some hint of eschatology in them. William Shea⁶ has recently pointed to the importance of the link between history and eschatology. Eschatology is not just a cold, systematic, and somehow mechanical focus upon the last things, but rather is always connected with real (future) history, real people, and a real God. Clearly this indicates a special understanding of history and one refreshingly different from the rationalistic, materialistic version of history

⁴I will not specifically focus upon apocalyptic eschatology, which G. Pfandl, *The Time of the End in the Book of Daniel*, Adventist Theological Society Dissertation Series 1 (Berrien Springs: Adventist Theological Society Publications, 1992), 21, defines in the following way: "If eschatology describes a radical break in the course of history, apocalyptic or apocalyptic eschatology describes the end of history, the end of this world. It is the time when the cosmic battle between the forces of good and evil will finally be finished, when the final judgment will take place and salvation will be consummated, and when this present age will be followed by eternity. Thus, the apocalyptic event is the final eschatological event."

⁵W. C. Kaiser Jr., *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 11-12, mentions six principles of doing OT theology, focusing upon specific theological concepts. These principles include (1) the critical placement of interpretive statements in the textual sequence; (2) the frequency of repetition of ideas; (3) the recurrence of phrases or terms that begin to take on a technical status; (4) the resumption of earlier themes; (5) the use of categories of assertions previously used that lend themselves to a description of a new stage in the program of history; and (6) the organizing standard by which people, place, and ideas were marked for approval, contrast, inclusion, and future and present significance. Kaiser has chosen one main theme, i.e. the promise-fulfillment axis, as the center of all OT theology. G. F. Hasel, *Old Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate*, 4th edition (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 52-54, 139-171, has questioned the validity of the *one* center of theology approach.

⁶W. H. Shea, "History and Eschatology in the Book of Daniel," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 8/1-2 (1997): 195-205.

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which we are all systematically being fed by modern mass media, science, and certain quarters of religious studies. The biblical view of history depicts a clear linear (and not cyclical as in ancient religion!) view of time which moves from the beginning (creation) to the final restoration of this world. It is evidently a theocentric (as opposed to human-centered) view of history and depicts God's intervention in favor of His world and—more specific—of His people.⁷

Closely related to the history-oriented nature of the Pentateuch is its focus upon creation. The creation theme of the Pentateuch involves eschatology, since creation in the OT “has a beginning, a history, and an end . . . [and] is part of a history characterized by figures and dates.”⁸

Thus it appears that the specific “history nature” of the Pentateuch in itself provides a clear indication of its “end-orientation”—an important concept in eschatological thought. Furthermore, as has been pointed out in an important study by John Sailhamer published in 1987,⁹ the narrative and poetic seams of the Pentateuch are predominantly connected to the important phrase *'ah^arît*, “end,” which is usually connected to a temporal marker (like “days” or “time”). One can find three major poetic sections in the Pentateuch (Gen 49; Num 24; and Deut 31)¹⁰ which are connected to the main narrative (or “story”) sections, thus displaying a clearly visible and coherent macro-structure. Sailhamer writes:

A close look at the material lying between and connecting the narrative and poetic sections reveals the presence of a homogeneous compositional stratum. It is most noticeably marked by the recurrence of the same terminology and narrative motifs. In each of the three segments, the central narrative figure (Jacob, Balaam,

⁷Compare here the insightful discussion of Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 789-797.

⁸R. L. Smith, *Old Testament Theology: Its Message, Method, and Message* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1993), 404.

⁹J. H. Sailhamer, “The Canonical Approach to the OT: Its effect on understanding prophecy,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 30/3 (1987): 307-316. Compare also his later remarks in J. H. Sailhamer, “The Mosaic Law and the Theology of the Pentateuch,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 53/2 (1991): 241-261.

¹⁰There are indeed more poetic sections, such as Exod 15:1-18; Num 23:7-10, 18-24; 24:3-9, 15-24 and Deut 32-33. Although Exod 15:1-17 does not contain a specific lexical marker referring to time in an eschatological context, the concepts contained in the poem do exalt several aspects of eschatological thought: (1) God as judge executing his verdict (15:4, 6-7); (2) reference to the final destination—which in a historical context refers to the conquest of Canaan—but which suggests also a much broader context (15:13-17); (3) the reference to the eternal nature of God's reign (15:28). One of the main themes of the poem—namely the intervention of God in human affairs (as pointed out by A. Soviv, “The Song of the Sea—From Enslavement to Service in ‘Thy Holy Abode’,” *Beth Mikra* 25/81 [1980]: 125-131)—is also one of the main pillars of biblical eschatology. C. Houtman, *Exodus. Vol. 2. Chapters 7:14-19:25*, Historical Commentary on the Old Testament (Kampen: Kok, 1996), 292-293, suggests eschatological overtones in the final statement of YHWH's kingship and his everlasting nature. It is interesting to note that Targum Pseudo-Jonathan reads, “His is the kingship in the world to come . . .”—a clear indication that this section was understood in eschatological terms.

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Moses) calls an audience together (imperative: Gen 49:1; Num 24:14; Deut 31:28) and proclaims (cohortative: Gen 49:1; Num 24:14; Deut 31:28) what will happen (Gen 49:1; Num 24:14; Deut 31:29) in the “end of days” (Gen 49:1; Num 24:14; Deut 31:29).¹¹

It appears as if the author wants us—the ancient and also the modern readers—to receive a cue in order to read the passage “eschatologically,” that is, with a view towards the end.

In more generic terms, we can observe the sequence of narrative—poetry—epilogue as part of the literary technique used by Moses in order to unify the work. A good example can be found in the creation account in Gen 1-2, where a short poetic discourse of Adam in Gen 2:23 (“This *is* now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man”) concludes the narrative of the creation and is followed by the epilogue in Gen 2:24 (“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh”).¹²

It has been noted that both the narrative and historical form (and content) of the Pentateuch and its macro (and micro) structure point the reader toward a time beyond the present and thus invites a study of its eschatology. In the following section I will first define the lexicon of eschatology in the Pentateuch (thus focusing upon the semantic domain of “end, cessation”), and then provide a more detailed discussion of the Pentateuchal references to this lexicon.

A Definition and Discussion of the Lexicon of Eschatology in the Pentateuch

Gerhard Pfandl, in his important study of one of the key terms and markers of eschatological perspective (*et qēš*, “time of the end” in Dan 8:19), has provided us with a helpful discussion of two important phrases indicating eschatological concepts in the book of Daniel, namely *’ah^a’rît*, “end, outcome, after-part” and *qēš*, “end.” Other terms connected to eschatological concepts include the verb *sûf*, “to come to an end, cease,” which, however, does not occur in the Pentateuch.¹³ Another Hebrew root, *qsh*, “end,” (and etymologically related to

¹¹Sailhamer, “Canonical Approach to the OT,” 310.

¹²Similar patterns can be seen in Gen 3 and the narrative of the fall. Gen 3:14-19 contains a poetic discourse which is followed by an epilogue to the story in Gen 3:20-24. For a more in-depth discussion of the phenomenon, see J. H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 34-44.

¹³The verb occurs 7x in the OT in Est 9:28, Psa 73:19, Isa 66:17, Jer 8:13, Amos 3:15, Zeph 1:2-3. The verb is often found in a context of divine judgment (Isa 66:17).

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qēš), refers predominantly to physical or spatial dimensions¹⁴ and thus will not be of great help for the present discussion.¹⁵

In the book of Psalms the verb *gāmar*, “end, come to an end, complete” does seem to carry some eschatological overtones, as it can refer to God’s act of judging (in itself an eschatological concept—Psa 7:9) or to His intervention in favor of His people (the German Elberfelderübersetzung translates here very well “vollenden”—“make complete, to perfect”—Psa 57:3 and 138:8). However, the root appears only in poetic contexts in the book of Psalms and thus falls outside the limitations of this study.

After having provided a concise introduction to the semantic domain of “end, cessation” and after having established the two main nouns of reference, I will now discuss the references of both *’ah^arît* and *qēš* in the Pentateuch in more detail.¹⁶

’ah^arît in the Pentateuch

The following table will provide an overview of the occurrences of *’ah^arît* in the context of the Pentateuch and contains three main columns, including the reference, the immediate co-text¹⁷ and the larger context.

REFERENCE	CO-TEXT	CONTEXT
Gen 49:1	Found together with the noun (plus article), “the days,” which appears as well in Dan 2:28-29. ¹⁸	Blessings or Testament of Jacob in terms of a prophecy of future events related to the tribes of Israel.
Num 23:10	Together with the preposition and pronominal suffix, “like his.” This form occurs only in poetic contexts. ¹⁹	The first oracle of Balaam, where he blesses the descendents of Jacob instead of cursing them. The context does not appear to be eschatological, but limited to the descendents of Israel.
Num 24:14	Utilized together with the noun (plus article), “the days”—see above.	Functions as an introduction to the fourth (and obviously unpaid) oracle of Balaam, explaining what will happen in the “latter days” (NKJV), “end of days”

¹⁴Compare A. Tomasino, “*qsh*” in: *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, ed. W. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 3:956-959.

¹⁵In Gen 8:3 *qāšeh* indicates the end of the time of the flood, but carries no eschatological connotations, although it could be argued that its inclusion in a story with universal repercussions points the reader to a much broader context and typology of the flood story.

¹⁶Pfandl, *Time of the End*, 140-151, has provided a very useful discussion of the term *’ah^arît* in the Pentateuch.

¹⁷Co-text describes the immediate connections in the same verse, while context describes the larger unit and structure.

¹⁸Unfortunately, I did not have access to E. Lipinski, “*b^e’ah^arît hayyāmim* dans les textes préexiliques,” *Vetus Testamentum* 20 (1970): 445-450, and J. T. Willis, “The expression *be’acharith hayyamin* [sic] in the Old Testament,” *Restoration Quarterly* 22 (1979): 54-71.

¹⁹See here B. K. Waltke and M. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winnona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 189, especially 11.1.2.d.

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		(revised German Elberfelderübersetzung)
Num 24:20	No direct connection. The form contains a pronominal suffix (“his”) which refers to Amalek.	Part of the final miscellaneous oracles of Balaam, referring to the future of Amalek. Does not appear to include eschatological overtones.
Deut 4:30	Utilized together with the noun (plus article), “the days”—see above.	Moses’ address in Transjordan, before the beginning of the conquest (Deut 1:1).
Deut 8:16	No specific direct time marker. Stands alone in this context.	Refers to the end of the desert wandering.
Deut 11:12	Term is used in connection with the noun “year.”	Refers to the year cycle—from its beginning to its end.
Deut 31:29	Utilized together with the noun (plus article), “the days”—see above.	Forms part of the seam to the poetical section known as the “song of Moses” (Deut 32) and as with the earlier seams it projects the future events towards the “end of the days” or “latter days.”
Deut 32:20	Includes the pronominal suffix “their end.” No additional time marker included.	Possible reference to the earlier golden calf episode (in Exo 32) or future experience of idolatry.
Deut 32:29	Includes the pronominal suffix “their end.” No additional time marker included. Same as in Deut 32:20.	See above.

Gen 49:1 utilizes the exact same phrase as Dan 2:28-29 and Dan 10:14 *b^e’ah^a’rît hayyāmîm*, which the New Jerusalem Bible (NJB) translates as “in the final days.”²⁰ As has been observed above, the macro-structure of the narrative—poetry—epilogue sequence can also be observed in this context.²¹ The reference to a future point in time prepares the reader for the surprising turn of history as described in Exo 1, where the Israelites (or the sons of Jacob), living in Egypt but without the protection of the governor Joseph, are facing slavery and oppression. The main tenor of the “in the last days” perspective is God’s future deliverance of His chosen people. There is hope and a future—even beyond the distress and oppression the sons of Jacob are yet to experience! At the end of the discourse, there is the threefold use of the root *bārakh*, “to bless,” which the NKJV translates as “. . . and he blessed them; he blessed each one according to his own blessing.” It seems that by connecting one of the major themes of Genesis to its penultimate chapter, the author consciously seeks to relate this section to the first blessing found in Gen 1:28, where God blesses

²⁰The NKJV translates here “in the last days.”

²¹The narrative of the patriarchal stories (Gen 12-48) is followed by a poetic conclusion with an eschatological orientation (Gen 49:1), which itself is followed by an epilogue in Gen 50.

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Adam and Eve on the sixth day of creation.²² Thus the beginning and a future point in time are connected in the text. While the exact nature of this point in time is not clear, the possibility of a messianic fulfillment should not be discarded—especially in view of the reference to *šilōh*²³ in Gen 49:10 which—at least—refers to the house of David and—perhaps—looks even beyond that specific time, referring to the Messiah.²⁴

In Num 23:10 the phrase *'ah^arîṭ kāmōhû*, “my end like his [i.e. Jacob’s descendents, the singular form is utilized in a collective manner],” is part of the first oracle, which the pricey seer from Aram produced for Balak, the king of Moab. Balak is not very happy with the outcome because instead of the promised curse, Balaam blesses the descendents of Jacob²⁵—and is being paid for this dis-service! The final reference to “my end” appears to be a personal reflection of Balaam, where he concludes “his vision of Israel by wishing that, at the end his own life, he could be as blessed as Israel was.”²⁶ In view of his end at the swords of an Israelite army unit (Num 31:8), the “end” came rather suddenly and quickly upon Balaam and does not contain any eschatological connotations.

Num 24:14 contains the introduction to the final fourth oracle of Balaam. King Barak is furious, but Balaam defends himself by pointing to the fact that he can only speak what he has been shown. It appears that the connection with *kôkhāv miyy^aqōv*, “the star out of Jacob,” indicates a distant future fulfillment. This phrase has been interpreted in terms of a reference to David or to the Mes-

²²God also blesses the Sabbath day (Gen 2:3), Noah—after the flood (Gen 9:1), Abraham (Gen 12:2-3), etc. All in all the verb occurs 65x in the book of Genesis and constitutes a major theme. Compare also the discussion of G. V. Smith, “Structure and Purpose in Genesis 1-11,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 20/4 (1977): 307-319, who connects the blessing/curse dichotomy in Genesis to the overall structure of the book of Genesis. B. A. McKenzie, “Jacob’s blessing on Pharaoh: An Interpretation of Gen 46:31-47:26,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 45/2 (1983): 386-399, also has demonstrated the importance and function of the blessing theme for the Joseph cycle.

²³The translation of this term has been an enigma in Pentateuchal studies and is extremely difficult.

²⁴See here G. Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, Word Biblical Commentary 2 (Dallas: Word, 1994), 476-478, and the references provided there. See also V. P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis. Chapters 18-50*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 658-661. For a discussion of the history of interpretation of Gen 49 as a whole, see J. D. Heck, “A History of Interpretation of Genesis 49 and Deuteronomy 33,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 147/585 (1990): 16-31.

²⁵In the OT outside the Jacob cycle in Genesis 25-36, Jacob is often a collective reference for Israel—a fact which can be demonstrated with the frequent parallel usage of Jacob together with Israel (compare here, Deut 32:9; Jer 10:25; 30:7; Isa 10:21, etc.). See also the remarks of S. D. Walters, “Jacob Narrative,” in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. D. N. Freedman, 6 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 3:607-608.

²⁶See here T. R. Ashley, *The Book of Numbers*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 472.

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siah himself (connecting Rev 22:16, the “Morning Star,” to Num 24:17).²⁷ The evidence of the Aramaic translations (or Targumim) suggests that Judaism interpreted the reference to the star as an indication of the Messiah.²⁸ The Jews living in Qumran from the second century B.C. to the first century A.D. interpreted this reference in terms of their messianic expectations in the context of the final universal war between the sons of light and the sons of darkness as found in the famous war scroll (1QM, column 11:6-7).²⁹ Looking at the history of interpretation of this verse and at its wider prophetic context, it seems appropriate to suggest an eschatological perspective focusing possibly first upon David and then—in a more inclusive perspective—upon the Messiah.³⁰

In Num 24:20 the term refers to the end of the Amalekites³¹—a tribe often mentioned during the early history of Israel in connection with the Edomites.³² The context does not indicate any eschatological connection and includes references to other tribes connected to the history of Israel.³³

Deut 4:30 contains the complete formula *b'ah'rit hayyamim*, “at the end of days,” which also appears in Dan 2:28-29. Moses admonishes his people to stay clear from idolatry and describes the inevitable results of their actions—if they allow idolatry to take control of their hearts. In the form of a typical ancient Near Eastern vassal treaty³⁴ Moses depicts not only the results of idolatry—namely exile, destruction and more idolatry—but also points toward the

²⁷See R. K. Harrison, *Numbers: An Exegetical Commentary*, Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 321-324. Compare also Ashley, *Numbers*, 500, and R. B. Allen, “Numbers,” in: *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. F. E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 2:909-910.

²⁸Compare Pfandl, *Time of the End*, 144-145 and the references to Targum Onkelos and Targum Jonathan included there. It is interesting to note that the prominent first century AD Rabbi Akiba, called Simon Bar Kosiba, who briefly conquered Jerusalem in 132 AD and led the Second Jewish Revolt against the Romans, Bar Kokhba, “the son of the star.” This is undoubtedly an allusion to the messianic prophecy of Num 24:17 and illustrates the Jewish understanding of this passage in the second century AD. Compare here also J. J. Scott Jr., *Customs and Controversies: Intertestamental Jewish Backgrounds of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 103.

²⁹See F. García Martínez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran Texts in English*, 2nd edition (Leiden/Grand Rapids: Brill/Eerdmans, 1996), 104. Concerning the imminent eschatological expectations of the Qumran community and their (often curious) method of interpretation see L. H. Schiffman, *The Eschatological Community of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series 38 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1989).

³⁰This dual fulfillment perspective has also been suggested by Pfandl, *Time of the End*, 147.

³¹For a discussion of the second part of the oracle, where the MT reads *'dê 'ōvêd* “to the one who destroys” see Ashley, *Numbers*, 504. Based upon the Samaritan Pentateuch, Albright divided the phrase differently and thus translated *'d y'vd*, “to perish forever,” but the longer prepositional form suggests an early preposition, possibly connected to Akkadian.

³²See the discussion in G. L. Mattingly, “Amalek,” in: *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. D. N. Freedman, 6 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1:169-171.

³³Such as the Kenites (Num 24:21) and the Kittim (possibly Sea people and connected to the Philistines, Num 24:24).

³⁴Compare the comments in Pfandl, *Time of the End*, 148, and also D. R. Hillers, *Covenant. The History of a Biblical Idea* (Baltimore/London: Johns Hopkins UP, 1969), 128-134.

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future redemption of Israel. “When you are in distress, and all these things come upon you in the latter days, when you turn to the LORD your God and obey His voice.” Thus the future (and not specified) redemptive event will occur *after* the suffering and the change of heart necessary for a new beginning. Christopher Wright comments here very poignantly:

Moses turns the dynamic of the covenant into a theology of history. No place would be too far and no time too distant for Israel to come back to God. Beyond sin and judgment there was always hope—as their recent past history had already proved.³⁵

The precise historical context of this future repentance cannot be ascertained from the context of the passage³⁶ and has been connected with the exile of the northern tribes and the final destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC by the Babylonians.³⁷ However, the temporal marker “at the end of days” has also been interpreted as stretching all the way from OT times to the end of the Age³⁸—especially in view of the fact that the sequence fall—judgment—repentance is part of a specific pattern, which will be operative until the final judgment.

In Deut 8:16 the “end” appears without any explicit temporal marker and refers in this specific context to the end of the wandering in the desert, emphasizing God’s goodness towards His people. Goodness—in this context—includes testing by hardship for the sake of a better future.³⁹ The text does not seem to indicate eschatological connotations. This also appears to be the case with Deut 11:12, where the focus is upon the land. Moses distinguishes in his sermon between the land of Egypt with its proliferate fertility and the promised land whose primary caregiver is YHWH. Year-in and year-out, God will be the one responsible for rain, growth, harvest, and well-being—a theme which is later on perverted by the typical Canaanite fertility cults where Ba’al (or any other god for that matter) usurps YHWH’s life-sustaining power.⁴⁰ The reference to the term “end” is clearly connected to the year and cannot be understood eschatologically.

Deut 31:29 again is part of the introduction or seam to a major poetic section in the Pentateuch, namely the Song of Moses in Deut 32, including the leader’s farewell address. The immediate context suggests a period of apostasy

³⁵C. Wright, *Deuteronomy*, New International Biblical Commentary 4 (Peabody: Hendrickson/Paternoster, 1996), 54.

³⁶M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1-11: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible 5 (New York/London: Doubleday, 1991), 210, suggests that the phrase denotes a “future period, the distance of which varies with the context.”

³⁷Compare P. C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 141.

³⁸See Pfandl, *Time of the End*, 149-150.

³⁹This phrase was taken from Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1-11*, 395.

⁴⁰See Craigie, *Deuteronomy*, 210. It is interesting to note the connection of the conflict between YHWH and other fertility deities such as Baal in an eschatological context.

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after the death of Moses and does not include direct eschatological connotations.⁴¹ It appears that “the latter days” would indicate a time in the relatively near future; for example, during the time of the judges where the prophetic description of Moses became a sad reality (Jdg 2:11-16). The final two references in Deut 32:20 and 32:39 to *’aḥ^arītām*, “their end,” refer most probably to the golden calf episode in Exo 32⁴² or future events involving idolatry and connect “end” with the people. Deut 32:21 reads, “They have provoked Me to jealousy by *what* is not God; they have moved Me to anger by their foolish idols. But I will provoke them to jealousy by *those who are* not a nation; I will move them to anger by a foolish nation” (NKJV). “End” should be interpreted in terms of destiny or future and does not carry eschatological overtones, but connects directly to a past and possibly future experience of Israel.

qēš in the Pentateuch

In the following section I will look at all the occurrences of the time marker *qēš*, “end,” in the Pentateuch and will try to determine whether the term occurs in an eschatological context or not.

REFERENCE	CO-TEXT	CONTEXT
Gen 4:3	<i>meqqēš yāmîm</i> , literally “at the end of days,” occurs together with preposition “from.”	Describes the passing of time and the end of a specific encompassing the time after the fall, birth of the first so Adam and Eve, and their growing up. No eschatological notations.
Gen 6:13	No specific additional time marker is included. The noun appears without preposition.	The introduction of the flood story. God communicates Noah that the “end of all the flesh” is immanent. The nature of the event provides a typological equivalent for time events, but does not indicate specifically eschatological future realities.
Gen 8:6	“At the end of forty days.”	Indicates the time period before which the ark had settled on mount Ararat and where Noah opened the window and released a raven. No eschatological connotations.
Gen 16:3	“At the end of 10 years.”	After ten years in Canaan without any children, Sarai proposed the solution of giving her slave maid Hagar to Abram. No eschatological connotations.
Gen 41:1	“At the end of 2 years.”	Two year period that Joseph spent in prison before he interpreted Pharaoh’s dream. No eschatological connotation.
Exo 12:41	“At the end of 430 years.”	Period of sojourn of Israel in Egypt. The time marker is an important event in salvation history, namely the beginning of the Exodus. No eschatological connotations.
Num 13:25	“At the end of forty days.”	Period that the spies spent in Canaan. No eschatological notations.

⁴¹M. Fishbane, “Varia Deuteronomica,” *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 84/3 (1972): 349-352, argues that the phrase indicates the immediate future.

⁴²See here E. H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, New American Commentary 4 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 417, who connects the description with the historical incident found in Exod 32.

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Deut 9:11	“At the end of 40 days and 40 nights.”	Period that Moses spent upon Mount Sinai after having received the 2 stone tablets inscribed with the 10 commandments. No eschatological connotations.
Deut 15:1	“At the end of seven years.”	Laws concerning the Sabbatical year, where remission of debts is granted. No clear eschatological connotations. ⁴³
Deut 31:10	“At the end of seven years.”	As part of Moses’ final discourse Israel is challenged to obey the law of God every seven years. No eschatological connotations.

Several observations can be made while considering the data of the usage of *qēṣ* in the Pentateuch.

First, with the exception of only one reference (Gen 6:13), all references connect the preposition *min*, “from, at” to the noun *qēṣ*, “end.” This usage seems to go hand in hand with possible eschatological (or at least typological) connotations of the term. With the exception of Gen 6:13 all references utilizing the preposition indicate a specific and limited time period.

Second, it appears that *qēṣ* is often utilized in crucial moments in salvation history. In Gen 4:3 the description of the first homicide on our planet and the repercussions of the fall are described. The time marker in Gen 8:6 indicates a period prior to the opening of the ark—and with that—the new beginning of humanity. Gen 16:3 describes the crucial “man-made” solution to the problem of Sarai’s sterility, following the current customs of its day. The point of reference in the mind of the author is clearly Gen 12:1-3 and God’s promise of a future, descendants, and a name. Exod 12:31 marks the end of an era (i.e., the time in Egypt of the people of Israel) and the beginning of a new one, because now Israel is a people (and not just a bigger clan) on its way to the promised land. Finally, Deut 9:11 refers back to the time Moses spent on Mount Sinai, receiving the law of God—clearly an important event in salvation history. Taking into account all the mentioned references, it appears that the allusion to the “end” of a specific period/era always supposes the beginning of something new—a principle also often found in eschatological literature, although it is not explicitly eschatological in its nature.

Third, a closer look at Gen 6:13 indicates a distinct usage of the term—without the preposition *min*. God speaks to Noah and provides a rationale for the destruction, or better, “the end of all the flesh,” which is an indication of all living beings (including both mankind and animals).⁴⁴ Gordon Wen-

⁴³Although the context (and co-text) of the verse under consideration does not indicate eschatological connotations, attempts have been made to establish a typology of sabbatical years in terms of messianism in Judaism. See here S. Bacchiocchi, “Sabbatical Typologies of Messianic Redemption,” *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 17/2 (1987): 153-176. For a modern application of these institutions see T. K. Hui, “The Purpose of Israel’s Annual Feasts,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 147/586 (1990): 143-154.

⁴⁴See here H.-J. Stipp, “‘Alles Fleisch hatte seinen Wandel auf der Erde verdorben’ (Gen 6,12). Die Mitverantwortung der Tierwelt an der Sintflut nach der Priesterschrift,” *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 111/2 (1999): 167-186.

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ham has correctly recognized a similar terminology in the description of the destruction of Jerusalem as found in Eze 7, including key words such as “end,” “violence,” “coming,” “is full”⁴⁵—an event with similar repercussions in salvation history. Inasmuch as judgment is always part and parcel of “final things,”⁴⁶ Gen 6:13 definitely carries eschatological overtones—even more so in view of the fact that it utilizes a distinct grammatical construction when compared to the other occurrences of *qēš* in the Pentateuch (i.e., without the preposition *min*). However, it is clear that the eschatological overtones concern typology and have no distinct eschatological program or route.

Conclusion—Eschatology in the Pentateuch

The present study has demonstrated that eschatological thinking is not a late development in OT theology, but an integral part of theological thought which can be traced from the first to the last book of the Old Testament canon. This stands in clear contrast to modern evolutionary concepts of theology and religion—especially regarding its eschatology. David Peterson expresses the current critical majority position concerning the historical development of the modern (and critical) eschatological theological perspective in the following words:

OT eschatology should be discussed within the context of historical development. Old Testament eschatology is best understood as a complex of traditions evolving out of earlier and discrete Israelite traditions. Old Testament eschatology is not essentially a systematic theological term, and therefore it is difficult to discuss eschatology as if one were describing one basic concept.⁴⁷

Several typical (at least for modern scholarship) concepts can be gleaned from Peterson’s statement. Clearly, it subscribes to an evolutionary concept of theology and religion—especially concerning eschatology. Furthermore, Peterson suggests that eschatology is the result of different strands of traditions which in specific historical periods contributed to our present understanding. It is clear that Seventh-day Adventist theology cannot agree with Peterson’s presuppositions. The eschatology of the OT is not a late development—as alleged by most liberal theologians—but rather an integral part of theological perspec-

⁴⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 172.

⁴⁶See here the comments of C. A. Evans and P. W. Flint, “Introduction,” in *Eschatology, Messianism, and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. C. A. Evans and P. W. Flint, *Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Literature* 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 5, who suggest that the diversity of eschatological thought in the DSS does not preclude the existence of central ideas or a common core. One of the central ideas indicated by Evans and Flint concerns the imminent arrival of the day of judgment and restoration.

⁴⁷D. L. Peterson, “Eschatology (OT),” in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. D. N. Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 2:578.

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tives which can be found in most texts of the OT canon⁴⁸—including the Pentateuch. Although its eschatology does not have “banner quality,” but rather “footnote quality,” it nevertheless is present. As has been demonstrated in this article, the eschatological lexicon provides the modern reader with specific terms and contexts which indicate eschatological thought. Perhaps, we can even go further in our conclusions. As has been suggested by John Sailhamer, the Pentateuch as a whole (and not as the result of four or more distinct sources, as alleged by traditional historical criticism) is a work built around prophetic hope and eschatological perspective,⁴⁹ a fact which can be seen in the literary macrostructure of the Pentateuch, which is always introduced by verses including the phrase *b’ah’rît hayyāmîm*, “at the end of the days.” While it is often difficult to pinpoint the exact nature and time of this “end of the days,” it is nevertheless a clear indication of the inclusion of this important theological concept in early books.

A curious footnote to the recent discussion concerning the date and provenance of the Pentateuch⁵⁰ can be added to the present study. Traditional historical criticism asserts that originally the Pentateuch represents an evolutionary development whereby four sources (J-E-D-P) were edited together—a task accomplished around the fifth century B.C. According to the proponents of this traditional critical model—which is, in many ways, superseded by most current research but still awaits a comprehensive revision in the textbooks—the final source P (or priestly source) originated in the fifth century B.C. Knowing this, one would expect a tremendous amount of eschatological concepts in these texts, because—according to Peterson⁵¹—the theology of eschatology developed decisively during the Persian period (which corresponds to the fifth century B.C.). However, this is not the case. At least concerning the eschatological lexicon, our present research has not uncovered this phenomenon. It appears that either the traditional theological evolutionary perspective or the traditional source critical analysis of the Pentateuch is faulty—or (most probably) both.

In a world where we hear confusing voices about the things to come, we need God’s sure Word even more. As the Seventh-day Adventist Church we have studied eschatological concepts for more than a hundred and forty years, but still there is much more to discover in the riches of God’s Word. Future studies should focus not only on the eschatological lexicon, but also develop a sound methodology to understand eschatological concepts and eschatological

⁴⁸One should note the two different concepts of “progressive revelation.” Progressive revelation in a conservative context refers to a clearer and deeper understanding of eternal truths by subsequent generations. See here the insightful remarks by G. Pfandl, “Revelación progresiva,” *Theologika* 11/1 (1996): 124-136.

⁴⁹Sailhamer, “Mosaic Law,” 241.

⁵⁰See here G. A. Klingbeil, *A Comparative Study of the Ritual of Ordination as found in Leviticus 8 and Emar 369* (Lewiston/Queenston/Lampeter: Mellen, 1998), 33-34, 87-89, and the references provided there.

⁵¹Peterson, “Eschatology (OT), 579.

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typology. The interpretive road stretches before us, lined with precious truths and surrounded by refreshing vistas. It is well worth our while to walk that way.

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The End Time Remnant in Revelation

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The term “remnant” (*loipos*) is found several times in Revelation (2:24; 3:2; 8:13; 9:20; 11:13; 12:17; 19:21; 20:5). In a number of translations this term is sometimes rendered “others.” In contrast to the term “church,” the word “remnant” does not only apply to true believers. In several cases it is even used with a negative connotation. The remnant can be a faithful or an unfaithful remnant. While the latter will be destroyed, the faithful remnant is identified by certain characteristics. The following diagram illustrates how the term “remnant” is used in Revelation:

- (1) *The “remnant” without a direct connection to the church:*
 - (a) The rest of the trumpets (8:13)
 - (b) The survivors:
 - The rest of the people (the surviving two thirds of the population), who are not destroyed by the plagues (9:20)
 - The inhabitants of the city (minus 7000), who are not killed (11:13)
 - (c) The remnant as a group of people who are subject to judgment:
 - The rest (worshippers of the beast) are killed (19:21)
 - The rest of the (other) dead were resurrected after the millennium (20:5)
- (2) *The remnant in connection with the church*
 - (a) Possibly negative:
 - The remnant (neuter) in connection with the church of Sardis which is about to die (3:2)¹
 - (b) Possibly positive:

¹A faithful remnant is apparently mentioned in Rev 3:4. Yet the word in use here is not *loipos*, but *oliga*—in the plural “some,” “a few.” See also Gerhard Hasel, “The Remnant in Scripture and the End Time,” *Adventists Affirm*, Fall 1988: 11, and “Who are the Remnant?,” *Adventists Affirm*, Fall 1993: 9.

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The survivors of 11:13 are terrified and give glory to God. In light of 14:7 they seem to turn to God and become a faithful remnant.

- (c) Positive, the faithful remnant:
 - In the church of Thyatira (2:24)
 - The end time remnant (12:17)

The last text reference is of special importance, since the remnant is not confined to a local setting (3:2; 2:24) but rather is the universal remnant, namely the remnant of the overall church. We will focus on this.

I. The Remnant in Rev 12–14

1. The Literary Context

The account of the remnant in Rev 12:17 is part of the fourth major segment in the Apocalypse (Rev 11:19–14:20), the centerpiece of the book. Three series of sevens—the letters to the churches, the seals, and the trumpets—precede it. In Rev 12–14, this device of sevens is interrupted and a group of three dominates the scene. Yet in its structure this vision resembles the preceding series of sevens.²

Battle with Evil Forces

a. The Temple Scene (11:19)

The temple scene in Rev 11:19 functions as a preparation for the succeeding issues, just as previous temple scenes introduced individual series of sevens. The location mentioned in Rev 11:19 is the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary (Exod 40:20–28). The ark of the covenant is not only visible but is in the center.

The ark of the covenant is linked to three important elements or concepts:

(1) The ark contained the ten commandments (Exod 25:21; Deut 10:1–2). Therefore, the introductory scene raises the question of what will happen to God’s unceasingly binding law during church history and in the end time and how this is related to faithfulness to God.

(2) The ark was covered with the mercy seat (Exod 25:21). Salvation comes only by the grace of God through Jesus’ substitutionary self-sacrifice. Those who break the law can be forgiven and the individual can receive pardon on the condition of faith, which, according to the New Testament, has no merit of itself.

(3) The day of atonement is alluded to. Only once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest was allowed to enter the most holy place (Lev 16), whereas the congregation remained worshiping in front of the sanctuary. This

²Cf. Kenneth A. Strand, “The Eight Basic Visions,” in *Symposium on Revelation—Book I*, Daniel & Revelation Committee Series, ed. Frank B. Holbrook (Silver Spring: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1992), 6:42.

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was a symbolic judicial rite to portray the ultimate elimination of sin which will take place at the end of time.

All three aspects appear in the “prophetic description” (Rev 12–13), as well as in the “spotlight on last events” (Rev 14).

- (a) God’s law (Ten Commandments):
 - Observance (12:17; 14:12)
 - Rejection (12:4, 15; 13:4, 6, 8, 12, 14, 15; 14:11)
- (b) Grace on the basis of Jesus’ sacrificial death and the response by faith (12:11; 13:10; 14:12)
- (c) Worship and judgment:
 - True worship and judgment (14:7)
 - False worship (13:4, 8, 12, 15; 14:11)

b. The Prophetic Description (12–13)

(1) The Dragon and the Woman (12:1–17)

The dragon, the woman, the male child, Michael, and the remnant are the main characters in Rev 12. The following little chiasm shows how they appear there:

- A The woman, the son, and the dragon (12:1–6)
- B Michael and the dragon (12:7–12)
- A’ The woman, the remnant, and the dragon (12:13–17)

This chapter is clearly divided into three sections.³ The first and the last sections correspond to each other. Yet the middle section is also connected to the other two parts: A and B are associated by the phrases “he cast to the earth” (namely the stars, v.4) and “he was cast” (namely Satan and, in addition, his angels—v.9). B and A’ are linked by the common theme of battle (vs.7, 17). The following outline provides an overview of the chapter:

- A *The woman, the child, and the dragon* (12:1–6)
 - 1. Introduction of the woman (1–2)
 - 2. Introduction of the dragon (3)
 - 3. The dragon against the stars and the woman’s child—attempt to kill the child (4)
 - 4. Birth of the son and His ascension (5)
 - 5. Flight of the woman into the desert (1260 days) (6)
- B *Michael and the Dragon* (12:7–12)
 - 1. The battle and the results (7–9)
 - 2. Evaluation in a hymn (10–12)
- A’ *The woman, the remnant, and the dragon* (12:13–17)

³Cf. Hubert Ritt, *Offenbarung des Johannes*, Die Neue Echter Bibel (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1988), 65.

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1. Action: *The dragon*—persecution of the woman who gave birth to the son (13)
2. Response: The eagle—the woman escapes into the desert (3 1/2 times) (14)
3. Action: *The serpent*—attempt to kill the woman (15)
4. Response: The earth—rescue of the woman from the dragon (16)
5. Action: *The dragon*—war against the remnant (17)

A4 and A5 are linked to A'1 and A'2 by the topics persecution and rescue. The description of the woman in A1 is mirrored by a description of the remnant in A5. In A3 and A'3 the common thought is the attempt of murder.

In section A the woman has given birth to the male child, which is attacked by the dragon. As a parallel section A' mentions the woman bringing forth the remnant⁴ that are pursued by the wrath of the dragon. After a time of suffering the child is taken away to God. Suffering is not mentioned in 12:5, but is hinted at in 12:11 by the mention of the blood of the Lamb (section B). Apparently, the remnant of her offspring have to endure distress before they, as redeemed ones, can stand with the Lamb on Mount Zion (14:1).

The woman is a symbol for God's true church. In the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament, God's people are compared to a woman—Isa 54:5–6; Eph 5:25–32. As soon as God's people separate from the Lord, they become, as a group, a harlot—Jer 3:20; Eze 23:2–4. Indeed, in the book of Revelation the faithful church (chap. 12) is contrasted with a church that has fallen away from the Lord, the harlot Babylon (chap. 17).

The male child is Jesus Christ: (1) Ruling with a rod of iron is taken from Ps 2, a messianic psalm. (2) This expression is used in Rev 19:15, and there it is applied to Jesus. (3) That the child is caught up to God and His throne points toward the ascension of Jesus and His inauguration at the right hand of God.

The dragon is Satan (12:9). He is the first part of the satanic trinity that appears in 12–14. Since after His ascension the dragon cannot attack Jesus any longer, he turns specifically against God's church and the remnant of her offspring. Apparently, the dragon carries out this battle against the remnant through the beast out of the sea (13a) and the beast out of the earth (13b).⁵ The sea beast, which appears immediately after the dragon and declares war against the saints, receives its power and authority directly from the dragon (13:2). The dragon went "to make war with the remnant" (12:17, *poiēsai polemon meta tōn loipōn*). The sea beast is given power to "to make war with the saints [*poiēsai polemon meta tōn hagiōn*] and to overcome them" (13:7). The beast out of the earth

⁴Cf. Eduard Lohse, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes*, NTD 11 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988), 76. He calls the remnant and the Messiah "children of the woman."

⁵Cf. Ulrich B. Müller *Die Offenbarung des Johannes*, Ökumenischer Taschenbuchkommentar, vol. 19 (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1984), 247, who states that chap. 13 develops what it means: that the dragon cast out of heaven battles against Christians and starts a final assault against those who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus (12:17).

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speaks like a dragon (13:11), is connected to the sea beast, and has also received its power and does not in itself possess it (13:14.15).

(2) The Beast out of the Sea and the Saints (12:18–13:10)

An overview of Rev 13a reveals the following structure:

1. *Description of the beast and the reaction of humanity* (13:1–4)
 - a. Description of the beast (1–3a)
 - (1) Appearance of the beast
 - (2) Authority from the dragon
 - (3) Deadly wound and recovery
 - b. Reaction of humankind: *Worship* (3b–4)
2. *Actions of the beast and reaction of humanity* (13:5–8)
 - a. Actions of the beast (5–7)
 - (1) *It was given to him* a mouth speaking blasphemies
 - (2) *It was given to him authority* to act for 42 months
 - (3) He opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, the tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven
 - (4) *It was given to him* to make war with the saints
 - (5) *It was given to him authority* over the nations
 - b. Reaction of humanity: *Worship* (8)
3. *The threefold “If anyone . . .” and the attitude of the saints: “Here is . . .”* (13:9–10)

The beast out of the sea is clearly dependent⁶ on the dragon and collaborates with him. In contrast to the description and the actions of the sea beast (13:1–8), there is the brief description of the saints starting with the words “Here is . . .” (13:10b). The sections 13:1–4 and 13:5–8 seem to be parallel.⁷ In both parts mouth, blasphemy, power, and worship are mentioned.⁸ Death through the

⁶Cf. also the expression “it was given to him” in Rev 12:18; 13:2.4.

⁷Cf. William H. Shea, “Time Prophecies of Daniel 12 and Revelation 12–13,” in *Symposium on Revelation—Book I*, 6:354–359, and William G. Johnson, “The Saint’s End-Time Victory over the Forces of Evil,” in *Symposium on Revelation—Book II*, 7:24.

⁸The section 13:5–7 seems to have a chiastic structure. Charles Homer Giblin, *The Book of Revelation: The Open Book of Prophecy*, Good News Studies 34 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1991), 133–134, supports this view. However, he includes passages 3b–4 and 8, both of which talk about false universal worship. He calls the section 13:3b–8 “the concentrically-structured, dramatized scene of false worship.” The following table of 13:1–10 seems to point towards two parts plus an appendix or contrast:

V. 1	beast heads	names of blasphemy	
V. 2	beast dragon	mouth	dragon gave power
V. 3	beast heads/mortally wounded		
V. 4	beast dragon	he (dragon)	make <i>earth</i> gave authority war worship
V. 5	(it)	mouth/blasphemy	was given/authority was given
V. 6	(it)	God	mouth/blasphemy/blaspheme name
V. 7	(it)	saints	was given/make authority was given war

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sword at the end of the passage (13:10) might be a reminder to the mortal wound at the beginning of the text. Twice universal worship of humankind is mentioned. Unfortunately, it is not directed toward God, but to the dragon and to the beast. The actions of the sea beast are directed against God and against the saints.

(3) The Beast out of the Earth and the Inhabitants of Earth (13:11–19)

In contrast to the passage on the sea beast and the saints, Rev 13b makes no reference to the saints, even though the two beasts are closely interrelated. However, Rev 13b extensively points to those who dwell on earth (13:8; 13:12; 14:14), a group of people consistently presented in a negative way throughout the book of Revelation. The beast out of the earth exercises its power through force. Everyone who submits to this force is part of these inhabitants of earth. On the other hand, whoever does not worship the image of the beast is threatened with death. Whoever does accept the mark of the beast has to anticipate an economic boycott. This group that resists the beast is not mentioned by a specific name.

Rev 13b can be outlined as follows:

1. *Description of the beast* (11)
2. *Actions of the beast* (12–17)
 - a. First beast (twice), pressure to *worship*—inhabitants of the earth (12)
 - b. Signs (twice)—inhabitants of the earth (13–14a)
 - c. The image of the beast (four times), pressure to *worship*—inhabitants of the earth (14b–15)
 - d. Mark of the beast (twice)—sixfold description of the inhabitants of the earth (16–17)
3. *Those who understand: “Here is . . .”* (18)

Just as in the preceding section, the topic of worship is used in two different verses. Again, it is a misguided worship which is in opposition to the true worship of God.

(4) Conclusion

Satan is fighting against the church (Rev 12), especially against the remnant (12:17). He fights them through the beast out of the sea (Rev 13a) and through the beast out of the earth (Rev 13b), which erects an image. Even though the beast of the sea and the image are not identical, they both pursue the same goal. The final question revolves around the issue of worship: worship of God or wor-

V. 8 (it)	lamb/	<i>earth/slain worship</i>
V. 9		
V. 10	saints	

This table would allow for a chiasmic structure of Rev 13:3b–8 if viewed from the perspective of worship only. Yet the other elements contradict such a conclusion.

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ship of man-made systems, and therefore actually worship of Satan. Everyone opposed to false worship and obedient to God will have to face severe problems. Still, there will be people who will hold fast to their faith (13:10) and obedience to God (12:17).

c. The Spotlight on Last Events (14:1–13)

(1) The 144,000 (14:1–5)

Starting with Rev 14:1–5, the perspective has changed. This results in the following outline:

- (1) “I saw”—the Lamb and the 144,000 (1)
- (2) “I heard”—the new song of the 144,000 (2–3)
- (3) Characteristics of the 144,000 (4–5)

The Lamb and the 144,000 stand on Mount Zion. Those who have been condemned and persecuted in chap.13 now triumph with the Lamb.⁹ Instead of the mark of the beast on their foreheads, these people bear the name of the Lamb and of the Father. They belong to God. He keeps them. They are similar to Him. They sing a new song, a song of their personal experience in the final battle between truth and error, God and Satan. They are purchased. Even though they were unable to buy or sell (13:17), Jesus has bought them. Salvation was expensive. It cost Jesus His life.

The 144,000 have not defiled themselves with women. They are virgins. This means they have not entered into a relationship with false religion or they have separated themselves from it.¹⁰ They follow Jesus every step of the way (cf. John 10:27–28) and are transformed through God’s grace.

(2) The Three Angels’ Messages (14:6–13)

The three angels’ messages have apparently brought forth the 144,000 and are the messages proclaimed by the 144,000. These messages, and especially the first one, are the eternal gospel. Although judgment is quite prominent, the goal is salvation of each individual through Jesus Christ.

The *first message* emphasizes worship of the creator in contrast to worship of man-made systems and worship of Satan. It accentuates obedience to God and the pre-advent judgment.¹¹ The *second message* proclaims the fall of Baby-

⁹Lohse, 84, labels Zion as “die Stätte der endzeitlichen Bewahrung” (the place of end time preservation).

¹⁰Cf. the woman in chap. 12 and the harlot in chap.17, Jezebel in 2:20, furthermore, 2:14 and 18:2.4.

¹¹The wording in 14:7 points back to the fourth commandment. To worship God as the creator also implies keeping His day holy, the day that He instituted at creation as a commemoration of creation. While the healing of the fatal wound of the beast leads to a new conflict on earth, heaven is conducting the pre-advent judgment and actively sides with the true believers.

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lon.¹² In the *third message* the angel announces God's final judgment on those who worship the beast or its image and carry the mark of the beast. God responds to the Babylonian wine of wrath with His own wine of wrath (Ps 75:9). The followers of the beast have persecuted God's people, but God intervenes on the behalf of His children.¹³

The blessing that follows points out that although some might have to pay for their loyalty and their relationship to Jesus with their life—they may die during the end time—they are blessed. They may rest until the resurrection.

d. The Glorious Climax: The Twofold Harvest of the Earth (14:14–20)

After the proclamation of the last of the three angels' messages in Rev 14a, when the division of all people into two groups—the bearers of the mark of the beast and the bearers of the seal of God—is final. Then three additional angels appear, together with the one who is like a son of man—Rev 14b. They are ready to reap the harvest of the earth. Jesus returns, and with His second coming the twofold harvest of the earth begins:

(1) The wheat harvest: Those who belong to Jesus will be caught up to Him. They are ripe.

(2) The wine harvest: The remaining people will be destroyed. Because they have rejected God's message of Rev 14:7–12 addressed to them, they are also ripe, ripe for their downfall. Even though the judgment will be troublesome, God's remnant can rejoice over their deliverance from the dragon, the beast out of the sea, and the beast out of the earth.

¹²In order for us to understand the meaning and significance of the term Babylon, we have to examine this expression in the Old Testament (e.g., Gen 11; Isa 14, Dan, as well as in its New Testament context. In the New Testament, it is used as a code-name for Rome (1 Pet 5:13). In Revelation, Babylon is described in detail in chaps. 17–18. The great city Babylon stands in contrast to Jerusalem, the city of God—11:2, 8; 14:1, 8; 16:19. In chap. 17:1–5, Babylon is depicted as a harlot. Thus, it also stands in contrast to the woman clothed with the sun in Rev 12, a symbol of the faithful church. Babylon represents a religious system that has fallen away from God. Its destruction is announced, and God's people are called to separate from it in order to avoid judgment (18:2, 4). The remnant has nothing to do with Babylon. Cf. Ekkehardt Mueller, "Babylon in Revelation" (unpublished manuscript).

¹³The mark of the beast is indirectly defined 14:12. Those who receive this mark are contrasted with the saints. The saints are characterized by their patience, faith in Jesus, and keeping of the commandments. Evidently, these characteristics are lacking in the first group. These people are not faithful to Jesus and his commandments, or they only partially respect the law found in the ark of the covenant of the heavenly sanctuary (11:19). Yet partial obedience still counts as disobedience (Jas 2:10–12). This is supported by the understanding of the seal of God in Rev 7, the counterpart of the mark of the beast. John may have had in mind Ezek 9:4–6 when he wrote about the seal of God. Those who are brokenhearted about the sins among God's people, those who turn away from their sins and turn to God with all earnestness, will be the ones to receive the seal of God. They do not disregard God's will, because they love their Lord (John 14:15) and expect their salvation only from Him. All those that are not sealed by God will eventually be left to the "sealing" by the beast and its image.

2. The Time Frame

a. The Overall Time Frame

Rev 12–14 covers at least the time from Jesus' first coming to his second coming. The male child who is born by the woman and ascends to God is without doubt Jesus. Thus, His life from His birth to His ascension (12:5) is sketched out. The one like a son of man, coming to the harvest on a cloud (14:14), is once again Jesus, this time at His second coming.

In this vision of the battle between the satanic trinity and God's people, we find several time elements:

- (1) In 12:6 the woman remains in the desert for 1260 days.
- (2) In 12:14 it is three and a half times.
- (3) The sea beast rages for 42 months.

These time elements are all identical: Three and a half years at 360 days each amount to 1260 days or 42 months. Seven times they are mentioned in the Bible, twice in Daniel and five times in Revelation:

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| (1) Dan 7:25 | 3 1/2 times: Persecution of the saints |
| (2) Dan 12:7 | 3 1/2 times: Dispersion of the holy people |
| (3) Rev 11:2 | 42 months: Trampling of the holy city |
| (4) Rev 11:3 | 1260 days: The witnesses clothed in sackcloth |
| (5) Rev 12:6 | 1260 days: The woman in the desert |
| (6) Rev 12:14 | 3 1/2 times: The woman in the desert |
| (7) Rev 13:5 | 42 months: Actions of the sea beast directed against God |

The 1260 days that the woman has to undergo the desert experience correspond—according to the year-day principle—to 1260 years, lasting from 538 A.D. until 1798 A.D. Christians suffered from many persecutions.¹⁴ Rev 12–14 describes the time of the early Christian church, the medieval ages, and the end time leading up to the second coming of Jesus Christ.

b. The Time Frame of Rev 12

Rev 12 also contains these three periods of world history. In the first stage, Satan fights God's church by turning against Jesus (12:1–5). As soon as Jesus is out of his reach, he focuses on the church itself for 1260 days. After that Satan turns his attention to the remnant of her offspring.

The descendant of the women at the beginning of Rev. 12 finds a certain parallel in the descendants of the woman at the end of Rev 12.¹⁵ The dragon opposes all of them. The battle against the remnant in 12:17 is elaborated on in Rev 13, where the dragon uses his agents to fight the faithful remnant.

¹⁴The year-day principle and identification of the historical dates for the 1260 days cannot be addressed in this study. See William H. Shea, *Selected Studies on Prophetic Interpretation*, Daniel & Revelation Committee Series, (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1982), 1:56–93, 116–123.

¹⁵Also cf. the expression “he stood” in 12:4 and in 12:18.

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The battle of the dragon in Rev 12 is outlined below. Notice that (1) and (2) comprise the first part of the chapter and (4) and (5) the third part.

- (1) Early conflict between the dragon and the woman (12:1–5)
- (2) Medieval conflict between the dragon and the woman (12:6)
- (3) Conflict between Michael and the dragon in heaven (12:7–12)
- (4) Medieval conflict between the dragon and the woman (continued) (12:13–16)
- (5) End time conflict between the dragon and the woman¹⁶ (12:17)

Satan's warfare against the remnant therefore takes place in the last phase of world's history, which started with the 19th century and in which the great antitypical day of atonement is held.

c. The Time Frame of Rev 13a

Rev 13a mentions the same time element that has already appeared in Rev 12. It is the 42 months that lasted until 1798 AD. Furthermore, a deadly wound that heals is pointed out. The miraculous recovery leads to the worship of the dragon and the beast. Since it appears that Rev 13:1–4 and Rev 13:5–8 are parallel, we have to place the healing of the fatal wound after the 42 months.¹⁷

Because John relates a vision that he saw (13:1), he talks about events as if they had happened in the past, although in his time they were still future. Noteworthy is the change of tenses in 13:8. John switches from the previously used aorist to the future tense, thereby placing the universal worship of 13:8 after the 42 months.¹⁸

The sea beast resembles the dragon in several aspects. However, there is a significant difference: While the heads of the dragon are crowned, the horns of the sea beast are crowned. This difference seems to point to a later phase in the historical development.

In Rev. 12–14 the phrase “to make war” is used twice:

- (1) The dragon went *to make war against* the remnant (12:7).
- (2) The sea beast is given authority *to make war against* the saints (13:7).

This strong literary parallel points out that probably from Rev 13:7 onward the end time aspect dominates Rev 13a, which occurred already in 13:3–4. Ob-

¹⁶Cf. William H. Shea, “Time Prophecies of Daniel 12 and Revelation 12–13,” *ibid.*, 349.

¹⁷In 13:1–4, “blasphemy” and “mouth” are mentioned prior to the fatal wound. In 13:5–8 the blasphemy is connected to the 42 months. Universal power and universal worship seem to follow this period. It is interesting that the deadly wound (13:3) in just one of the heads of this creature leads to the deadly condition of the whole dragon (13:14). The beast is a counterfeit of the Lamb that also was deadly wounded (“slaughtered”—13:8; 5:9–12) and was resurrected (1:18; 2:8). The beast experiences a resurrection as well, leading to its universal worship (13:14).

¹⁸Vgl. Leon Morris, *The Book of Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary*, revised edition, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 164.

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viously, the remnant are the saints of 13:7, even though the term saints is used in a broader sense in other passages of Revelation.¹⁹

d. The Time Frame of Rev 13b

The key to the question of when the beast out of the earth in Rev 13b is going to become active, to erect the image, and to force the inhabitants of earth to worship it, is probably found in the postulate of Rev 13b that at that time the sea beast is already present and that it existed prior to the second beast.

- (1) It is designated as the “first beast” (13:12).
- (2) The beast out of the earth exercises the power of the first beast (13:12).
- (3) Rev 13:12, 14 refers back to the healing of the fatal wound of the sea beast and considers it as having happened in the past. Therefore the events of Rev 13b take place after the healing of the fatal wound and more or less simultaneously with its universal worship.

Just as from our present perspective the universal worship of the sea beast in Rev 13a is still future, so Rev 13b points to events still to come. A distinct group of worshipers of the beast or its image does not exist yet. So far there a universal death decree for those who refuse to worship man-made systems and/or specific people has not been issued.

e. The Time Frame of Rev 14

Whereas Rev 14:1–5 proleptically points to the final salvation, Rev 14:6–12 relates a message that will be proclaimed shortly before the second coming of Jesus. The second coming itself is symbolically described in 14:14–20. The crisis at the end of chap.13 increases in intensity to the point that one fears that not a single faithful believer would be able to survive. Rev 14:1–5 forms a contrast: There are 144,000 standing as the redeemed next to Jesus. Evidently, these are the remnant. The contrast between Rev 13b and 14a can be roughly sketched out in the following way:

- A. Propaganda of the beast out of the earth (13:11–15)
 - B Followers of the beast out of the sea (13:16–18)
 - B’ Followers of the lamb (14:1–5)
- A’ God’s last message (14:6–12)²⁰

3. Interchangeable Terms

Rev 12 mentions not only the woman, but also the remnant of her offspring. Rev 13a talks about the saints, Rev 13b about the counterpart to the inhabitants of the earth, and Rev 14a about the 144,000.²¹ As mentioned earlier, there are

¹⁹Cf. 5:8; 8:3–4; etc.

²⁰Cf. Johnson, 14.

²¹Cf. C. Mervyn Maxwell, *God Cares—Vol. 2* (Boise: Pacific Press, 1985), 309.

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similarities between the remnant and the saints. Although the term saints in Revelation is used in a wider sense, it seems that 13a concentrates on the end time saints as the remnant.

Rev 13b mainly emphasizes the inhabitants of the earth and does not mention God's people with a direct name. Death decree and boycott are to force everyone to universal false worship. Looking at 13:15–17, we can conclude that there will be people who will not bow down in false worship. These are the living remnant. Rev 14:1–5 shows that followers of the lamb are facing the followers of the beast, and true believers can be assured of the ultimate victory, even if it does not look like that today. Thus, at least partially, the 144,000 are similar to the remnant. Most interesting is the use of the phrase “those that keep the commandments.” In 12:17 this phrase is used in relation to the remnant, whereas the identical phrase in 14:12 is used in connection with the 144,000.

Summary: The dragon battles against the son of the woman, against the woman, and then against the remnant. This war is fought in Rev 13 by the agents of the dragon, the beast out of the sea and the beast out of the earth. The issue is worship. Although it comes to almost universal worship of the satanic trinity, one group is excluded: the remnant, who are the saints and the 144,000.

There is a close connection between Rev 13 and 14a. The different sections of these chapters contain striking similarities. All of them start with the formula “I saw” and end with the expression “here is.” The first and third “here is” sentence have a close resemblance.

- A. The beast out of the sea (13:1–10)
 - (1) “I saw . . . “
 - (2) Description of the beast and its activity
 - (3) “*Here is* patience and faith . . . “
- B. The beast out of the earth (13:11–18)
 - (1) “I saw . . . “
 - (2) Description of the beast and his activity
 - (3) “*Here is* wisdom . . . “
- C. The 144,000 and the three angels' messages (14:1–12)
 - (1) “I saw . . . “
 - (2) Description of the 144,000
 - (3) “I saw . . . “
 - (4) Three angels' messages
 - (5) “*Here is* patience . . . faith”

The interconnectedness of the sections points to the common theme of war against the church, especially the end time church.

II. The Characteristics of the Remnant

The concept of the remnant appears in the Old Testament over and over again. The remnant are people who (1) have escaped hardships and disasters

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(Ezek 6:8–9; Isa 10: 20), (2) have rejected false religious systems (1 Kgs 19:18), and (3) have turned away from injustice (Zeph 3:13). These are the remnant of God’s people.

In Rev 12–14 three texts are interwoven that describe the main characteristics of the remnant. The references are Rev 12:17, Rev 13:10, and Rev 14:12. The last two belong to the “Here is” statements.

Rev 12:17 Keep the commandments; Testimony of Jesus

Rev 13:10 Patience; Faith

Rev 14:12 Keep the commandments; Patience; Faith of Jesus

Thus, the essential characteristics of the remnant are found:

(1) *Keeping the commandments* (12:17; 14:12). The remnant keep the commandments of God, thus demonstrating their love and loyalty toward their Lord. The most prominent of the commandments, next to the commandment to love God and your neighbor, are the ten commandments. In the introductory scene the ark of the covenant already pointed indirectly to them. The observance of the commandments of God includes the keeping of the biblical Sabbath anchored in the fourth commandment.

(2) *Testimony of Jesus* (12:17). The remnant have the testimony of Jesus. According to 19:10 this is the “spirit of prophecy,” the Holy Spirit that speaks through the gift of prophecy. In the parallel text, Rev 22:9, the word “prophets” replaces the phrase “testimony of Jesus.” The remnant lift up God’s word and exhibits genuine manifestations of the gift of prophecy (1Cor 12:7–11; Eph 4:11)—including the book of Revelation—that comes from Jesus and in which Jesus testifies about Himself.²²

²²An exhaustive discussion on the question of translating this text with a genitivus subjectivus or a genitivus objectivus can be found in an article by Gerhard Pfandl, “The Remnant Church and the Spirit of Prophecy,” in *Symposium on Revelation—Book II*, 7:295–333. On 321–322 he summarizes important results:

- (1) In the New Testament the term *marturia* (testimony) is mainly used by John.
- (2) Outside of the Book of Revelation *marturia* used in a genitive construction is always a genitivus subjectivus..
- (3) In the Apocalypse all references to *marturia* can be interpreted as a genitivus subjectivus.
- (4) The parallelism in 1:2, 9 and 20:4 between the “word of God” and the “testimony of Jesus” makes it evident that the “testimony of Jesus” is the testimony that Jesus Himself give, just as the “word of God” is the word that God speaks. This applies also to the parallelism in 12:17 between the “commandments of God” and the “testimony of Jesus.”
- (5) In 12:17 the remnant “have” the “testimony of Jesus” This does not fit the idea of giving testimony about Jesus.
- (6) The context of the New Testament makes it necessary to view the content of the “testimony of Jesus” as Jesus Himself. The testimony of Jesus is Christ’s self-revelation through the prophets. It is His testimony, not the believer’s testimony about Him.
- (7) The parallelism between 19:10 and 22:8–9 indicates that the one who has the “testimony of Jesus” has the gift of prophecy. The “testimony of Jesus” is the Holy Spirit, who inspires the prophets.

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(3) *Patience* (13:10; 14:12). The remnant are characterized by patience or perseverance. In difficult times, they do not give up, do not let go their relationship with God, and do not lose their hope in Jesus' soon return.

(4) *Faith* (13:10; 14:12). Rev 13:10 talks about the faith of the saints. In Rev 14:12 the remnant are identified as having faith in/of Jesus. Of course saints have faith in Jesus, and some interpreters understand this expression in this way.²³ Others suggest translating the phrase as "the faith of Jesus" and understand it to reflect the Christian doctrine, as it is contained in the New Testament. In any case, the remnant faithfully holds on to Jesus and His doctrine.

By describing the 144,000 and relating the three angels' messages, Rev 14a furnishes some additional information about the remnant:

- (1) *Property of God and Jesus* (14:1, 3–4)
 - (a) Names of Jesus and the Father on the forehead (14:1)
 - (b) Purchased (14:3–4)
 - (c) First fruits (14:4)
- (2) *No false worship* (14:4)
 - (a) Not defiled with women (14:4)
 - (b) Virgins (14:4)
- (3) *Followers of the lamb* (14:4)
- (4) *Truthfulness and blamelessness like sacrificial animals* (14:5)
 - (a) Without a lie (14:5)
 - (b) Without a blemish (14:5)²⁴
- (5) *Worldwide proclamation of three angels' messages* (14:6–12), including:
 - (a) Proclamation of the eternal gospel (14:6)
 - (b) Call to worship God by fearing and honoring Him (14:7)
 - (c) Announcement of the judgment (14:7)
 - (d) Worship of the Creator (14:7.9–11)
 - (e) Appeal to separate from Babylon (14:8)²⁵

III. Identification of the Remnant

As one tries to find the remnant of Rev 12:7 today, one is faced with the questions whether or not the remnant represent different Christian denomina-

Therefore the remnant as a group have, according to 12:17, the gift of prophecy. Cf. Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, New Testament Theology (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993), 72, and Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 247. Adventists, therefore, apply the phrase "spirit of prophecy" (as a synonym for "testimony of Jesus") also but not exclusively to the ministry of E. G. White.

²³In this case, it is a genitivus objectivus. Cf. R. H. Charles, *The Revelation of St. John*, International Critical Commentary (New York: Scribner's, 1920) 1:369; Mounce, 277; Pfandl, 322.

²⁴Cf. Ritt, 74. He also summarizes the characteristics of the 144,000 in four points.

²⁵Cf. Johnson, 36–39. He doesn't specifically talk about the remnant, calling it God's people instead, but he describes God's people in Rev 14:1–12 in ten points.

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tions, whether or not they are located within a specific church, and whether or not they are scattered believers here and there.

The biblical characteristics do not permit us to extend the remnant to diverse Christian denominations, since the necessary criteria are not generally exhibited. What about scattered believers versus a visible church? A number of considerations lead us to the conclusion that the remnant of Rev 12:17 must be more than scattered believers independent from each other:

(1) *The time sequence.* Rev 12–14 provides a time frame into which the remnant has to be placed. It is the time after 1798 A.D. and prior to the return of Jesus when this remnant occurs. The remnant of Rev 12:17 is therefore an end time group of believers, the last descendants of the faithful church of Jesus throughout the centuries of church history. In human history they are the very last remnant, with evidently no others following them. If this remnant has existed since the 19th century, it seems probable to conclude that the majority of them can be found in a visible church.

(2) *The succession of the woman of Rev 12.* God's church, from early Christianity until the 18th century, did not consist only of single, independent Christians. It seems obvious to expect that the remnant as what is left of the woman in the end time would also form a visible group of people.

(3) *The characteristics.* Besides the time fixation, the remnant manifests certain characteristics that allow it to be identified. These characteristics are distinct and at least partially visible criteria helping others to readily recognize the visible remnant.

(4) *The contrast to Babylon.* The contrast to the woman in Rev 12, from which the remnant emerges, is Babylon, the prostitute. Just as Babylon is visible and recognizable as a system of religious and quasi-religious groups, so the contrasting group, the remnant, should at least partially be visible. The characteristics of the remnant are necessary to be able to distinguish between it and the harlot.

(5) *The call to separate from Babylon.* The remnant has nothing in common with Babylon. Yet, God's people who are still in Babylon are called to come out (18:4). The call to come out does not make much sense if one does not know where to go. In addition, the New Testament clearly teaches that Christians cannot exist in self-chosen isolation (Heb 10:24–25; Act 2:46–47). Christians need a church to which they may belong and which supports them.

(6) *The gift of prophecy.* One of the characteristics of the remnant is the Holy Spirit as manifested in the gift of prophecy. According to Rev 12:17 the remnant has this gift, and yet the New Testament points out that not every believer possesses this gift (1Cor 12:11–30). Apparently, the remnant appears as a church and collectively has this gift.

(7) *The worldwide commission.* Evidently, the remnant is commissioned to proclaim the three angels' messages throughout the world. The fulfillment of

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this commission by individual believers is impossible; however, a visible church can carry out such a mission.

Seventh-day Adventists believe that even though their church has limitations and imperfections, it bears the characteristics of the remnant of Rev 12–14 and therefore represents God’s end time church of the remnant. At the same time the church acknowledges that it is called to live up to the ideal presented in Scripture as well as to invite people from all nations, tribes, languages, and peoples to join God’s remnant. This does not mean that each Seventh-day Adventist is saved. Neither does it deny that God has faithful children in other denominations and religions who He wants to lead to true worship and joyful preparation for Jesus’ second coming. To these believers the call of Rev 18:4 is issued to leave end time Babylon.²⁶

Conclusion

The doctrine of the remnant in Revelation is broader than it appears at first sight. Apparently the end time remnant of 12:17 are more or less identical with the saints of Rev 13a, the group that does not worship the beast and its image in Rev 13b, and the 144,000 of Rev 14a. This remnant is heavily persecuted by the satanic trinity and is finally threatened with death. Yet those who make up the remnant are assured that the final victory is theirs. They display the characteristics of loving God with all their hearts and following Jesus. In carrying the name of God and of Jesus (14:1) instead of the name of the beast (13:16–17) on their foreheads, they are declared to be God’s and Jesus’ property through Jesus’ self-sacrifice on the cross, and in their character they have become similar to their Lord and God.

Seventh-day Adventists as a church bear the characteristics of the remnant. Therefore the church should and must be conscious of its identity and, being filled with joy and with God’s power, should proclaim the everlasting gospel. Feelings of inferiority and false pride are equally inappropriate. Always God’s church is His church only because of His grace. On the other hand, not every Adventist is automatically part of the remnant, and not every non-Adventist is necessarily excluded from the remnant. Therefore, each individual believer is challenged to live in closest harmony with God and portray the characteristics of the remnant, just as the church is called to live up to its vocation and its commission.

²⁶The issue of the remnant is also discussed in *Seventh-day Adventists Believe: A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines* (Washington, DC: Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1988), 152–169; *Schlüsselbegriffe adventistischer Glaubenslehre* (Hamburg: Advent-Verlag, 1973), 48–51; Siegfried H. Horn, “Remnant,” in *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1960), 908–909; Richard Lehmann, “Die Übrigen und ihr Auftrag,” in *Die Gemeinde und ihr Auftrag: Studien zur adventistischen Ekklesiologie*, ed. von Johannes Mager (Hamburg: Saatkorn-Verlag, 1994), 2:73–101; Francis D. Nichol, ed., *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1957), 7:812–815.

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Jesus and His Second Coming in the Apocalypse

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Seventh-day Adventist confess with their name that they believe in Jesus' soon return. I would like to take a look at Revelation and ask what this book tells us about the second coming of Jesus. First, I will focus on the most important words connected to the second coming. Then I will evaluate this data.

I. Jesus' Second Coming in the Book of Revelation

There are many places in Revelation where we can find statements about Jesus' second coming and about events connected to it. If we read through the book, the following passages catch our attention:

- (1) Jesus is coming with the clouds—1:7
- (2) Jesus promises to come—2:5, 16, 25; 3:3, 11
- (3) The day of the wrath of God and the Lamb—6:14-17; 7
- (4) The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of the Lord and of His Christ—11:15-18
- (5) The harvest of the world—14:14-20
- (6) The kings from the east and Jesus' promise to come—16:12-15
- (7) The rider on the wide horse —19:11-21
- (8) Jesus promises to come (22:7, 12, 20)

This list already shows us how important this topic is in the Apocalypse.

II. Terms Related to or Referring to the Second coming

The Book of Revelation also contains a number of important words that refer to the Lord's return. Let us briefly take a look at them before we turn symbolic descriptions.

A. The Term "to Come" (*erchomai*)

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Important nouns found in other parts of the NT and referring to the second coming, such as “the coming” (*parousia*) and “the appearing” (*epiphaneia*), are not found in Revelation. However, the verb “to come” (*erchomai*) is found frequently. An investigation of this term shows that it is found in connection with God the Father, the Son, but also with heavenly and earthly beings. However, in most of the cases it refers to God and Jesus.

The following picture emerges as soon as we take a closer look at the word “to come” as it relates to Jesus and God.

1. “To Come” and Jesus

Thirteen times the coming refers to Jesus. One of these thirteen occurrences describes how the Lamb comes to God, who is seated on his throne (5:7). This happened in AD 31, when Jesus was installed as king in heaven. Twelve out of the thirteen times “to come” refers to the second coming of Jesus, and in seven of these texts Jesus himself promises to come. In the apocalyptic part of Revelation symbolic descriptions of the second coming prevail, whereas in the letter format that frames the book literal descriptions are found.

Letter Frame

A 1:7 Jesus is coming. Amen.

B 2:5 “I am coming!”
2:16 “I am coming!”
3:11 “I am coming!”

Apocalyptic Part

C 6:17 The Lamb’s wrath has come
14:15 The time to reap has come

D 16:15 “I am coming!”

C’ 19:7 The wedding of the Lamb has come

Letter Frame

B’ 22:7 “I am coming!”
22:12 “I am coming!”
22:20 “I am coming!”

A’ 22:20 “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!”

(2) “To Come” and God

Interestingly enough, Revelation does not only talk about the coming of Jesus. “Coming” is also connected to the Father. Oftentimes God the Father is described with the threefold formula: “the one who was and is and is to come.” This formula occurs three times in the first couple of chapters of Revelation. Then suddenly, it is reduced to a twofold formula—Rev 11:17: ‘the one who is

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and who was.” Probably the last element is left out in this text because God will have come at that time. God the Father is also coming.

God’s nature is described in the letter frame, while his activities are announced in the apocalyptic part.

I. God’s Nature

1:4 Threefold formula—who is, was, and is to come

1:8 Threefold formula—who is, was, and is to come

4:8 Threefold formula—who was, is, and is to come

11:17 Twofold formula—who is and was

II. God’s Activities

11:18 His wrath has come

14:7 The hour of judgment has come

2. The Term “to Come” (*hēxō*)

There is another Greek word for “to come” used in the Book of Revelation, *hēxō*. We find it in Rev 2:25; 3:3 (twice); 3:9; 15:4, and 18:8. However, only twice is this term directly related to Jesus’ second coming. In both of these texts Jesus promises to come. Both texts are found in the letter frame of the book. The other texts talk about groups of humans and about the plagues that are going to come.

3. The Term “Soon /Quickly”

The adverb translated “soon” or “quickly” and the corresponding noun are found several times in the Apocalypse. We find the adverb (*tachu*) in Rev 2:26; 3:11; 11:1; 22:7, 12, 20. We find the noun (*tachei*) in Rev 1:1 and 22:6. Five times Jesus says He will come soon. (In English the noun is also translated “soon.”) The two phrases in which it occurs are almost identical in wording: “what must take place soon.”

Some suggest that the word describes the speed of the second coming, not its closeness. However, that Jesus would come at a high speed instead of coming soon would not seem to make much sense for the readers of the book. Persecuted Christians are comforted through the knowledge of a soon returning Lord. The speed with which he comes from heaven is less important. It seems best to understand that Jesus is coming soon.

4. The Term “Near”

The term “near” (*eggus*) is found in two places (1:3; 22:10) and seems to support what we have said with regard to the word “soon.” Within the letter frame the phrase “the time is near” is used. Because the Book of Revelation was most probably written after the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, the first part of Jesus’ end time speech in Matt 24 (also Mark 13; Luke 17 and 21, the so-

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called synoptic apocalypse) had been fulfilled. The time is indeed near, because according to Jesus' speech the only missing major event is His second coming.

III. Evaluation of the Statements Related to Jesus' Second Coming

After this brief look at the terms related to the second coming, let us move to an evaluation. We will first look at the texts in the letter frame of Revelation, then at the ones which belong to the apocalyptic part. First of all, we take an overview:

Within the Letter Frame of Revelation

Christ's Coming in the Prologue Rev 1:7; 2:5, 16, 25; 3:3, 11

Christ's Coming in the Epilogue Rev 22:7, 12, 20 (twice)

Within the Prophetic-Apocalyptic Part of Revelation

The sixth and seventh seals (6:12-8:1)

The seventh trumpet (11:15-18)

The harvest of the world (14:14-20)

The sixth and seventh Plague (16:12-21)

The marriage supper of the lamb and the rider on the white horse (19:1-21)

1. The Second Coming Within the Letter Frame of Revelation

a. The Second Coming in the Prologue

(1) In Rev 1:7

A highly important text is Rev 1:7. This is the first text in Revelation in which the second coming is clearly spoken of and Jesus is mentioned. The text belongs to a longer passage, Rev 1:5-7, which is part of the introduction of the book. This passage contains a summary statement of the entire Apocalypse. It is Revelation in a nutshell. Before moving to strange beasts, confusing numbers, and terrible disasters, this passage tells what the book is really all about. If it were not for this introduction, we would be in danger of getting lost in the symbols and frightful events depicted and losing sight of God's plan of salvation that like a golden thread runs throughout all history.

The passage Rev 1:5-7 describes Jesus' attitude toward us and His activity in favor of us. Jesus loves us (1:5). He has saved us by shedding His blood. The sin problem is solved (1:5). Jesus has set us in a new position. We are a kingdom and priests (1:6). Jesus is coming again (1:7).

This is good news! Everything is done for us. The entire plan of salvation is summarized in these words. Jesus loves us. His substitutionary death provides salvation for us. Since we have accepted His grace, we have become a kingdom and priests. Followers of Jesus are the real kings and priests on earth. But were it not for His second coming, everything would be incomplete, the final salvation would not be obtained. Jesus does not stop halfway. What he has begun, he also will bring to glorious completion. Jesus is coming again. This is what Rev 1:7 tells us.

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Rev 1:7 also teaches that Jesus' return will be visible to the entire human race. Everybody will see him. A hidden or secret coming or a coming which will be noticed only by a few is alien to the Bible. This verse ends negatively. The tribes of the earth will mourn. As wonderful as the second coming of Jesus is for His disciples, for His enemies it means judgment, whereas for God's children it is final salvation.

(2) In Rev 2-3

In the messages to the seven churches "coming" is mentioned five times, namely in the messages to five different churches. The only letters in which the words "to come" is missing are those to the best church and the worst church: Smyrna and Laodicea. Of the five times the term "coming" occurs, it is used negatively with Ephesus, Pergamum, and Sardis. These negative comings are comings for judgment.

Rev 2:5 ". . . repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent."

Rev 2:16 "Repent then. If not, I will come to you soon and make war against them with the sword of my mouth. . ."

Rev 3:3 ". . . repent. If you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you."

The announced judgment does not only refer to a future judgment. If these churches do not repent, the judgment is at hand.

In the messages to Thyatira and Philadelphia "to come" occurs in a positive way and clearly refers to the second coming.

Rev 2:25 "Only hold fast to what you have until I come."

Rev 3:11 "I am coming soon; hold fast to what you have, so that no one may take your crown . . ."

We discover from this that the expression "to come" has positive overtones, it refers to Christ's return. When "coming" is negative, it is an act of judgment which is not limited to the second coming. However, an end time component seems to be present anyway. The promises to the overcomers, which follow in each case, are associated with the end time. In Rev 2:16 the word "soon" is added, "I am coming soon," namely for judgment. Elsewhere in Revelation the expression "soon" is found in connection with the second coming. The terms "to make war," "sword," and "mouth" occur also in Rev 19:11 and 15, when Christ as the rider on the white horse wins the battle of Armageddon at his return. And coming like a thief reminds us of Rev 16:15 and similar NT passages which clearly refer to the second coming.

Thus, even the negative passages have an end time component. However, one wonders if only five of the seven messages to the churches hint at Jesus' coming. What about the other two? In the message to the church of Smyrna the promise for the overcomers assures them they will not be harmed by the second death. The second death becomes a reality only after Christ's return.

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In the message to the church of Laodicea Jesus says: “Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with me.” The opinions of expositors vary. Some think the text applies to the individual who opens his or her life to Jesus. Others notice a connection to the second coming or to both aspects. What are the arguments in favor of an end time interpretation of Rev 3:20?

First, the context is directed toward the end time. Obviously, the supper reflects the marriage supper of the Lamb in Rev 19:9, which will be celebrated after the second coming. Second, the narrow context is also end time oriented, as can be seen by the promise to the overcomers in 3:21. Third, since the messages to the other churches hint at Jesus’ second coming, we expect to find a similar feature in the message to the Laodiceans. Fourth, the large context of Revelation, e.g., 16:15, is filled with the concept of the Lord’s second coming. Fifth, the idea of standing at the door reminded first century Christians of the Lord’s second coming. Matt 24:33 and Mark 13:29 emphasize that Jesus is at the door: “When you see all these things, recognize that He is near, right at the door.” In Luke 12:36 the context is the second coming. In this case we hear about knocking and opening the door. According to James 5:9 the judge is standing right at the door.

b. The Second Coming in the Epilogue

Having investigated the prologue of Revelation, we now jump to the conclusion of this book. In Rev 22:7 we read: “Behold, I am coming soon! Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.” At the end of Revelation this message serves as an encouragement. Much will take place soon (22:6). Not all of it will be positive. But Christians live with the expectancy that Jesus will come soon. This will empower them. In the second part of this verse, Jesus points to the Word of God, in this case to the Book of Revelation. This Word of God needs to be read, heard, taken to heart, kept, and lived. We need to be grounded in this word, as we expect our Lord’s soon return.

In Rev 22:12 we read: “Behold, I am coming soon; my reward is with me, to repay according to everyone’s work.” This message starts like the previous one; however, it is continued differently. Jesus talks about reward according to works. This reward can be final judgment or salvation. Therefore, some regard the second coming as a threat. For others it is comfort, encouragement, and hope. The next verse talks about the One who is able to lead us to the final goal.

It is interesting to hear about reward according to works. In Matt 24 and 25 Jesus’s end time speech is found. It includes several examples or parables. Each has a certain direction:

1. The fig tree—Watching
2. The days of Noah—Watching
3. The evil servant—Relating to people

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4. The ten virgins—Acting (cf. Matt 7:24-27)
5. Talents—Acting
6. Sheep and goats—Relating to people

Matthew did not mention the correct doctrine when he discussed the second coming. The right doctrine and its importance are referred to in several other passages of Scripture. But Matthew did not concentrate on it. One can become very preoccupied with doctrine. One can even fight for the correct doctrine and at the same time be blind to treating friends, colleagues, and relatives fairly and with love. It belongs to the preparation of the second coming to have a good relationship to brothers and sisters within the church and those outside the church, not just the right doctrine, as important as the latter is. This concept may be present here when we hear about a reward according to deeds.

The final confirmation comes in Rev 22:20: “The one who testifies to these things says, ‘Surely I am coming soon.’ Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!” The one who testifies is the same person found in v. 18. We have to take the context into consideration. What Jesus testifies in vs. 18-19 is: Do not add anything to the book of Revelation and therefore to the Bible and do not omit any part. Thus, Jesus calls us to be extremely careful with the Word of God and to be faithful toward it. Today many Christians do not care much about God’s Word. Unfortunately, there are trends among us to follow sociology, psychology, philosophy, or any of the sciences, as well as our own inclinations and the opinions of the majority, rather than the Word of God. There is the danger of no longer letting Scripture guide us. There is the danger of no longer feeding personally upon God’s Word daily. Sometimes we do not even bring our Bibles to church or to Sabbath School. As the second coming is near, there must be a new devotion to Scripture among us, because it is there that we are most likely to meet our Lord.

Finally John as a representative of all faithful believers exclaims: “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.” This is the confession of the church: Maranatha—Our Lord comes; or: Come, o Lord.

2. The Second Coming in the Prophetic-Apocalyptic Part of Revelation

Now we can move on to the apocalyptic part of Revelation. We will start with the seals.

(1) The Sixth and the Seventh Seals (6:12-8:1)

Whereas the seals in general parallel the signs of the coming of the Lord, the last two seals are especially important. The sixth seal clearly has to do with the Lord’s coming. First, it describes seven phenomena in nature. Then it mentions seven groups of people. The natural phenomena are mostly the heavenly signs as we know them from Matt 24. The reaction of humankind to the last of these signs and to Christ’s return, which is associated with them, is amazing. People want to die. The day of the Lord has come, which is the day of judgment,

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as already known from the OT. They would rather be slain than have to face the Lord!

So the first part of the sixth seal is directed toward the unbelievers. The second part is introduced by the question at the very end of chapter 6: Who can stand? and is directed toward the believers. This question is answered with Rev 7. The 144,000, probably identical with the great multitude, is able to stand. Why? First, they are “sealed.” They reflect God’s thinking and His ideas. Since they distance themselves from sin (Ezek 9:4), God regards them as His property. Second, they have “come out of the great tribulation” and remained faithful to God. Third, “They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb.” They have accepted salvation as a gift, and they have allowed Jesus to cleanse them from sin and guilt. As a consequence they serve God in His sanctuary, live in close fellowship with God, and are cared for by Jesus the Shepherd. Whatever was negative is removed. The seventh seal refers to a silence in heaven. This may point to the final judgment and a new creation. Both depend on the second coming.

(2) The Seventh Trumpet (11:15-18)

The last trumpet is called the completion or the fulfillment of the mystery of God. When this trumpet is sounded, we hear that “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever” (11:15). Verse 18 is quite interesting. This verse summarizes the remainder of the Book of Revelation:

1. The nations were angry—12-14
2. God’s time has come:
 - a. for judging—15-18
 - b. for rewarding His people—21-22
 - c. for destroying those who destroy the earth—19-20.

“Those, who have destroyed the earth” are not people who pollute the environment. Ecology is not the issue. The expression refers to the satanic trinity forming the great harlot Babylon (19:2).

The idea of reward is again mentioned in this passage. The second coming allows for rewarding humanity with salvation or final eradication. From our modern perspective and from a first world country this may sound cruel. It is quite different when God’s people are suffering, persecuted, and killed and when God then intervenes.

(3) The Harvest of the World (14,14-20)

The next major vision in Revelation is the center of the book, the vision of the satanic trinity which ends with a double harvest. A person like a son of man comes seated on the cloud. The harvest is gathered. It is a double harvest: harvest of wheat and harvest of grapes, the gathering of the elect and the destruction

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of the wicked who had made a decision against God and who tried to annihilate God's people. Again Revelation talks about a twofold effect of Jesus' second coming.

(4) *The Sixth and the Seventh Plague (16:12-21)*

With the sixth and seventh plague the battle of Armageddon has come. Evil powers are gathered, and the waters on which the harlot Babylon is seated are drying up. The Day of the Lord has finally come. The kings from the east are coming, Jesus with His heavenly army. Babylon breaks apart and is judged. Rev 17 and 18 describe the fall of Babylon in greater detail. In the same way, Rev 19 depicts the intervention of the kings from the east.

As old Babylon in the 6th century B.C. was defeated by Cyrus, the king and anointed one from the east, so his antitype, Jesus the Lord, the real Messiah and King, will bring an end to Babylon by His second coming.

In the middle of this passage a direct word of our Lord is found—16:15: "Behold, I am coming like a thief!" In spite of all signs, Jesus' return will be surprising. The precise date of his second coming cannot be calculated. More important than all calculations is, therefore, to be constantly ready.

In *Out of Africa*, Isaac Dinesen tells this story about her Kenyan cook Kamante. One night, after midnight, [Kamante] suddenly walked into my bedroom with a hurricane-lamp in his hand, silent, as if on duty. . . He spoke to me very solemnly . . . "I think that you had better get up. I think that God is coming." When I heard this, I did get up, and asked why he thought so. He gravely led me into the dining-room which looked west, toward the hills. From the door-windows I now saw a strange phenomenon. There was a big grass-fire going on, out in the hills, and the grass was burning all the way from the hilltop to the plain; when seen from the house, it was nearly a vertical line. It did indeed look as if some gigantic figure was moving and coming toward us. I stood for some time and looked at it, with Kamante watching by my side, then I began to explain the thing to him. . . But the explanation did not seem to make much impression on him one way or the other; he clearly took his mission to have been fulfilled when he had called me. "Well yes," he said, "it may be so. But I thought that you had better get up in case it was God coming." Just in case, be ready. Just in case, be awake. People have been wrong in the past about when He would come, but make no mistake, one day He *is* coming!

Jesus pronounces a blessing on those who watch and keep their garments, who stay in the right relationship with the Lord and remain dependent on him. Watching does not mean to be frightful or to castigate oneself. It is a joyful waiting for the One whom we love and with whom we spiritually live from day to day, even if we do not see Him right now face to face.

(5) *The Marriage Supper and the Rider on the White Horse (19:1-21)*

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At the end of Rev 14 we found a twofold harvest. In Rev 19 there is a twofold meal. The redeemed are invited to the marriage supper of the lamb. The enemies of God and His people become a meal for the birds.

Jesus returns as the rider on the white horse. His heavenly army follows Him. Armageddon takes place. The evil powers are judged. God's people are liberated and are able to participate in the marriage supper. Jesus is called "the Word of God," and He fights with the sharp sword that comes out of His mouth, the divine Word. This Word is powerful and has created the earth. This Word destroys the enemies. Indeed, Jesus is the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

IV. Results

After this survey of the doctrine of the second coming in the Apocalypse, we are ready to summarize the results.

1. The Manner of the Second Coming

How, according to Revelation, will Jesus return? What does the book teach us? The Apocalypse is in full accordance with Jesus' end time speech, as recorded in the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke). This speech is not found in the Gospel of John, but the important elements are all present in his Apocalypse. Certainly, in Revelation symbolic language is often used, especially in the prophetic-apocalyptic part, but the results are the same. In addition, the book of Revelation fills in many details which are connected to the second coming and which are not or not as clearly found in other biblical material. Here are the results:

- (1) Jesus will come visibly for all humans.
- (2) Jesus will come with the clouds.
- (3) Jesus will come with his heavenly army.
- (4) Jesus will come soon.
- (5) Jesus will come like a thief.

2. Results of the Lord's Second Coming

The second coming of our Lord has results: (1) His return means judgment for one group; and (2) His return means longed for, final salvation and direct communion with their Lord for the other group. Both ideas are present in the term "reward."

The Second Coming brings about God's end time intervention: (1) Liberation of His people and first resurrection; (2) Judgment before, during, and after the Millennium and second resurrection; and (3) New creation.

3. Preparation

Even the question of how to prepare for this event is addressed in Revelation:

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(1) Watching and waiting, not losing the certainty of salvation and the relationship with God; not giving up faith in Jesus and His soon return in spite of all the questions that cannot be completely answered; letting our lives be determined from a clear goal.

(2) Taking God's Word seriously, studying it; not expanding on it or omitting something that we do not like; living according to this Word.

(3) Good works deriving from our faith in Jesus and from our gratitude for salvation. This includes a Christian behavior and attitude toward others and care for fellow church members and fellow human beings.

Conclusion

Revelation reports the second coming of the Lord. It quotes seven direct promises of Jesus. Jesus makes a sevenfold promise. The number seven points to the certainty and trustworthiness of Jesus' promise. It will come true. One day it will come true. One day Jesus will come, surprisingly, and soon! We are looking forward to that moment. What could be better than the return of our Lord?

Our Lord will keep his promise. Let us remember what he personally told us in Revelation:

A 2:5 I am coming
2:16 I am coming soon
3:11 I am coming soon

B 16:15 Behold, I am coming like a thief

A' 22:7 Behold, I am coming soon
22:12 Behold, I am coming soon
22:20 Yes, I am coming soon

With John we answer: "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!"

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The Controversy Over the Commandments In the Central Chiasm of Revelation

William H. Shea

Like Ezekiel's wheels within wheels, chiasms in biblical literature operate on several different levels. There are those cases in which they occur in very local and limited passages, a verse or two or a poetic bicolon. A larger scope may be taken into account in an overall narrative, sometimes equivalent to a chapter in the English Bible. Ed Christian has outlined three of these cases in an article in which I played a part. Christian has outlined a chiasm which covers Rev 12, another which covers Rev 14, and a third which extends through the second half of Rev 13, the narrative which deals with the land beast.¹

There are also cases in which a grand chiasm spans a biblical book. Once again, Revelation provides an example. In this case the prologue parallels the epilogue, the 7 churches parallel the victorious church at the end of the book, the "historical" seals parallel the "eschatological" seals of Rev 19–20, and the trumpets parallel the plague bowls, in a seven-fold outline for Revelation with the central narrative covering chapters 12–14. The thesis of this present study is that this central narrative also has a chiasm which extends over the entire three chapters. This interpretation does not compete with the individual chiasms in chapters 12, 13, and 14, for they are part of the wheels within the wheel. This does mean, however, that there is a relatively intricate series of literary relationships within this passage and in the entire book which only increases one's appreciation for the inspired artistry of the book.

A basic outline for this type of literary structure that covers Rev 12–14 is given below as a basis for further discussion. I have included here the scenes from the heavenly sanctuary in 11: 19 and 15:5–8, as they also appear to be related as reciprocals.

A 11:19 Ark of the Covenant: Sanctuary Scene plus the Commandments

¹ See William H. Shea & Ed Christian, "The Chiastic Structure of Rev 12:1–15:4: The Great Controversy Vision" *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, 38/2 (Autumn 2000).

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- B 12:1–2 The First Great Portent (Gr. *semeion*): The Pure Woman
- C 12:3–4a The Second Great Portent (*semeion*): The Great Dragon
- D 12:4b–5 The Male Child: The First Coming of Christ
- E 12:10–12 The Voice From Heaven: Blessing in Heaven but Curse on the Earth
- F 12:17 Keep the Commandments and the Testimony of Jesus
- G 13:1–18 The Sea Beast and the Land Beast (*en bloc*)
- H 14:1–5 The Lamb and 144,000 on Mount Zion
- G' 14:6–11 The Three Angels' Messages (*en bloc*)
- F' 14:12 Keep the Commandments and the Faith of Jesus
- E' 14:13 The Voice from Heaven: Double Blessing on Earth
- D' 14:14–20 The Son of Man: The Second Coming of Christ
- C' 15:1 The Third Great Portent (Gr. *semeion*): The 7 Plagues
- B' 15:2–4 The Remnant of the Woman's Seed in Heaven
- A' 15:5–8 The Temple of the Tent of the Testimony: The Sanctuary Scene plus the Commandments

A/A', 11:19 + 15:5–8. The Two Sanctuary Scenes with the Commandments

These two scenes set in the heavenly sanctuary introduce the main lines of prophecy which follow them. Rev 11:19 is the fourth sanctuary scene and introduces the prophecy of Rev 12:1–15:4, the main prophecy in the center of the book. Rev 15:5–8 introduces the next major line of prophecy, dealing with the plagues. Thus a conflict may be perceived here in that Rev 15:5–8 belongs to the next line of prophecy, not the one with which we are concerned here. As Jon Paulien has pointed out, however, there is a literary feature in Revelation known as duodirectionality. In this way a passage may point both backward to what has preceded it and forward to what follows. The sanctuary scene in Rev 15:5–8 appears to be used in that way. Its primary function is to introduce the following prophecy, but it also functions as a conclusion to what precedes it. Thus, there is a relationship between these two sanctuary scenes.

Both of these sanctuary scenes depict or refer to a common feature of the sanctuary. In 11:19 the heavenly sanctuary is opened in such a way that John sees the Ark of the Covenant there. This we may refer to as the great heavenly original. In the earthly sanctuary the Ark of the Covenant was located in the Most Holy Place. That place was opened but once a year, on the Day of Atonement. The Day of Atonement was a day of judgment in the camp of ancient Israel, a time when those who did not enter into the spirit of the day were to be cut off from the camp. It was also a time when the final dealing with sin in the cultic year took place. That foreshadows what is described in Rev 12:1–15:4. It is an eschatological controversy that takes place toward the end of time. The sanctuary scene sets the frame of reference for the following prophecy in that

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time of the end.

A central purpose of the Ark of the Covenant is that it served as the box containing the tables of the Law, the Ten Commandments. Thus, by focusing upon the Ark of the Covenant, this introductory sanctuary scene also focuses upon the Ten Commandments contained in that Ark. The controversy in the end time described in Rev 12:1–15:4 should, therefore, involve the Ten Commandments. Rev 15:5–8 focuses upon that same element in even more specific terms. This scene is set in the “temple of the tent of the testimony.” The word used here for “testimony,” *marturia* in the genitive, does not refer to the general testimony or witness that is given by the saints through the ages elsewhere in Revelation. In this case it is placed in the context of the tent (*skene*) in the temple in heaven. The language used in this context points back to the earthly tent or the tabernacle in the wilderness. There was a “testimony” (Hebrew, *‘eduth*) in that earthly sanctuary: the Ten Commandments. This usage occurs first in Exod 25:21–22, where the instructions about building the Ark of the Covenant are given. The same use for this “testimony” follows twenty more times in the book of Exodus. In this first passage the Ark is called the Ark of the Testimony, i.e., of the Ten Commandments. These are the cultic and linguistic parallels that should be used to interpret the tent of the testimony in the temple in heaven.

To fill out this translation more fully, it should be translated as “the temple of the tent of the ten commandments” in heaven. That makes the connection even more specific, and it parallels the use of the Ark of the Covenant in Rev 11:19. There is a sense, however, in which the action referred to in these two sanctuary scenes is reciprocal. In 11:19 the prophetic view takes us into the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary. In 15:5–8 the action takes us out of that arena and out of the heavenly sanctuary in its entirety. The Shekinah glory of God flares up at the time depicted in 15:5–8 so that no one can enter the temple; all must come out of it. No more ministry of intercession is to be carried on there after that. Probation for the human race has ended. Then the plagues will fall. This scene is also parallel to the inauguration of the tabernacle in the wilderness described in Exod 40:34–35. On that occasion too the glory of God flared up to so great an extent that even Moses could not enter the tent (see also Lev 9:24). Thus this powerful manifestation of the glory of God accompanied the commencement of its ministry on earth and the conclusion of its ministry in heaven. Also relevant to understanding the sanctuary scene of 15:5–8 and the plagues which are poured out onto the earth immediately afterward is Lev 10:1–3, where fire comes out from the presence of the Lord and destroys Nadab and Abihu. For them there was no more opportunity for repentance, but only the execution of God’s judgment against them. Likewise with the plagues.

Thus, these two sanctuary scenes are related not just by position in the text but by theme and content. Both scenes deal with the setting for the Ten Commandments, and the commandments are specifically referred to by title in the second instance. In the first case a ministry of judgment takes place toward

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those commandments, and in the second instance the movement is away from the commandments after their place in the ministry of heaven has been completed.

B:C::C':B', 12:1–4 // 15:1–4: the Four Great Portents in Heaven

The first of these two passages opens with a depiction of the great pure woman clothed with the sun, moon, and stars. This is called a sign, a portent (Greek, *semeion*). The second scene in the first passage is also called a portent, using the same Greek word. There the great red dragon is seen with its seven heads and ten horns. This great red dragon is identified in 12:9 as Satan, the Devil. In a secondary sense it is the earthly agency through which he sought to destroy the man child of the woman, Jesus, when he was born into the world. The agency he utilized in attempting to destroy the baby Jesus was the troops of Herod, the puppet king Rome had placed upon the throne of Judea. Thus Rome bears the ultimate responsibility for this attempt on the life of Jesus. The woman is not Mary but the church, as is made clear in the various Daughter of Zion texts in the Old Testament. After the ascension of Jesus, described in verse 5, the woman, representing the church, flees into the wilderness to escape the persecution the devil launches against her.

Here then are the first two portents that appear in heaven: the woman representing the church bringing baby Jesus into the world, and the dragon, the devil, unsuccessfully attempting to destroy him.

The third “portent in heaven” in this sequence appears in Rev 15:1, using the same Greek word *semeion* for it. The portent now is the picture of the seven angels with the seven bowls of the plagues, ready to pour them out upon the devil’s adherents at the end of time. Thus there is not only a linguistic link between these two passages but a thematic one, too. 12:3 describes the actions of the devil and 15:1 describes the final consequences for his adherents in the end time. It is of passing interest to note that the number seven is used twice in both of these passages. Also, the dragon in 12:3 has seven heads with seven crowns, while in 15:1 there are seven angels with the seven plague bowls.

If there is a correspondence here between the second and third portents, those in 12:3 and 15:1, where is the other portent to match that of the depiction of the pure woman in 12:1–2? It is present but in this case it is not labeled as a portent. In 15:2–4 the victorious saints stand on the sea of glass in heaven singing the song of Moses and the Lamb, the words of which are given here. This is not labeled as a portent because it is a description of an actual scene set in heaven, but it still is related to the woman shown in the first portent. These victorious saints represent the end stage of the seed of the woman, the remnant, those who have gained the victory in the final conflict described Rev 12–14. There is an organic connection between these saints and the woman who symbolizes the church through the ages. But she is a symbol and they are real. Thus, they cannot be a portent or sign; they are what the portent or sign stands for.

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These relations may be outlined as follows:

- A 1st portent: the woman, the church at the beginning of the era
- B 2nd portent: the dragon/devil, beginning the era
- B' 3rd portent: plagues for the devil's final adherents
- A' (4th portent): 15:2–4: rewards for woman's final adherents

**D/D' 12:4–5 // 14:14–20: The First
Coming of Christ and His Second Coming**

The first coming of Christ is told only in brief. First, Rev 12 mentions that the woman, the church, was pregnant and in labor (v. 2). Then verse four describes how the dragon stood before the woman waiting for her to deliver her child, like a satanic midwife, but he was unsuccessful in his attempt to devour the child. Verse 5 next indicates that the child was a son (Greek, *huion*). The text then skips over his entire earthly ministry to go directly to his ascension to the throne of God and the promise that he would rule the nations with a rod of iron (v. 5b). This promise is fulfilled in Rev 19:15, indicating that at His Second Coming he will rule the nations with a rod of iron.

The description of the Second Coming in 14:14–20 is more extensive than the description of His First Coming in 12:4–5. There is one linguistic link between the two, however, in that Christ is introduced with the title, "Son of Man." The word for son here is the same as that which was used in the earlier passage, but it now has added to it the genitive form of "Man" to produce the Messianic title of prophecy that appears in Dan 7:13 and was used extensively by Christ in the gospels. (See Matt 24:30, 25:31 for examples of this use in the context of the Second Coming.)

Rev 14:15–20 goes on to tell of the harvest of the earth at the time of the second coming, and for this there is no parallel in terms of the first coming in 12:4–5. The link has already been made, however, in terms of His two comings to earth. There is also the reverse involved here. In 12:5 he was caught up to the throne of God, and in 14:14 he comes down from that position to earth for His harvest. So there is also motion in the opposite directions connected with these two comings.

E/E' 12:10–12 // 14:13: Voices from Heaven with Curse and Blessing

The first part of the succeeding passage in Rev 12 is not paralleled in Rev 14. This is the section from 7–9 telling of the war in heaven between Michael and the dragon, that old serpent, Satan, the devil. Their following troops of angels fought, Satan lost, and he and his angels were cast out of heaven. No parallel for this is found in 14:13, even though it underlies the controversy that continues there.

After Satan and his angels were cast out and down to earth, John "heard a loud voice in heaven" (v. 10). The words spoken by this loud voice come in three statements. First, in v. 10, the victory by God and His Christ over the ac-

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cuser of the brethren is celebrated. Then, in v. 11, we are told how the earthly saints can also gain the victory over him, through the blood of the lamb and by the word of their testimony, even unto death if necessary. Verse 12 concludes this speech with a general observation about who has benefited from this (heaven) and who will suffer from it (earth). “Rejoice then, O heaven and you that dwell there, but Woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short.”

With some liberty we might describe the effect upon heaven as a blessing to those who dwell there. They no longer have to deal directly with the devil. There is, however, another side to this coin: the effects of this course of events on the earth. The word Woe is used to describe these effects. Another word for pronouncing a woe is to pronounce a curse, using the word in the technical sense of the word, as it is used in Deut 27–33. In sum, we have here a blessing pronounced upon those in heaven who no longer have to suffer visitation by the devil, but the curse is pronounced upon the earth because his activities are now confined to that realm. In addition, knowing his time is short (12:12), he carries out his attacks upon the saints with greater wrath. So there is the blessing for heaven, but the curse for the earth.

Rev 14:13 opens with a similar voice from heaven pronouncing a blessing upon a special class of saints, those die while the messages of the three angels are being given. “And I heard a voice from heaven saying, ‘Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord henceforth.’ ‘Blessed indeed,’ says the Spirit, ‘that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them’.” It is interesting that the word for blessing is used twice in this passage, first directly by the voice from heaven, and then reinforced by the Spirit who pronounces a second blessing. These two blessings correspond directly to the blessing heaven received in 12:12, but now the blessing is down here on earth. The woe that was pronounced then has also been turned into a blessing, in spite of the continuing assaults of Satan upon the saints. Like those in heaven, these saints who rest from their works are now safe and out of his range. These relations may be outlined as follows:

12:10 - a loud voice in heaven	14:13a - a voice from heaven
12:12a - rejoice in heaven	14:13b - blessed are the dead
12:12b - woe on earth	14:13c - blessed indeed

While this is the whole content of the second passage, 14:13, it parallels only the conclusion to the first passage, 12:7–12. This is appropriate, since 14:13 is purely eschatological in character, while the controversy depicted in 12:7–12 applies to the nature of the controversy between the woman—the church—and the devil throughout the Christian era.

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**F/F' 12:17 // 14:12: Keep the Commandments
of God and the Faith of Jesus**

In the end stage of the controversy between the dragon and the woman the remnant of her seed—the church of the end time—is given two identifying characteristics: they “keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus” (12:17). These same two characteristics are repeated after the description of the contents of the messages of the three angels: “Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus” (14:12). The wording of the phrase about keeping the commandments of God is essentially identical in these two passages, thus providing a very direct linguistic parallel. The phrase that follows differs slightly. In the first instance the verb for “having” the testimony of Jesus is stated in the first instance but not in the second. The word for faith (*pistis*) has taken the place of the word for testimony (*marturia*). For our practical purposes here these two statements may be considered essentially identical.

While these two statements are often referred to by Seventh-day Adventist commentators, no explanation has been sought for why it would be repeated. Once the literary structure of the overall passage is considered, a very good reason for its recurrence can be found—because they stand at the same locations in their respective parts of the outline, and this reinforces their message about the commandments.

The question may then be asked, which commandments of God are in view here? That question is answered by reference to the introductory sanctuary scenes, both the one that precedes these passages and the one that follows it. It is the commandments that reside in the Ark of the Covenant, according to the first of these two introductory sanctuary scenes. It is the Testimony residing in the Tent, now in the Temple in heaven, to which the second of these two sanctuary scenes refers. In that context the Testimony referred to must be the Testimony of the Law, the Ten Commandments, referred to twenty times in the book of Exodus as residing in the tent. The Ten Commandments are the Testimony of the Tent and of the Ark, and thus they provide a direct correlation with the two passages which refer to those commandments of God in 12:17 and 14:12. These four passages taken together indicate that a serious question about this final controversy in this central passage of Revelation involves the Law of God.

The Central Sections on Worship

The verb “to worship” does not occur in Rev 12. Nor does it occur in Rev 14:12–15:4, even though a scene of worship is shown in that section (15:2–4). In the central sections of Rev 13 and 14:6–11, however, the verb for worship occurs eight times (*proskuneo* in its various forms). By weight of vocabulary, therefore, the controversy in this central section of Revelation reaches its height when it comes to worship. The question is, will mankind worship God or the beast and its image? The distribution of these verbs is not even—there are five

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occurrences in Rev 13, compared to only three occurrences in the messages of the three angels. In one of the five instances in the former passage, however, there is reference to those who will not worship the image (13:15), so one could say this occurrence belongs in God's column with the messages of the three angels. That would make the distribution more even thematically, even though this one occurrence appears earlier in the text.

In the outline given above, it was noted that these two sections were written *en bloc*. That is to say, even though each of these passages contains three main elements and are related to each other, they are not related in inverted order. They come in a parallel order. Thus, the first angel's message (14:6–7) relates most directly to the story of the sea beast (13: 1–8). The second angel's message relates to the poetic interlude between the story of the sea beast and the story of the land beast (Rev 14:8 and 13:9–10). The third angel's message parallels the story of the land beast (14:9–11 and 13:11–18). This is pointed out most directly by noting that the third angel's message is a warning against worshiping the image to the beast and receiving its mark, because the narrative about the land beast describes the origin of these elements.

Another way to put this is that these central sections are in parallel, whereas the elements which frame them are in chiasmic order. Since there is a final central section, however, the chiasm continues to its apex in 14:1–5. Thus, the parallel sections of chap. 13 and 14:6–11 are taken *en bloc*, and those blocks fit into the chiasmic construction, even though elements within them follow a parallel order rather than a chiasmic order.

GI/GI' Rev 13:1–8 and 14:6–7:

The Sea Beast and the First Angel's Message

As Ed Christian has perceptively noted in his forthcoming analysis of the passage that deals with the sea beast,² it is not in chiasmic order. Rather it contains two sections that parallel each other. The second is a restatement of the first, with modifications and additions. That is important for relating the first angel's message to the sea beast narrative, for in essence, it relates mainly to the second section, vs. 5–8. There is a difference in the tense of the verbs involved here, for the two references to worship at the end of the first section, in v. 4, are put in the past: "Men worshipped the dragon, for he had given authority to the beast, and they worshipped the beast, saying, 'Who is like the beast and who can fight against it?'" When verse eight is reached, the reference is to the future, "and all who dwell on the earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that was slain."

My understanding of the orientation of these verbs is that they point in two directions. The worship verbs at the end of the first section, in v. 4, point back-

² See note 1.

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wards to what happened during the 42 months before the beast received its almost deadly wound. In the second passage, vs. 5–8, and especially the worship verb in v. 8, the focus is forward, after the deadly wound was healed. That puts this second section more in the end time than in the historical flow where the first reference belongs.

If the first angel's message corresponds in some way to this, that explains why the verb for worship occurs there only once. The focus of the verb for worship in 14:7 is in the future, in the time of the revived beast. At that time there will be a very sharp and distinct contrast in worship, between those who agree to worship the beast and those who hold out for worshipping the Creator God (14:7).

The only part of the first angel's message that refers back to this first section about the sea beast in 13:1–4 is the reference to the "everlasting gospel." The beast has preached its own blasphemous gospel, especially during the period of 42 months when it was given authority. But the preaching of the true gospel of God goes back far beyond that. It goes back to the apostolic era, it goes back to Christ, and it goes back into Old Testament times. Ultimately it goes back to the establishment of the plan of salvation before the foundation of the world (cf. the parallel in 13:8 as to when the Lamb's book of life was first written).

When it comes to the distribution of the first angel's message, that is paralleled in the second section of the narrative of the sea beast (13:5–8). More specifically, it is paralleled in the same wording, as is shown in the following comparison.

13:7	14:6
The sea beast is given authority (again) over every tribe and people and tongue and nation.	To proclaim to those who dwell on the earth, to every nation and tribe and tongue and people.

If one identifies the four elements in the first passage as A:B:C:D, then those elements in the next passage come in the order of D:A:C:B. These comprise two pairs in which both of the elements have been inverted. The healed beast proclaims its authority over the same worldwide territory the first angel proclaims its message over, but in a manner of speaking, they go in different directions because they have different messages.

It is also interesting to see that in the second passage dealing with the sea beast (vs. 5–8), the list of blasphemies is expanded and made more specific. In the first section (vs. 1–4), the text simply says it had a blasphemous name upon its head (v. 1). Here now, in the second section, that statement is expanded to take in three main aspects of God that are blasphemed. These can be paralleled in a general way by the three commands that come with the first angel's message:

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Blasphemies in 13:6:	Commands in 14:7:
Against God	Fear God
Against His name	Give glory to Him
Against His dwelling (that is, those who dwell in heaven)	Worship Him as Creator

A fairly direct relationship can be seen between the first two word pairs. While one power blasphemes against God, at the same time the call is given to fear Him. When his name is blasphemed, the saints are called to give glory to Him. The third statement is less direct, since one refers to heaven and the other identifies the elements in this earth that He created. This identification of Him as Creator has relations elsewhere in Rev 13, more specifically with the image that the land beast is to make, and that relationship is described further below after the section on the sea beast has been surveyed.

**G2/G2' 13:9–10 // 14:8: The Poetic Interlude and the
Historical Interlude (the 2nd Angel's Message)**

Between the description and discussion of the sea beast and the land beast there is a brief passage of poetry. It is written with good Hebrew parallelism of thought and it has been outlined especially well by Ed Christian in our forthcoming study on the literary structure of Rev 12–15. After the introductory line of v. 9, “If anyone has an ear, let him hear,” a pair of bicola follow:

If anyone is to be taken into captivity, to captivity he goes;
If anyone slays with the sword, with the sword he must be slain.

In context this “he” refers to the deadly wound of the sea beast, not just a general aphorism. This was a power that slew with the sword during the period of 42 months when it was given authority. During that period it “was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them” (13:7). Now it receives its just desserts. It has slain with the sword, and now it is to be slain with the sword. It had sent into captivity; now it must in turn go into captivity.

This is then followed by what appears to be the central verse of this section of Revelation, and thus of the book as a whole, “Here is the call for endurance and faith of the saints.” Given the location of this exhortation in the literary structure of the book, one can refer to it as the central call or appeal of the book.

The parallel passage in the second angel's message has also been written in something of a quasi-poetic style. This style is hinted at by the repetition of the verb at the very beginning of the message. The message itself is brief, consisting of only two main statements:

Fallen, Fallen is Babylon the great,
She who made all nations drink of the wine of her impure passion.

These two statements in 13:10 and 14:8 are also connected thematically. The first refers to a political or military fall. The second refers to a spiritual fall.

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While they are not identical, they share in the same general idea, which is worked out in different ways in the two different contexts.

**G3/G3' Rev 13:11–18 // Rev 14:9–11: The Sea Beast
and the Image and the Third Angel's Message.**

Ed Christian has worked out the chiasm of this section especially well. It runs, in brief, something like this:

- A Exercising the authority of the first beast, v. 1–2a
- B Worship, v. 12b
- C The deadly wound that was healed, v. 12c
- D Miraculous signs, how, v. 13
- D' Miraculous signs, why, v. 14a
- C' The deadly wound that was healed, v. 14b
- B' Worship, v. 15
- A' Exercising the authority of the first beast through its image, vs. 16–18

Our emphasis here is especially upon the two occurrences of the word for worship. These are found in vs. 12 and 15. They are actually reciprocals, for in the first instance it is the inhabitants of the earth who are made to worship the first beast by the second beast. In the second instance, in v. 15, the statement is negated. Those who do not worship the image of the beast are persecuted in the way described.

The organic connection between the third angel's message and the description of the land beast of Rev 13b is readily apparent. The third angel warns, in the most severe terms, against worshipping the beast and its image or receiving its mark upon the forehead or hand. Thus, the third angel warns against what is described as being set up in the description of the land beast. Not only that, but it uses the word for worship twice. In this case, those two occurrences of the word for worship form a frame or envelope around the warning contained in the center of the message. An outline which emphasizes the aspect of worship can be presented as follows:

- Introduction of the third angel, v. 9a
- A Warning about worship, v. 9b: "If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand
- B Result: the destruction described in v. 10
- A' Warning about worship, v. 11 b: "these worshippers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name."

Thus the issue here clearly worship and its effects. One either worships the true God according to the call in the first angel's message or one worships the image to the beast and receives the dire reward that is threatened in the third angel's message. These worship passages can now be placed side by side as

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pairs:

Rev 13:11–18	Rev 14:9–11
Descriptions of the land beast	Reference to the third angel
<i>Worship</i> of the first beast, v. 12	Warning against <i>worship</i> of the first beast and its image, v. 9
Brings fire down, v. 13	sends fire up, v. 10
Not <i>worship</i> the image, v. 15	Warning against <i>worship</i> of the first beast and its image, v. 11a
Receiving the mark, vs. 16–18	Warning against the mark, v. 11b

Thus these descriptions of worship and these warnings against worship occur in approximately the same locations in their respective passages and make up word pairs that emphasize the seriousness of worshipping the beast and its image.

True Creation and False Creation

A special aspect of these parallel passages has to do with the false creation that occurs under the description of the land beast and the description of the true creation that occurs under the first angel's message. There is a creation in each case, but they are of a different nature. The creation described under the first angel's message is the true creation. It is described especially in terms that come from the first three days of the creation week: "worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the fountains of water." These aspects of creation include especially the events described in the first three days of the creation account of Gen 1. Then, beginning with the fourth day, those aspects of creation were populated, first the atmospheric heavens, then the sea and sky, and finally the earth. This takes in the astronomical bodies of the fourth day, the birds and fish of the fifth day, and the land animals and man on the sixth day. This population is referred to in the fourth commandment with the additional phrase, "and all that is in them." That extra phrase does not occur here. This reference is to the creation of the world as originally inhabited, but the inhabitants themselves are not specifically described here.

In that sense the pseudo-creation of the land beast fills that gap, but fills it with the wrong thing. The language of creation is used to describe the creation of the image of the beast. The word image is used just as it is in Gen 1:26, where God says, "Let us make man in our image." Then God went on to create the true first human pair. In the case of the land beast, it makes an image not of true man or woman, but of the first beast, a grotesque beast at that.

Then, after having formed man from the dust of the earth, God breathed into him the breath of life (Gen 2:7). That is what the land beast does to his pseudo-creation: "it was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast." In this respect, this pseudo-creation follows the steps of the original creation. Then,

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having made Adam, but before Eve was made, God had Adam speak in naming the animals (Gen 2:19). Once the image to the beast has been made, the land beast breathes life into it, and then the image itself speaks (Rev 13:15). When this image to the beast speaks, it does not name animals. It names men, those men and women who would not worship it. “Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead.” Here too is a parody of what Adam did in the Garden of Eden. God made a man and he spoke to the animals, naming them. The land beast makes an image of an animal, the first beast, and it speaks, but not to the animals; it speaks to men. It does not give men and women their names, but gives them his own mark and forces them to worship the image on pain of not being able to buy or sell or even on pain of death. This is not letting the named animals run free, as Adam did. Adam was given true dominion over the earth and the animals. The beast is given a pseudo-dominion over the earth and its inhabitants through this coercion.

Do these parallel accounts of the true creation and the false creation speak to the issue of what is involved in the worship urged here? The worship of the true Creator is urged in the first angel’s message. The elements of creation cited in that verse are especially those elements created on the first three days. These the devil—working through the beast and its image—cannot counterfeit. The memorial of that true creation, the day upon which the creator was to be worshiped, was the seventh day, the Sabbath (Gen 2:1–4).

The true beasts, like the false beast described here, were created on the sixth day. On the sixth day the beasts were created first, and then Adam and Eve were created after them. So the land beast and the sea beast it causes people to worship are a kind of third order of being that developed from the creation on the sixth day. But this creation of this false image of the false beast cannot be worshiped on the true day. It has to be worshiped on an alternate day, other than the true day of the memorial of the true creation.

It is interesting to see that the order of creation described in the first angel’s message stops with the third day. On the fourth day, the day following the end of that account of creation, the sun was created, or at least became visible on earth. The sun eventually came into its own, getting its own day in the planetary week. The first day in that week came to be called Sunday. One of the arguments that the early church fathers used to cite the superiority of Sunday over Sabbath was the fact that the sun was created on that day. That became the day of worship that was alternate to Sabbath. In itself it was an unbiblical creation, a creation of a day of worship for which there is no biblical warrant.

Thus these two days stand in tension and contrast. Sabbath, identified in the language of creation in the first angel’s message (which closely parallels the language of the fourth commandment, “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy, for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is” [Exod 20:11]), and Sunday, the day which came to commemorate the

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false creation identified in the message about the land beast. Just as these two kinds of worship stand in contrast here, so too these two days of worship also stand in contrast.

This emphasizes the fact that the central dispute in the chapters, the dispute over creation, is related to the Ten Commandments. The Locus for those commandments is given in the introductory sanctuary scene, with the Ark of the Covenant. The Ten Commandments are named as the Testimony of the Tent in the second sanctuary scene, the one with which this overall narrative closes. This connection is emphasized again in the paired statements about keeping the commandments that appear in 12:17 and 14:14. Then we come to the worship involved with the true creation and the false creation. Since worshiping the true Creator God involves one of the commandments, the worship of the false creation naturally would involve the violation of that same commandment, a pointing away to some other form and day of worship. In this way Sabbath and Sunday can be seen as comprising central elements in the controversy to come, when the image to the beast is made, set up, and given breath so it can speak and command obedience.

These elements can be selected out of the overall outline for this passage and emphasized in this way:

A Sanctuary Scene I - Ark of the Covenant, holding the Law of God, Rev 11:19

B Call to Keep the Commandments of God, Rev 12:17

C Call for Worship of the False Creation, Rev 13:14-17

C' Call for Worship of the True Creator, Rev 14:6-7

B' Call to Keep the Commandments of God, Rev 14:12

A' Sanctuary Scene 1 - Tabernacle of the Tent of the Ten Commandments, Rev 15:5

**Sanctuary Scene II: The Testimony of the Ten Commandments
in the Tent of the Temple in Heaven, Rev 15:5-8**

A final remark might be made here about the number of the beast, the enigmatic 666 which has received so much attention in the commentaries and in the popular media. A number of useful observations have already been made in the commentaries, but I will not bother to repeat those here. What is mentioned here may be taken as complementary to those earlier suggestions.

The number of the beast is given as 666. The image to the beast, in terms of the creation week, was created on the sixth day, as that was the day upon which the beasts were created. But this beast is neither a normal beast nor a normal man like those created on that sixth day. This grotesque beast is a third and inferior descendant, symbolically, of the order of that creation that took place on the sixth day. Thus it is not a 6, nor a 66, but a 666.

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The normal memorial for that creation was the seventh day, the Sabbath, following after the sixth day of those created elements. The seventh day comes at the end of a seven day week, like that of the original creation. If one divides that seven day week into 666, it goes 95 times, with one day left over after that 95th week. That 95th week would normally end on a Sabbath. One day more after that would normally fall on Sunday, the first day of the next week. While there may well be other correlations available for this mystical number, it could also be seen as producing the day for the worship of the false creation of the image to the beast when the true seven day week of creation is laid alongside it. Thus, it may be possible that the seven day week of the Creator in the first angel's message may be the measure by which the number of the beast may be measured off. If so, it comes out with a contrasting day of worship

H. Rev 14:1–5: On Mount Zion, the Lamb and the 144,000

The way in which the overall structure of Rev 12–15 has been worked out here ends up with Rev 14:1–5 at the apex of this chiasm. There we see the victorious ones with their leader, the Lamb. If one were only left with the three angels' messages standing in contrast to the messages about the sea beast and the land beast, then one might ask the final question, who won? This central piece answers that question — the Lamb wins, and His followers with him. The mark of the Son and the Father on their foreheads stands in contrast to the mark of the beast that was urged at the end of the preceding chapter.

The place where they stand is of literary and typological interest. First, they stand on a mountain. At the very peak of this literary construction there is a mountain peak, and the Lamb and his followers stand there. This is very similar in nature to the construction of the Flood Story of Gen 6–9, as outlined originally by U. Cassuto and then by others following him. The very center of the Flood Story is where the Ark comes to land on the Mountains of Ararat and “God remembered Noah” (Gen 8:1–4, with the quote taken from v. 1). Just as Noah's Ark came to rest upon his mountain, so the Lamb and His followers take up their position on their mountain, and this is right at the very center of the overall literary structure of the central narrative of Revelation.

Mount Zion was far from the tallest mountain in the world. But it was the most theologically important mountain. There the Lamb gathers the 144,000 who were divided up among the twelve tribes of Israel (Rev 7). The picture is, therefore, that of the Feast of Tabernacles, the final harvest festival of the Israelite calendar. This was the time when all of the tribes came to live for a week in the booths or tents that were reminiscent of those that the people lived in during the wanderings in the wilderness, between Sinai and Zion.

That this is meant to be a representation of the heavenly mount Zion is evident not only from correlations with Heb 12:21–22, but also from correlations within the passage itself. When the song is heard from heaven (v. 2), it is the song that is sung before the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders (v.

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3). According to Rev 4, this sets the scene as taking place in heaven. There they sing the song of Moses and the Lamb recorded in Rev 15:3–4. While the songs and setting are in heaven, the literary and theological imagery is that of earth. In this way the old Mount Zion gives way to the new Mount Zion.

The commandments of God come once more into focus here through the characteristics of the 144,000. Aside from singing the song of deliverance and aside from having the father's name written in their foreheads, they have two moral characteristics. First, they have not defiled themselves with women. In other words, they have not committed spiritual adultery, a figure drawn from the seventh commandment. Second, no lie was found in their mouth, meaning they did not bear false witness or testimony to their earthly companions, based upon the ninth commandment, nor did they take the name of the Lord their God in vain, based upon the third commandment. These then are the people who keep the commandments of God and have the faith of Jesus.

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Eschatology and Genesis 22

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The spark for this paper came from a graduate seminar with Dr. John Sailhamer, where he persuasively argued that the term “last days” in the Pentateuch is always eschatological and points forward to the coming of the Messiah. This important insight can and should be further elaborated. Genesis 22, though not specifically including the term “last days,” proves to be a key passage in illustrating the passion of Christ which inaugurates the “last days.” Through the avenue of narrative analysis, it will be seen that the details of Gen. 22 and surrounding chapters serve as intriguing pointers toward the Messiah’s mission.

Though interpretations vary, a long historical consensus exists in theological studies regarding the profound nature and significance of Genesis 22:1-19.¹ In the following study, this passage will be scanned for its “particulars.” Next, we will attempt to align these details to the larger context of the surrounding chapters in Genesis, and also the New Testament. A final section will suggest tentative theological implications for eschatology.

¹There are wide differences in *interpretation*, but not on the fact of its supreme importance in biblical narratives. This attention has not been limited exclusively to Christianity. All three monotheistic traditions that claim Abraham as their “father” (Christianity, Judaism, Islam) insist on the significance of this passage for their theology. For example, Islam’s sacred *Koran* includes this narrative. However, the intended victim of Abraham’s knife is *unnamed*. By the end of the third Islamic century, however, Ishmael has become the intended sacrifice. [R. Firestone, “Abraham’s Son as the Intended Sacrifice: Issues in Quranic Exegesis,” in *Journal of Semitic Studies*, 34 (1989): 117. References to the “Akedah” [the nomenclature given to the Gen 22 narrative in most Jewish writings; derived from the verb in v. 9, when Abraham “bound” Isaac] also appear in the earliest extra-biblical Jewish sources. Modern Jewish scholars continue probing Genesis 22 for discussions of their “martyrdom” in the Holocaust and other historical pogroms against their people. They frequently interpret the Gen 22 narrative to mean that in Isaac the Jewish people were thus “prophesied” and “destined” by God to be the “sacrifice” for the world. However, since Isaac, there has been no halting of the knife from heaven. For one example, see Elie Wiesel, *Messengers of God: Biblical Portraits and Legends* (New York: Random House, 1976), 97.

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One additional caveat: narrative analysis is a valuable tool. However, I submit that a weakness of this method, besides its leaning toward a non-historical interpretation of biblical narratives, is its proclivity to overlook the possibility of any overarching hermeneutical principle for interpreting the narratives. Undergirding this study is the hermeneutical principle Christ offers in Luke 24:

O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory? And *beginning at Moses* and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.²

This strongly suggests that the OT narrative materials are not simply an eclectic collection of unrelated and random details.

A Reading of the Text

Genesis 22, verse 1: “Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham”:

The formula, “after these things” is found only four times in the Pentateuch—all four in Genesis (15:1; 22:1; 22:20; 48:1)³ Notably, two of the four are within the Abraham narratives.

This brings questions to mind, such as: after *what* “things”? And why is *this* pericope being singled out? With the many narratives in Genesis, what was the author’s intent in “tagging” so few narratives in this particular manner?

In Gen 22:1, “after these things” introduces God speaking again to Abraham. Perhaps this is to remind us of Abraham’s long, complex life, as recorded in the nine preceding chapters?⁴ Abraham now is well over 100 years old—an

² Also, v. 44 “Then He said to them, ‘These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.’ And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.”

³ The first follows Abraham’s daring rescue of Lot and the subsequent worship of Yahweh by Abraham and Melchizedek (chapter 14). “After these things” also opens chapter 15, where Yahweh speaks again to Abraham and reaffirms His covenant, with its specific promise of numerous descendants. The third immediately follows Gen 22:1-19 so the reader will separate the next verses with the just completed event. The final appearance of “after these things” (chapter 48:1) introduces the reader to the blessings of Jacob upon Joseph’s two sons following the narrative of Jacob’s reunion in Egypt with his son Joseph.

⁴ This is Calvin’s understanding: “The expression, ‘after these things,’ is not to be restricted to his last vision; Moses rather intended to comprise in one word the various events by which Abraham had been tossed up and down; and again, the somewhat more quiet state of life which, in his old age, he had lately begun to obtain. He had passed an unsettled life in continued exile up to his eightieth year; having been harassed with many contumelies and injuries; he had endured with difficulty an . . . anxious existence, in continual trepidation; famine had driven him out of the land whither he had gone, by the command and under the auspices of God, into Egypt. Twice his wife had been torn from his bosom; he had been separated from his nephew; he had delivered this

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old man even for his generation. In his earlier years he had been strong to endure hardship and to brave danger, but now the ardor of his youth has passed. The son of Promise has grown to manhood by his side. Heaven seems to have crowned with blessing a life with hopes long-deferred.

But then comes the shock: “God tested Abraham.” The reader is abruptly informed at the outset that the following harrowing experience comes from *God*. The subsequent lethal commands are not a figment of Abraham’s imagination nor his misinterpretation of a dream. The test is not instigated by Satan.⁵ Neither is it a matter of Abraham losing his mind. The explicit description of *God’s* responsibility is underscored both by the reversal in the Hebrew of the usual verb-subject sequence, and also with the unusual use of the definite article with God’s name.⁶

The verb “tested” is not uncommon in the OT. It is found thirty-six times in the *piel*. These often point to other divinely-appointed “tests,” which generally include explanations of *why* the test is permitted. The reader is often informed of its reasonableness (Exod 15:25; 16:4; 20:20; Deut 8:2, 6; 13:3, 4).⁷ However, in this instance, we are not told *why* God is testing Abraham—perhaps suggesting that even Abraham himself wasn’t told.

—“and He said to him, ‘Abraham.’” God has already spoken to Abraham on several occasions in the preceding narratives (12:13; 13:14-17, 15, 17; 18:21). However, only *this* time does God address Abraham by name *first*—perhaps singling out the solemnity of this moment.

—“and he said, ‘Here I am’ [*hineni*].” This response by Abraham to God occurs in Gen 22 (vs. 1, 11). Only two additional times in the entire Pentateuch will an address by God be coupled with this response. Abraham’s atypical re-

nephew, when captured in war, at the peril of his own life. He had lived childless with his wife, when yet all his hopes were suspended upon his having offspring. Having at length obtained a son, he was compelled to disinherit him, and to drive him far from home. Isaac alone remained . . . The meaning, therefore, of the passage is, that by this temptation, as if by the last act, the faith of Abraham was far more severely tried than before.” *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1948), 560-561.

⁵By comparison, the readers of the Job narratives are carefully informed (Job 1) that Job’s severe trials come at Satan’s provocation.

⁶Phyllis Tribble correctly notes: “God, indeed God, tested Abraham.” Though such a procedure is implicit throughout the preceding [Abrahamic] stories, only here does the verb “test” (*nis-sah*) appear. The explicit use startles the reader. It portends a crisis beyond the usual tumult. How many times does Abraham have to be tested? . . . After delays and obstacles Isaac, the child of promise, has come. Let the story now end happily, providing readers and characters respite from struggle and suspense. But that is not to be. Vocabulary and syntax show otherwise. The divine generic *Elohim* occurs with the definite article *Ha* suggesting “the God, the very God.” Reversing the usual order of a Hebrew sentence, this subject precedes its verb. The narrator makes clear that an extraordinary divine act is taking place. “God, indeed God, tested Abraham.” (emphasis Tribble’s)

⁷I.e., “And Moses said to the people, “Do not fear; for God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin.” Exod 20:20.

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sponse perhaps suggests that he himself was recognizing the portent of this occasion, and also his posture of obedience. He responds to God in this manner only in this narrative.⁸

Verse 2: “take now your son, your only/unique one, whom you love, Isaac”: This is the fourth time God’s commands to Abraham have involved his family ties.⁹ As painful as the earlier sundering of these bonds must have been, this surely is the ultimate devastation. Even the arrangement of the nouns in the Hebrew conveys a particularly strong sense of gravity. The three-fold description increases and intensifies Abraham’s attachment to his son Isaac: “Your son, your only/unique one, Isaac, whom you love.”¹⁰

Moreover, the triple designation plus name rules out any possible confusion. Abraham couldn’t evade the realization that God was clearly aware of what He was asking Abraham to do—and that He was specifically identifying the promised heir.¹¹ It could not be Eliezer, whom Abraham once suggested as his descendant (Gen 15:2). Nor could it be Ishmael, his son by Hagar, whom he begged God to let stand before Him (Gen 17:18).

The phrase “who you love” involves the initial use of the word “love” in the OT. With the oft-noted verbal reticence of this narrative, the tender regard Abraham had for Isaac is surely highlighted. God Himself is speaking. Thus the first time *He* uses this word in all His recorded dialogues in the OT is significant.

— “and go forth” occurs two times in the Abrahamic narratives. Both come at the outset of two signal commands to Abraham.¹²

⁸Only two additional times in the entire Pentateuch will such an address by God and this response be found—when God addresses Moses at the burning bush (Exod 3:4), and when He addresses Jacob by name (as reported by Jacob, Gen 31:11). Later, the lad Samuel responds with “*hineni*” to who he thinks is Eli calling, suggesting the attitude of obedience that Abraham exhibits in this narrative.

⁹1) Gen 12:1, leaving kindred; 2) Gen 13:5-18, separation from Lot; 3) Gen 17:17-18, separation from Ishmael.

¹⁰God’s initial three-fold command to Abraham in Gen 12:1 also increases in intensity as it unfolds: “Get out of your country/from your kindred/from your father’s house . . .”

¹¹Trible is sensitive to significance of this identification God announces: “the object of the verb is not a simple word but heavy-laden language. It moves from the generic term of kinship, ‘your son,’ through the exclusivity of relationship, ‘your only one,’ through the intimacy of bonding, ‘whom you love,’ to climax in the name that fulfills promise, the name of laughter and joy, the name *Yishaq* (Isaac). Language accumulates attachments: ‘your son, your only one, whom you love, Isaac.’ Thus far every divine word (imperative, particle, and objects) shows the magnitude of the test.” (Trible, 2.)

¹²Gen 12:1 “*Go forth* from your country and your kindred and your father’s house.” It is found only two more times in the OT (in Song of Songs 2:10, 13—feminine form), obviously a very rare usage (again underscoring the solemnity of the command). “The phrase ‘go forth’ serves as a bridge between the two narratives about Abraham. The first tells about the demand at the beginning of his history that he detach himself from his land, his home and his father’s house and go to the unknown country, at God’s command, ‘the land which I will show you.’ The second, at the end of this history, describes the most difficult demand of all, that he go to the land of Moriah and sac-

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— “to the land of Moriah”: no further identification of the divinely-ordained location is given except the assurance that God will signal Abraham at the appropriate time. Again, as in chapter 12, Abraham is commanded to go on a mission with its final destination a mystery. Verse 4 informs the reader that the designated place for sacrifice was a three-day’s journey away. Abraham would need to travel approximately seventy kilometers (forty-five miles) from Beer-sheva. However, traveling long distances was not new to Abraham.

— “and offer him as a burnt offering”: The first two imperatives in verse 2 would not have been alarming for Abraham. He is described in Genesis as regularly offering sacrifices to God. But with the third imperative, the true horror of the command is now made clear. Furthermore, the term “burnt offerings” is used not less than six times in this and the next few verses, the repetition keeping before the reader’s mind the extreme nature of the demand.¹³

What is Abraham’s response? “So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and he cut the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him.”¹⁴

From preceding narratives the reader knows Abraham as a mighty warrior who readily speaks.¹⁵ However, now he only responds “*hineni*”, v. 2, and then becomes uncharacteristically silent. There is no more discourse, only actions, until Moriah.¹⁶

The reader “sees” Abraham “saddle the donkey” and “cut the wood”, and should recall that “it is rare to find routine tasks mentioned in biblical narrative.”¹⁷ Moreover, one wonders *why* Abraham at his advanced age, and with his great wealth, is doing these tedious chores. Surely these were tasks he didn’t normally have to do for himself—this “mighty prince of God” (Gen 23:6) who could arm “318 trained servants who were born in his own house.”

Why does Abraham saddle the donkey and cut the wood for the sacrifice himself? Is this giving a hint of Abraham’s anguish? In his turmoil he perhaps

rifice his only, beloved son on one of the mountains ‘which I will tell you.’” Shimon Bar-Efrat, *The Art of the Biblical Story* (New York: Almond, 1979), 213.

¹³Robert Alter, in *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic, 1980), includes a whole chapter on biblical repetition. He makes the point that in sparse narratives (and Gen 22 certainly is one), *any* repetition becomes even more significant.

¹⁴One cannot help but compare Abraham’s ready obedience to an unwelcome task to that of the prophet Jonah.

¹⁵With his relatives to resolve difficulties (Lot, chapter 13), to royalty (kings of the Plains and Melchizedek, chapter 14 and king of Gerar, chapter 20), and most notably to God (chapters 15, 17, 18).

¹⁶For example: “So rose early Abraham in the morning”: This is an identical response to 21:14 when Abraham sent Hagar and Ishmael away at God’s directive. Even though both this command and that of chapter 21 were devastating for Abraham, one sees careful, prompt obedience. One cannot help but compare Abraham’s careful obedience to an unwanted task to that of the prophet Jonah.

¹⁷Bar-Efrat, 80.

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doesn't want to explain the journey (and thus God's command) to anyone. Maybe he knows someone would try to persuade him not to go, telling him he must be mistaken about what God said. Or, perchance, he *wants* to be alone as he wrestles with his thoughts. Thus, he attends to the preparations himself.

Notice also how Isaac is brought into the narrative *after* the two servants, perhaps indicating that Abraham woke him up last in his distress.

Suddenly the narrative alerts us to the fact that the journey to the unknown destination lasted three days. *Verse 4*: "On the third day Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place afar off." The distance traveled before arriving at Moriah surely prolongs the agony for Abraham. He must have reviewed the three-fold command from God over and over in his mind, hoping he had made some mistake. There was plenty of time in three days to think. Yet the narrator passes over any mention of the journey. We are not permitted to view those three torturing days.¹⁸

— "and Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place": possibly suggesting the height of the mountain that God revealed to Abraham. The more common OT description of "seeing" is "he looked . . . and saw." Thus, the author, by describing Abraham's "seeing" by "lift[ing] up his eyes" perhaps hints of Abraham's inner struggle, underscoring his deep mental anguish by implying his head was bowed down. Or, is the use of this particular expression possibly suggesting more than just physical sight?¹⁹

Verse 5: "and then Abraham said to his young men, 'stay here with the donkey. I and the lad will go yonder and worship and come again to you.'"

Abraham, from his extensive household, brought only two young servants with him. Now having arrived at the hour of sacrifice, he leaves them with the donkey. Perhaps even yet they might try to restrain Abraham. Or, possibly, he didn't want them to view what was going to happen. Father and son must go alone.

— "we will worship": the perceptive reader notices the first use of this word for "worship" in the Pentateuch. Abraham's faith apparently has not wavered throughout the three-day journey. Even with pain surely stabbing his heart, he can still affirm his intent to worship God.

— "We will return to you": this is an electrifying statement in light of what Abraham faces. The verbs are cohortative and thus reveal emphatic determination. The plural "we" should be shocking. Though the narrator does not directly disclose Abraham's agony, this profound statement of faith perhaps gives a glimpse of Abraham's mental wrestling during the long 3-day journey. The

¹⁸" . . . a three-day journey—which according to Kierkegaard lasted longer than the four thousand years separating us from the event . . ." Elie Wiesel, *Messengers of God: Biblical Portraits and Legends*. (New York: Random House, 1976), 72.

¹⁹Generally speaking commentators take this expression to indicate a literal upward movement of the eyes. A closer look at its actual usage, however, indicates that this might not necessarily be the case. See below for fuller discussion.

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author of the book of Hebrews (11:17-19) suggests this when he writes: “By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac . . . *accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead.*” The nature of Abraham’s faith on the mountain of sacrifice is astounding when one recalls that he had no precedent of any resurrection on which to base his faith. A 20th century person looking back through such miracles subsequent to Abraham can only marvel!

Verse 6: “and Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son and he took in his hand the fire and the knife; so they went, two of them, together.”

The verb, “and Abraham took” completes the divine command to “take” in v. 2. God has commanded Abraham, and Abraham has conscientiously obeyed. Notice too, how in this verse, the sacrificial implements, “wood of the burnt offering” and “fire and knife”, surround “Isaac his son.”²⁰

Isaac now takes the place of the beast of burden. Why is the donkey left behind? The poignant picture is of the victim bearing the instrument of his death. Father and son go alone. The text states: “so they went, both of them, together.”

The wood has the heavier weight of those items that are needed for sacrifice and Abraham is elderly. Is this why Isaac carries the wood? Even so, notice how the father carries the knife and fire, as if to shield his son from their harm as long as possible.

Verses 7-8: “and Isaac said to Abraham his father and he said, My father, and he said, here am I, my son; and he said, behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham said, God will see/provide himself the lamb for a burnt offering my son; and they went, two of them, together.”

At Isaac’s question, Abraham again responds “hineni.” Note this identical response of Abraham to God earlier. Is this alerting the reader to the intensity of the moment?²¹

The poignant dialogue: “My father” . . . “my son” reminds the reader again and again of the relationship between Abraham and Isaac in this narrative—four times in just these two verses. In fact the word “son” occurs ten times between verses 2-16. This constant reminder is not just redundant reference to the blood relationship between Abraham and Isaac. Rather, this obvious repetition pointedly stresses the horror that a father goes through in sacrificing his son.²²

²⁰Trible, 5.

²¹Refer to comments on v. 1.

²²This is not a strained reading of this conspicuous repetition. It is an assumption of this paper that the Genesis book has one author. Thus this is just another example of this technique of repetition for accenting. It is also evident in the narrative of the first murder (Cain and Abel), where in just three verses (Gen 4:8-10) the word “brother” is mentioned five times. The reader already knows Cain and Abel are brothers. Thus, again, this type of repetition accentuates the horror of that scene even more. The most shocking aspect of the incident is not that only murder has taken place (as terrible as that is), but that fratricide has been committed (point well-taken by Bar-Efrat, 213). In this pericope, the author again repeats family ties in another critical event.

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— “God will see/provide himself”: One of many times this narrative emphasizes “seeing.” God’s involvement dominates Abraham’s guarded response to Isaac. Normal Hebrew syntax is again reversed and the subject precedes the verb. Note, also, how it includes a lingering ambiguity of apposition linking “burnt offering” and “my son.” Was this the only way Abraham could yet speak of what was just ahead?

— “and they went, two of them, together”: this phrase is repeated the second time in three verses. Was this when Isaac began to understand Abraham’s enigmatic response? If so, he did not try to escape, for we are again reminded that *even yet* father and son “went together.”

Verses 9-10: “and they came to the place of which God had told them. Abraham built there an altar and laid in order the wood and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar upon the wood and Abraham put forth his hand and took the knife to slay his son.”

— “and they came to the place of which God [“God” again with definite article as in v.1] had told them”): once more we are reminded of the certainty of God’s instructions and how carefully Abraham had carried them out.²³

At this point the narrative slows down dramatically with the preparations on the mountain. Why are so many details included here? These preparations for a burnt offering would be unnecessary instruction to OT readers, well-familiar with sacrificial worship. Yet note the calculated accuracy depicted through this sequence of 6 verbs. Abraham alone is the subject of them all, with Isaac appearing as object after each group of three.²⁴ Milgrom comments, “These are particularly desperate moments because at each of these pivots Abraham could have turned back.”²⁵ Even the action of taking the knife is divided into two separate movements—putting forth his hand and then taking the knife—with the reader reminded yet again of Abraham’s intention “to slay his son.”²⁶

We are never informed *when* Abraham told his son of the divine command, or *what* he said to Isaac. Whenever it occurred, there apparently was no resistance. For when Isaac is again mentioned, we find that Abraham has bound him

²³Completing, thus, v. 2, that Abraham was to “. . . go to the land of Moriah . . . on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.”

²⁴Trible suggests a pattern which serves to heighten the tension:

Abraham built an altar
arranged wood
bound Isaac his son
laid him on the altar, on wood
put forth Abraham his hand,
took the knife to slay his son” (Trible, 7)

²⁵In *The Akedah: The Binding of Isaac* (Oakland, CA: BIBAL, 1988), 14.

²⁶It is one of these six verbs□, with its solitary appearance in the OT in this form, that subsequently becomes title for this narrative in Jewish writings—“The Akedah.” The narrative never reveals when Abraham told Isaac of God’s command. Thus, perhaps this verb of the six identifies the last moment when Isaac would have had to know.

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for sacrifice. As a young man, Isaac could have easily over-powered his aged father. But instead, the reader becomes aware of a second act of faith and obedience. For Abraham's beloved son, heir of the promise, lies ready to die by his own father's hand. The father has yielded his son. The son has yielded his life. All Christian and Jewish writers pause long over these two verses.²⁷

Verses 11-12: "but the angel of Yahweh called to him from heaven and said, Abraham, Abraham, and he said here am I. And he said do not lay your hand on the lad or do to him anything. For now I know that you fear God; you have not withheld your son, your unique one from me."

At this critical point one immediately notices the change of the name of God used up to this point. And this name will now be used until the end of the narrative.

The double vocative "Abraham, Abraham" reinforces the intervention from heaven,²⁸ as does the father's third "*hineni*" (as in vs. 1 and 7), all adding to the intensity of this moment.

Also punctuating God's urgent halt is the double negative to ensure the total safety of Isaac, "do not lay your hand on the lad/do not do anything to him."

— "now I know you fear God": The divine being declares the meaning of Abraham's act. This direct characterization of Abraham uttered from heaven thus has absolute authority. The reader is left with no doubt that true fear of God consists in complete subjection to His sovereign will.²⁹

— "Your son, your only/unique one": God repeating this designation of Isaac at this juncture (as in v. 2) accentuates that He recognizes full well the nature of His command to Abraham.

Verse 13: "and Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold a ram behind him caught in a thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son."

At this point, again "Abraham lifts up his eyes and sees." The narrator utilizes the same formula as in v. 4 to mark off another poignant moment for Abraham. The first time he "lifted his eyes" his heart must have stopped as he saw the mountain God indicated. He knew then for sure that he had not been mistaken about God's command. And *now*, at *this* moment he sees the substitute for his son.

²⁷I.e., "Few narratives in Genesis can equal this story in dramatic tension. The writer seems to prolong the tension of both Abraham and the reader in his depiction of the last moments before God interrupted the action and called the test to a halt." John H. Sailhamer in *The Pentateuch as Narrative* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 178.

²⁸The double call is rare in the Pentateuch. Three other occasions of urgency employ it: Jacob (Gen 46:2); Moses (Exod 3:4); and Samuel (1 Sam 3:10). Very similar would be King David's mourning over his son (2 Sam 18:3). These several occasions are marked with high intensity.

²⁹Nahum Sarna is eloquent on this point, describing it as the "definition of relationship between man and God . . . [which finds the] fullest expression in the realm of action." (*Understanding Genesis* (New York: Schocken, 1966), 163.

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As alluded to above, the phrase “[he] looked ... and saw” is the most common way of depicting physical sight in the OT. It is used over 860 times; over 240 times in the Pentateuch; and almost 100 times in Genesis alone. Forms of “to see” also occur 7 times within 15 verses of Gen. 22. Thus it becomes tantalizing to notice the few times when the rare phrase “lifting up . . . eyes” is tagged to the already obvious word for “seeing.” Could this possibly imply something beyond mere physical sight?³⁰ The narrator could have written that Abraham “saw” the ram, in this case. He does this almost 250 times in the Pentateuch. However, at this dramatic point in Gen. 22 there is added “lifted up the eyes” to the word “seeing.” Is this possibly indicating something beyond natural vision?³¹

In the NT, Jesus Himself declared that “Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.” (John 8:56). Could He have been alluding to this instance of “lifting up the eyes and seeing” of Gen 22:13? Was the Messiah’s future mission of salvation something that Abraham began to “see” there on Moriah’s mountain? The rare formula “lifting of the eyes”, used at two critical junctures in this narrative, could possibly signify something beyond mere natural sight. The narrator seems intentional that the reader “see” as Abraham did when he “went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering *instead of his son.*”

The drama of this substitution is also emphasized through the phrase “behold a ram”, answering earlier Isaac’s question: “behold . . . where is the lamb?” in v. 7. This is also the first time the word for this sacrificial animal is used in Genesis.

Verse 14: “and so Abraham called the name of that place Yahweh will see, as it is said to this day, on the mount of Yahweh, it shall be seen.”

³⁰Texts include: 1) Gen 13:10, Lot “lifting eyes” and seeing Sodom (hinting that he was seeing more than just the fertile valley, but was also considering what advantages there would be to living there). Also, he was in a position enabling him to look down into the valley and thus didn’t need to “lift” his eyes in a physical sense; 2) Gen 24:63-64, used *twice* in two verses, as Isaac and Rebekah first encounter each other (possibly denoting deep emotions both might have been experiencing at this “arranged” marriage); 3) 33:1, when Jacob “lifted his eyes” and saw Esau approaching, thereby suggesting the anxiety he was experiencing (remembering his elder brother’s fury at losing the birthright); 4) Gen 43:29, Joseph “lifted” his eyes and saw Benjamin as his brothers *bowed* before him (with complex emotions seeing his brother again plus remembering his past dreams and present fulfillment)—he certainly didn’t need to raise his eyes to view prostrate people; 5) Num 24:2, Balaam “lifts his eyes” to view the Israelite camp in the valley *beneath* him.

³¹The “lifting up the eyes” seems enigmatic and deserves attention. Gudmundur Olafsson, “The Use of NS¹ in the Pentateuch and its Significance for the Biblical Understanding of Forgiveness”, Ph.D. Dissertation, Andrews University, 1988) 148-154, and C. S. Reif (“A Root to Look Up: A Study of the Hebrew *nasa ayin*” in *VTS* 36(1985): 230-244) both begin to turn in this direction.

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Abraham now names the mountain. The “name draws attention to God, not Abraham. It is not Abraham-has-performed, but God-will- provide.”³²

Verses 15-18: “and the angel of Yahweh called to Abraham a second time from heaven and said, by Myself I have sworn says Yahweh, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only/unique one. With blessings indeed I will bless you and I will multiply your seed as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the shore of the sea and your seed shall possess the gate of his enemies. And in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed because you have obeyed my voice.”)

After the sacrifice, the “angel of the Lord” called out of heaven the second time to Abraham. *Three* times in just nineteen verses God speaks to Abraham, two of them at this pivotal climax of the narrative.³³

Verse 16: “I swear by Myself”: This is the solitary instance of God swearing this way in all of the Patriarchal narratives, crowning these words with extreme importance.³⁴ God is obviously reaffirming His earlier Covenant with Abraham but in a dramatically expanded manner. “And He said”, used over and over in these nineteen verses, is now punctuated with “says Yahweh.”³⁵ Even the verbs are reinforced by the absolute infinitive—adding “most abundantly”! Noticeably, the blessing is now extended to Abraham’s seed, and victory over enemies is mentioned for the first time. These blessings are also uniquely presented as the result of Abraham’s actions, and not merely as God’s gracious initiative, as in previous chapters. God specifically praises Abraham’s obedience in this Covenant statement.

Messianic Echoes

The narrative of Gen 22 is profound.³⁶ Each of the “particulars” beckon attention and interpretation. It seems very apparent that the narrator has displayed, as Robert Alter cogently remarks, “his omniscience with a drastic selectivity.”³⁷ It is the position of this paper that the accumulative effect of the various particulars of Gen 22 and its surrounding context cannot be brushed aside as merely coincidental.

³²Victor P. Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982), 109.

³³And this is the last time God speaks to Abraham.

³⁴This type of oath is extremely rare in all of Scripture. Three other examples: Isa 45:23; Jer 22:5; 49:13; (Heb 6:13, 14, the NT reference to this important oath). The Pentateuch subsequently has repeated references to this oath (24:7; 26:3; 50:24; Exod 8:5; 33:1).

³⁵“saith the Lord” is used constantly by the prophets, but is rare in the historical books (Num 14:28; 1 Sam 2:30; 2 Kgs 9:26; 19:33).

³⁶John Sailhamer is one of many who singles out the Gen 22: “Few narratives in Genesis can equal this story in dramatic tension.” *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 178.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 126.

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1. Isaac's birth, in just the previous chapter (21), is announced in a very singular manner.³⁸ Up to this birth, the author of Genesis has described the conception of a child as the result of the husband "knowing" his wife.³⁹ However, in this instance we are told that "the LORD visited Sarah as He had said, and the LORD did for Sarah as He had spoken."

Sarah conceived, without the previously-used Genesis formula of her husband "knowing" her. This in no way suggests that Abraham was not involved! This is not a virgin birth. Sarah has, however, been pointedly depicted as well-beyond child-bearing years (chapter 18). Thus this birth of Isaac is miraculous in that fact alone, pointing the perceptive reader to the later miracle involved in the Messiah's unusual birth.

2. The text declares that Isaac's miraculous birth also came "at the *set time* of which God had spoken to him" alluding to a later fulfillment of God's word when at "the fullness of time" the Messiah would be born (Gal 4:4).

3. The birth announcement involves both names for God that are found in Gen 22, the shift in names occurring there at the decisive interruption on Moriah.

4. God explicitly informs Abraham what he is to call his son: "Then God said: "No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and *you shall call his name Isaac*", bringing to mind the later words of the angel to Joseph, "you shall call His name Jesus. (Matt 1:21) Matthew quotes the exact LXX phrase of Gen 17:19.

5. The word "love" is used for the first time in Genesis—in this narrative, specifying a father's love for his son. Surely fathers loved their sons before Abraham. However, this particular relationship is singled out.

6. Specific mention of Moriah: later readers would be reminded of when God halted the plague against Israel (2 Sam 24:15-25); where the Temple would stand (2 Ch 3:1), and thus, "in NT times, the vicinity of Calvary—where sin's great Plague would be halted."⁴⁰

7. Abraham's journey to Moriah is specifically pointed out as being a "three days" journey. "Three days" proves to be a significant marker in the Pentateuch, sensitizing the reader to the three days of Christ's death and resurrection.

8. The reader is given a double reminder linking a father and son—"they went, two of them, together."

³⁸"And the LORD visited Sarah as He had said, and the LORD did for Sarah as He had spoken. For Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him." (21:1-2).

³⁹Gen 4:1, 25—Adam and Eve; 4:17—Cain. A fuller discussion will be given later in the paper.

⁴⁰Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1976), 143.

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9. The detail of Isaac carrying the wood to the place of sacrifice is explicitly noted.

10. The dramatic slow-down in the narrative in verses 9-10, sensitizing readers to the only time “in history by which it is surpassed: that where the Great Father gave His Isaac to a death from which there was no deliverance.”⁴¹

11. Curiously, Isaac is silent. He never speaks, except once—on Moriah’s mountain. Isaiah later writes of the Messiah: “Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter ...” (53:7)

12. The word for the “sacrificial ram” occurs first in this narrative.

It can be argued that the narrator develops a whole constellation of salvation images in Gen 22: a father giving his son; a son yielding to the father’s will; a sacrifice, wood, altar, ram, faith, and obedience. Taken in entirety, the poignant details of this narrative seem to point to the Great Sacrifice of Christ.

Eschatological Implications

Much current Narrative Analysis assumes the non-historical, mythical nature of OT events and personages with interest focused rather on probing the psychological nuances of the characters.⁴² Moreover, the various details included by biblical narrators are not generally allowed to carry theological import. However, this study has attempted to suggest a deliberate hermeneutic seemingly pervading the Abrahamic narratives. We are arguing that in the crafting of Genesis 22, the narrator was seeking to orient the reader to the “Last Days”, instituted with the Great Atonement of Christ.⁴³

New Testament materials also give evidence of linkage with Gen 22. It could be argued that it was some of the very particulars in Gen 22 that the NT writers pondered as they wrote of Christ and His death. The Apostle Paul seems to have lingered long over Gen 22 when he writes ““What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? *He who did not spare His own Son but delivered Him up for us all*, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” (Rom 8:32, emphasis supplied). Had John the Baptist

⁴¹James Montgomery Boice in *Genesis: An Expository Commentary, Volume 2, Genesis 12:1-36:43* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1985) 218.

⁴²See Robert Alter, and David M. Gunn and Danna Nolan Fewel, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1993) for but two examples.

⁴³Within the surrounding chapters, we note that Isaac’s name is given by a divine being before birth (Gen 17:19: as will happen with Christ, Mt 1:21); the miraculous conception (of both Isaac and Christ); the victim (both Isaac and Jesus) silent and yielding before death (Is 53:7); both Isaac and Christ bearing the wood to the place of sacrifice (Gen 22:6; John 19:17); resurrection on the “third day” (Isaac never dies; but he “miraculously” rises from the altar on the “third day.” Even Jewish Midrash ties the “third day” to resurrection with Hos 6:2. *Genesis Rabbah*, Vol. 1, 491. Also: “There are many three days mentioned in the Holy Scripture, of which one is the Resurrection of the Messiah.” (*Bereshith Rabba*); and “The Holy One doesn’t leave His just men in sorrow more than three days, as it is said, “After two days will He revive us; on the third day He will raise us up that we may live in His presence (Hos 6:2). (Parasha 56.1).

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been moved when studying Gen 22:7-8 and pondering “My father . . . where is the lamb?” coupled with Isa 53 when he announced, by the Jordan River, “Behold the Lamb of *God* which takes away the sin of the *world*.” (John 1:29, 36, emphasis supplied)

Is the word “love” describing a father’s heart initially used in Gen 22 so that when later God Himself calls from heaven twice, “This is *My* beloved Son”⁴⁴ later readers would better grasp what love was involved in *His* heart for *His* Son? The mention *three times* to Abraham by God in Gen 22 of Isaac as “your son, your only/unique one” also finds echo in Christ’s words to Nicodemus when He tells him that “*God* so *loved* the world that He gave *His* only/unique Son.”

The Apostle Paul also does careful exegesis of Genesis. He notes (Gal 3:18) that “And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the nations by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, ‘In you all the nations shall be blessed.’” Of his several statements of the Abrahamic covenant, Paul was distinctly referring to the blessing in Gen 22 and the *final* covenantal declaration with *Abraham*. Two previous times God’s covenantal statement states that through Abraham all the earth would be blessed: in chapter 12, all the “families” of the earth; but in chapter 22, all the “nations” of the earth (which rendering Paul quotes). For in v. 18, God dramatically changes the destination of the blessing from “families” in Gen 12:3, to “nations” in Gen 22:18.

This important passage in Galatians also seems to validate the earlier suggestion above that the “lifting up of the eyes” includes more than just physical sight. For Paul states that the “gospel” was “preached to Abraham” and pinpoints this exact time with a direct quote from Gen 22:18. There is no direct mention of God “preaching” the “gospel” to Abraham in Genesis chapters 12-25. When does God “preach” the “gospel” to Abraham? If the enigmatic obscure formula “lifting up the eyes” can suggest something more than just natural eyesight, it could be hinting at Abraham’s perception opening when he “lifted his eyes” and “sees” the substitute lamb on Mt. Moriah.

Paul’s argument in later verses (Gal 3:15-16) must not go unnoticed in this context. He seems to continue his exegesis of Gen 22 when he points to the deliberate change to the singular “seed” in the Great Blessing of Gen 22. Paul is not careless. He has traced the “seed” through its several promises within the Abrahamic narratives and thus demonstrates a “close reading” of Gen 22:17, elaborating on a detail which many modern English versions do not translate precisely.

Paul apparently noticed that elsewhere in Genesis when the collective “seed” is used it appears with the pronoun “they” (i.e., Gen 15:13). In Gen 3:15—the first covenant promise—one finds the first mention of the “seed” (collective plural), but used with the 3rd person *plural*. In the Gen 16:10 use of “seed” (in

⁴⁴Matt 3:17—Christ’s baptism; 17:5—Christ’s transfiguration.

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God's blessing to Hagar), no pronoun is used. In 17:7, 9, "seed" is used with *plural* pronouns. Yet in 22:17 and 24:60, the text includes a deliberate use of the *singular* pronoun. This pronominal precision continues in the discussion of the "seed" beyond the Pentateuch. For example, in 2 Sam 7:12—"I will raise up your seed after you . . . I will establish *his* kingdom. Also 2 Kgs 17:20—"The Lord rejected all the seed of Israel—afflicted *them*, delivered *them*," etc. When a nation is implied, the pronominal suffix is plural.

Further testimony can be found "indirectly" from the LXX. Of the 103 times where the Hebrew masculine pronoun is used in Genesis, *never* does the LXX violate the agreement of the pronoun and antecedent except in Gen 22—evidence, perhaps, of an anti-Messianic bias.⁴⁵ The RSV appropriately translates the pronoun "he"—the Hebrew utilizes the third person *singular* pronominal suffix following the plural seed in Gen 22:18. This is an important textual nuance Paul noticed (and built his exegesis upon), but which is excluded by most modern English translations.

This is not an isolated incident. Pronominal suffixes in the Covenant blessings are not carelessly written. Subsequently in chapter 24, as Rebekah leaves her home to go and marry Isaac, she is blessed: "May you become the mother of ten thousands; and may your seed possess the gates of those who hate "*him*" (*again*, the third person singular pronominal suffix!).⁴⁶ This deliberate focusing on a single "*him*" seems again to imply a Messianic understanding of these promises by the author of the Pentateuch—a significant detail upon which Paul builds his own argument.⁴⁷

Moreover, many have seen Isaac as a type of Christ in this narrative. We also tentatively argue that in the carefully crafted Gen 22 narrative, the writer actually seeks to rivet the attention of the reader upon the *father*. There is almost exclusive focus on Abraham. He is the subject of almost all the verbs. Perhaps it was here in Genesis that the NT writers learned of the Heavenly Father's love for His Son, and how closely He was identified with Jesus in the Great Sacrifice.⁴⁸

⁴⁵See Johan Lust, "Messianism and Septuagint" in *Supplements to Vetus Testamentum*, 36 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1985), 174-195.

⁴⁶Max Wilcox ("Upon the Tree"—Dt 21:22-23 In the New Testament" in JBL 96/1[1977], especially 94-99) notes this important point.

⁴⁷Jewish writers indirectly validate this interpretation. They blow the shofar horn, recalling the ram caught in the Moriah thicket, in anticipation of Yom Kippur, thus pointing forward to another divine event through Gen 22. Indeed, in addition to Gen 22, Christ's Atonement is prefigured all through the OT sacrificial system and the many types in the Israelite economy, and rightly so. The composition of the OT demonstrates one cannot focus too much on what Christ's Salvation Act involves.

⁴⁸The NT writers would have also noted (as we have) the constant repetition of "father" and "son" and the poignant repetition of "the two of them together"; and the first use of the word "love"—thus the pointed accent on a *father's* love. They also saw beneath the surface formula "he lifted up his eyes and saw"—realizing that on Mt. Moriah Abraham was "seeing" something more than just a mountain and a lamb. He was discerning not only the future Messiah but also now the

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OT sacrifices for sin were God-ordained. They were a prominent part of Hebrew worship. However, in Gen 22 one is instructed that God does not need the bloody sacrifice to bring His heart to love and forgive. It is because of the love already in His heart that He makes provision for the Atonement (Rom 5:8). And before any of the elaboration of the sacrificial ritual later in the Pentateuch, God first revealed to Abraham, the father of the true seed, what would be in *His* heart as He offered *His* only Son in sacrifice for sin.

The NT writers have not “advanced” theologically beyond the OT when insisting that “God is Love.” They are not introducing some new exalted concept. Rather, it is the position of this paper that NT writers lingered long over Gen 22 and saw, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit who also inspired the Abrahamic narratives (2 Pet 1:20-21), that “*the Father Himself loves you* (John 16:27). The collective details in Gen 22 are not randomly included, but instead serve as intriguing pointers toward the Messiah’s sacrifice issuing from His Father’s heart, inaugurating the “last days.”

We moderns tend to pride ourselves on our access to the sophisticated tools of comparative linguistics, religion, psychology and archaeology in dealing with the biblical text. Yet we are humbled to recognize that the ancients saw all the angles, voiced all the questions and paradoxes, and emerged from the maze still one step ahead of us.⁴⁹

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Father’s part in giving His Son. Thus Abraham named Moriah’s mountain “The LORD sees . . . on the mountain of Yahweh, he will be seen” (with the insistent occurrences of variants of “to see” [vs. 2, 4, 12, 13], it makes sense to translate the verbs of v. 14 this way—enhancing what the writer is trying to portray in both a primary and secondary sense). The three-fold repetition by God of “your son, your only/unique one” was also not lost on the NT writers (John 3:16; 1 John 4:9, etc.)

⁴⁹Milgrom, *ibid.*, 62. Martin Buber says it equally well: “Scripture does not state its doctrine as doctrine but by telling a story and without exceeding the limits set by the nature of a story. It uses the method of story-telling to a degree, however, which world literature has not yet learned to use; and its cross-references and inter-connections, while noticeable, are so unobtrusive that a perfect attention is needed to grasp its intent—an attentiveness so perfect that it has not yet been fully achieved. Hence, it remains for us latecomers to point out the significance of what has hitherto been overlooked, neglected, insufficiently valued.” in “Abraham the Seer,” *Judaism* 5 (1956): 296.

Trinitarian Evidences in the Apocalypse

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Wesleyan New Testament scholar Rob Wall has suggested that if there is a Trinitarian doctrine manifest in the Apocalypse, it is “primitive.” By “primitive” Wall clearly suggests that it is quite elementary, especially when compared with the sophistication the doctrine assumes from the times of Tertullian, Athanasius, and Augustine on to the present.¹

While Professor Wall certainly has a point, there definitely appears to be a “trinitarian” backdrop (at bare minimum), if not a major theme which permeates the Revelator’s expression of the “Godhead.” The following study presents evidence in support of three important aspects of the Trinitarian concept of God: 1) the Godhead manifest as a personal and profoundly united threesome, 2) the full deity of Christ, and 3) the personhood of the Holy Spirit. The most apparent evidence comes from chapters one—three, four and five, twelve—fourteen, twenty-one, and twenty-two.

Evidences from Chapters 1–3

The Trinitarian nature of the God of the Apocalypse is immediately suggested in the introduction to the book: in 1:4-6 the entire vision is said to be “from Him who is and who was and who is to come; and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, and from Jesus Christ.”²

It is quite evident that the Father, Spirit, and Son are in focus here. What is impressive about these verses is that they are so straight forward in introducing a heavenly Threesome. While the reference to “Jesus Christ” is undeniable, the

¹Opinions expressed during a discussion on the manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the Apocalypse at a recent Joint Meeting of the Wesleyan Theological Society and the Society for Pentecostal Studies held in Cleveland, TN, in March 1998.

²All biblical citations in this article are from the New King James Version, unless otherwise noted.

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expressions “seven Spirits” and “Him who is and who was and who is to come” merit some further comment.

The most obvious reasons why the Holy Spirit is presented as the “seven Spirits” has to do with:

1) The numerology of the book (seven, along with twelve, three, four, and eight have obvious symbolic significance)—seven most likely denoting the completeness, or the perfecting and creative power of God.³

2) The implication that the Spirit speaks and is available to all of the seven churches.

3) The Spirit’s involvement in the providences of God working through the numerous series of seven in the book: seven churches (2:1–3: 22), seals (6:1–8:1), trumpets (8:6–11: 15), thunders (10:2-4), signs (12:1–14:20), and plagues (15:1–16).⁴

The appellation given to the Father, however, is a bit more complex. In vs. 8 and 10 the same being “who is and who was and who is to come” is also called “the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End,” “the Lord,” and “the Almighty.” Who is this “Lord” of verse 8? Is He the Father or the Son?

What is interesting about these titles is that in the succeeding verses (10, 13, 17, and 18) the expressions “Alpha and Omega” and “the first and the last” are also applied to Jesus. What is to be made of the use of these titles?

The first suggestion is that quite obviously the profound oneness of the Father and the Son is evidenced by the stunning fact that they are both described with a title which is most obviously drawn from the prophet Isaiah (44:6) to describe the self-existing Yahweh.

What is most important to note, however, is that in the Apocalypse the expressions “Him who is and who was and who is to come” and “the Almighty” are never applied explicitly to Jesus (compare 4:8; 11:15, 17; 16:5, 7).⁵ This is rather strong implicit evidence that the one called “Him who is and who was

³See the perceptive discussion of numerology in the book of Revelation by G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 58–64.

⁴While many of the older commentaries interpret the “seven spirits” as referring to the Holy Spirit, there is a split opinion between the two latest magisterial commentaries on the Revelation: David Aune, *Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 52: Revelation 1–5* (Dallas: Word, 1997), provides an excellent summation of the positions of the major ancient and modern commentaries (33, 34) and goes on to clearly deny the position of the older commentaries; he suggests they refer to “the seven principal angels of God” (34). In contrast to Aune, G. K. Beale interprets them as “a figurative designation of the effective working of the Holy Spirit” (189).

⁵It should be carefully noted that in 11:17 the expression “who is and who was and who is to come” (NKJV) should, according to the best manuscript evidence, not have the phrase “who is to come.” This manuscript evidence is reflected in the NIV: “We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was.” Ranko Stefanovic, in *The Backgrounds and Meaning of the Sealed Book of Revelation 5* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews UP, 1996), suggests the reason for this is that the scene here depicted is one where the Father has come—“The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ” (NIV, v. 15).

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and who is to come” (NJKV) in v. 4 refers neither to the Son nor the Spirit, but exclusively to God the Father.

In chapter one, both the Father and the Son are referred to as the “Alpha and the Omega, The Beginning and the End,” “the First and the Last” (vs. 8, 11, 17). As was previously pointed out, these expressions are drawn from Isaiah 44:6: “Thus says the LORD [Yahweh], the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: ‘I am the First and I am the Last; Besides Me There is no God.’” This passage, addressed to Yahweh and applied by the Revelator to both the Father and the Son, is compelling evidence for their equality in nature and purpose.

Furthermore, such a seemingly easy equation of the identity of the OT God with the Jesus of the New Testament is stunning evidence for the almost unconscious and spontaneous ascription of all characteristics of the Father to the Son. This is an arresting phenomenon in Scripture which presents a constant source of consternation for the Arians.⁶

While the evidence for the divine unity of the Godhead and the full deity of the Son is quite compelling in the Apocalypse, suggestions for the personhood of the Spirit, while not as compelling, are still appealingly suggestive.

The initial evidence is found in the letters to the seven churches: each letter concludes with the same exhortation: “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (2:7, 11, 17, 29 and 3:6, 13, and 22). Speech in the context of spoken messages in Scripture is almost always associated with communications that go on between persons. Thus the Spirit’s speaking to the churches suggests the personhood of the Spirit.⁷

Evidences from Chapters 4–5

These chapters contain the most dramatic (possibly compelling) evidence for a Trinitarian consciousness in the Apocalypse (implicit at the very least, if not explicit).

Ranko Stefanovic⁸ has persuasively argued that the best way to understand these chapters is to see them as portraying the enthronement of Christ as spiritual Israel’s king at the time of the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). This arresting vision draws on the imagery of the inaugural ceremony of the kings of Israel. In these ceremonies the king was invested with covenant authority by virtue of the fact that he held the Law of Moses (the covenant book) in his right hand.

The thrust of all this seems to denote (in Revelation four and five) that the covenant privileges of the people of God are being restored through the rule of

⁶Compare this usage in Revelation 1 with Hebrews 1:10–12, where the author of the book of Hebrews easily applies to Jesus a Psalm (102:1, 25–27) which was originally directed to the LORD [Yahweh]. This is also very strong evidence that, in the mind of the author of the book of Hebrews, the Christ of the New Covenant is the Yahweh of the Old Testament.

⁷Very similar instances of the Spirit speaking are found in 14:13 and 22:17.

⁸Stefanovic, see especially 1–8 and 292–301.

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the Triune God who reigns not only by virtue of the creative power of the Father (4:11), but through the redemptive exploits of the “Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David” (5:5), Who has become a bloodied, sacrificial Lamb (5:6).

Chapter 4

This stunning and comprehensive vision of the heavenly enthronement scene unfolds in the kind of Trinitarian manifestation which is so reflective of the early church’s growing convictions of the eternity and Triune oneness of the God of Israel. There is little doubt that the central figure of chapter four, called “the One who sat on the throne” (v. 2) and who is worshiped as “Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come,” has reference to God the Father.

The appellations in 4:2 are clearly congruent with the scene given in 1:4 and 8. Once more it should be pointed out that while Jesus shares the title the “first and the last” with the Father in chapter one, in the book of Revelation He is never called the “Almighty” or the “One Who was and is and is to come” (4:8).

Furthermore, it should be duly noted that before the throne (and closely associated with the twenty-four elders of v. 4 and the four living creatures of vs. 6-8) are “the seven lamps of fire (which) were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God” (v. 5). The very strong implication of this scene of the close association of the “seven Spirits” with the “twenty-four elders” and the “four living creatures” is that the Holy Spirit is the inspiring catalyst which provokes the hymns of praise found in vs. 8 and 11.

This vision of the Spirit is consistent with the later trinitarian convictions of the church that the Spirit has willingly subjected Himself to the Father (and the Son) to proceed forth from Them and to inspire the intelligences of the created order to acknowledge the “worthiness” of the Father as the Almighty Creator/Lord of the universe.

The Spirit, however, is not merely content to provoke hymns of adulation to the Father: he is also presented as profoundly bound up with the Son in His work as the chief Agent of redemption—the Lion/Lamb of Revelation five.

Chapter 5

There is little doubt that 1) chapter five is a continuation of the vision begun in chapter four and that 2) the Son is the key figure in focus as this great covenantal/inaugural scene reaches its climax.⁹ The kingly facet of the Son’s person is denoted through the imagery of the Lion (v. 5), yet the key imagery which mainly provokes the great hymns of worship in this chapter (vs. 9, 10, 12, 13) has to do with the scene which presents the Son as the atoning, sacrificial Lamb (vs. 6, 9–12).

⁹See Aune, 329–38, and Beale, 337, 340–48.

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A number of Trinitarian features of this vision must be carefully noted. First of all it should be observed that the “seven Spirits,” pictured as “seven lamps of fire burning before the throne” (4:5), are now envisioned in chapter five as the “seven eyes” of the slain “Lamb” and are called the “seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth” (v. 6).¹⁰

Such a close identity of the Spirit with the Son is quite congruent with the great Johannine understanding of the relationship between the Son and the Spirit outlined in the Fourth Gospel (especially chapters fourteen—seventeen): it is the Spirit which reaches out to enlighten the whole world, the One Who “will glorify Me [the Son], for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you” (John 16:14, 15).

Thus it seems fair to conclude that the powerful intent of the vision of chapter five is that the sacrificially redemptive exploits of the Lion-Lamb enable the Spirit to send with convicting power a laser beam of spiritual and redemptive light “into all the earth” (5:6).

Second, note that while the Lion/Lamb is found worthy to open the sealed book in the hand of the Father because He has been slain, He is worthy to be slain only because He is the Son. (This passage does not identify Him as such, but we remember Jesus Christ from earlier in the book, and we know He and the Lion/Lamb are one and the same.) No mere man could die a ransom for many (Matt 20:28). Only God could pay the price required for breaking His laws. But the Father could not die this death, so the Son took human flesh, indivisibly man and God, so God—the Son—could become the sacrificial Lamb and pay the cost.

The covenant privileges of the kingdom had been forfeited through Israel’s sinful unfaithfulness to the gracious, covenant keeping God; but the slain Lamb, sent as the Father’s co-regent Lion/Lamb, effects salvation and covenant restoration.¹¹

Third, the equality of the “Lord God Almighty” of chapter four and the Lion/Lamb of chapter five is strongly suggested by the fact that the worship of the Lord God Almighty by the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures in chapter four (vs. 8, 9) is now (in chapter five) directed to the Lion/Lamb (vs. 8, 9, 10, 14).

Fourth, not only are there the praises and adulation of the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures, but this transcendent scene of heavenly worship is now augmented in chapter five with the praises of “ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousand of thousands” of angels (v. 11) and “every creature” in

¹⁰Once again, there is evidence of the Pentecostal setting of chapter five as the moment in redemptive history when Christ is enthroned as spiritual Israel’s king. One of the powerful effects of this enthronement is that the Spirit of God is “sent out into all the earth” (v.6); this phrase is absent in 1:4 and 4:5, strongly implying that the moment of enthronement is not portrayed until 5:6.

¹¹On the identity of the scroll, see Beale, 339–42.

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heaven and earth (v. 13)—all being directed to both “Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb” (v. 13).

As the implications of the redemptive exploits of the slain Lamb become apparent to all the orders of the created beings of the universe, there is a seemingly spontaneous manifestation of worship which is indiscriminately directed to the Father and the Son. Needless to say, this is powerful evidence of their profound equality as the divine co-regents of the restored kingdom. Yet, there are still more compelling implications arising from these scenes of worship.

Fifth, the most compelling evidence for the equality of the Father and the Son is contained in the hymns of chapters four and five. As has been pointed out, the hymns contained in 4:8 and 11 are directed to the Father, the “Lord God Almighty.” The first two hymns of chapter five are directed to the Son (vs. 9, 10 and 12) and the final hymn is directed to both the Father and the Son (v. 13). It should be carefully noted that the hymn of 5:12 is addressed to the Son and the final hymn of v. 13 is addressed to both the Father and the Son. What is truly compelling, though, is that both of these last two hymns ascribe predicates to the Son which, in chapter four, were ascribed to the Father. Though a bit repetitious, observe how these predicates are used in these hymns:

First, in v. 12 the “Lamb” is deemed “Worthy” “to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing.” In v. 13, however, the final hymn ascribes to both the Father and the Son many of the same predicates (or characteristics and privileges) addressed to the Son in v. 12—especially “Blessing and honor and glory and power”—characteristics which have been ascribed to the Father in 4:11.

J. Ramsey Michaels has forcefully expressed the implications of these “paean(s) of praise.” Initially commenting on 5:12, Michaels says that

Again it is the Lamb that is worshiped, but what he “receives” is now more than the sealed scroll. To him are ascribed the very predicates (glory, honor, and power) which in 4:11 were reserved for God himself. Indeed the list has more than doubled in length. God and the Lamb are the recipients of precisely the same kind of homage from the heavenly court.

This equality between God and Christ reaches a crescendo in the fourth and last hymn, a paean of praise from “every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, even all things that are in them.” Thus, using the vocabulary of worship rather than of speculative thought, the Book of Revelation has succeeded in elevating the familiar Davidic Messiah to the level of deity.¹²

The compelling evidence just presented for the full equality of the Father and the Son is the most forceful evidence in the entire book for the full deity of

¹²Glenn W. Barker, William L. Lane and J. Ramsey Michaels, *The New Testament Speaks* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), 367.

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Jesus Christ. If Jesus has all of the “predicates” and royal prerogatives of the Father, then the full deity of the Father must be the full deity of the Son.

While the evidence for the full deity of Christ is strongest in these chapters, the suggestions of the personhood of the Spirit are appealing, though less compelling. In chapter five the “seven spirits” become the “seven eyes” of the Lamb “sent out into all the earth” (v.6). Eyes are most often associated with personal intelligence and thus provide some suggestive evidence for the reality of the Spirit as a personality.

Evidences from Chapters 11–14

A Literary/Structural Overview of the Apocalypse

Before speaking directly about the issue at hand, a few observations about the overall organization of the Apocalypse are in order. Recent scholarship has persuasively argued that the book is organized along the lines of a chiasmic structure.¹³ There also seems to be a rough division in the book, with chapters 1—11:14 covering the historical overview of God’s providential oversight through the history of the church and chapters 11:16—22:21 unfolding the dramatic events of the eschatological climax. Thus the first three major series of sevens—the seven letters (chapters two and three), the seven seals (chapters 6—8:1) and the seven trumpets (chapters 8:2—11:15) fall within the first half—the historical overview.¹⁴

The letters address the internal events of God’s dealing with His covenant people—the church, the Israel of God. The seals envision the exploits of the Lamb evangelizing through the witness of the church. The trumpets present the dire results of rejecting God’s redemptive offer given in the church’s proclamation of the “everlasting gospel”—beginning at Pentecost (chap. 5) and climaxing in 14:6–12.

While the first half of the book is introduced with a dramatic Trinitarian scene (1:4–8), climaxing with the vision of Jesus, the covenant priest of the Israel of God, walking among the lamp stands (1:11–20), the second half of the book also opens with a dramatic presentation of the Trinity. The introduction to the second half of the book is climaxed with the birth and ascension of Jesus, the “male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron” (11:16–12:17).

Trinitarian Evidences

The Trinitarian evidence in these three chapters is both “positive” and “negative.” There is not only a clear presentation of the true Trinity (“positive”), but also an arresting portrayal of a counterfeit trinity (“negative”) which seeks to

¹³Kenneth Strand, *Interpreting the Book of Revelation* (Worthington, OH: Ann Arbor Publishers, 1976), 43-52. Compare the comments of Beale, 108-51.

¹⁴See Jon Paulien, *What the Bible Says About the End-time* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1994), 105-08.

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foment a great false spiritual revival to counteract the genuine revival of Gospel proclamation spearheaded by the true Trinity.

Chapters 11:16–12:17 give an arresting overview of the eschatological crisis, introducing the main protagonists—the Father, the Son and the Spirit of the True Trinity and the “fiery red dragon”—the counterfeit father of the evil trinity. Chapter thirteen presents the great revival of false religion provoked by the false trinity: the false father “dragon” now goes off to seek the revivalistic support of the leopard-like sea beast (the false son of vs. 1–8) and the lamb-like land beast (the false holy spirit—the unholy spirit of vs. 11–18).

God’s response to the false revival portrayed in chapter thirteen is the great true revival of chapter fourteen with its climactic gospel proclamation and the subsequent manifestations of the righteous judgments of God on the allies and devotees of the false trinity. The entirety of chapter fourteen is permeated with the force of the Triune God actuating the proclamation of the everlasting Gospel through the three angels of 14:6–12.

“Positive” Evidences for the Trinity

The second half of the book, like the first half, opens with a grand vision of the “Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was and who is to come” (11:17). Then is pictured the “great, fiery red dragon” who seeks to “devour” the “male Child” of the woman clothed with the sun. The “male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron” and “who was caught up to God and His throne” is clearly the Son. Now the key trinitarian question has to do with the identity of the Holy Spirit in these chapters.

While the Spirit is not expressly mentioned in chapters eleven and twelve, His presence is strongly suggested in 12:17, where God’s final people not only keep the covenant law, but also are furnished with the “testimony of Jesus Christ.” This “testimony” is plainly defined in the Revelation as the fruit of the mighty workings of the “spirit of prophecy.” Here is a clear reference to the office of the Holy Spirit as the divine power which inspires and makes effectual the work of the holy prophets (see 19:10 and 22:8, 9).

Thus the final half of John’s apocalypse is introduced against the backdrop of Trinitarian involvement in the resolution of the great controversy between the forces of the Gospel and its diabolic opposition.

The Trinitarian revelation, which has once again been introduced in chapters eleven and twelve, is further elaborated in chapter fourteen. The eschatological host (the 144,000) are pictured as triumphant on “Mount Zion” with the “Lamb” (14:1) before the “throne of God” (v. 5) as the “first fruits to God and to the Lamb” (v. 4). The balance of the chapter is filled with the story of the working of the Lamb and God the “Father” whose name is in the foreheads of the 144,000. Where, however, is the Holy Spirit in the portrayal of the great final revival of Gospel religion and proclamation?

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The presence of the Holy Spirit is both implicitly and explicitly portrayed in this chapter. First of all it must be carefully noted that the great revival of Gospel religion finds its climax in the proclamation of the three angels of vs. 6–12. The ripened characters of the 144,000 (vs. 1–5 and 12) are implicitly the fruit of the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit which “seals” them with the very character of God in their foreheads (minds) and actions (“without fault before the throne of God” [v. 5]; compare with Ephesians 4:30).

Second, the presence of the Spirit is further implicitly suggested in that the proclamation of the three angels’ messages is the event which ripens “the harvest of the earth” (v. 15). Such ripeness not only involves the wheat (the righteous), but also the grapes (the rejecters of the “everlasting Gospel”). Behind all of this imagery are the phenomena of the former and latter rains, especially the latter rain—a clear allusion to the converting and transforming work of the Holy Spirit (Joel 2).

The explicit evidence for the person of the Spirit is found in v. 13: here the “Spirit” is speaking blessings on the martyrs, comforting them so that they may now “rest from their labors.” Finally, the people of God are assured “their” heroic “works” of witness will not be lost in the sound and fury of the last great crisis, but will “follow them.”

“Negative” Evidence for the Trinity

In opposition to God, the Man Child of the woman, the comforting work of the Spirit, and God’s covenant keeping people is a powerful counterfeit trinity—the beast, the dragon, and the false prophet (16:13).

This portrayal finds its climax in chapter thirteen. Clearly the “Dragon” is a parody of God the Father. The Leopard-like beast who receives a deadly wound and comes back from the dead is surely a parody of the person and the work of the Son. The lamb-like land beast with the “dragon” nature and speech is most certainly a parody of the Holy Spirit as He seeks to exalt the Leopard-like sea beast with the deadly wound.¹⁵

Furthermore, another arresting feature of this unholy three is their relentless opposition to the covenant law of God—especially the commandments contained in the first table of the covenant code.¹⁶ The great crisis of chapters thirteen and fourteen has to do with worship, and the great principles of divine worship are contained in the first four of the ten commandments. The counterfeit trinity is all about false worship, which always denigrates the law of God—especially the first four commandments (14:6, 7 and 12).

¹⁵On the concept of parody in Revelation 12 and 13, see Robert Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 254 ff., and Beale, 690–92 and 707 ff.

¹⁶See Paulien’s penetrating portrayal of the unholy trinity’s severe and subtle opposition to the law of God, especially the commandments of the first table of the decalogue, in Section Four of his *What the Bible Says about the End-Time*.

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In notable contrast, the Holy Trinity is presented as fomenting a great true revival in chapter fourteen which eventuates in the worship of the creator God through the deep experience of the 144,000 obeying the first four commandments of the covenant code (14:12; cf. 12:17). Thus the entire eschatological crisis is a Trinitarian crisis of cosmic proportions!

So here we have both the positive and negative evidence, the implicit and explicit portrayals of the great Triune God in the eschatological center of the book. All of these scenes prepare the way for the final disposition of sin and sinners and the establishment of the everlasting covenant kingdom of the restored Israel of God.

Evidences from Chapters 21–22

In 21:1–6 there is one of the most touching scenes of the entire book. The “first earth had passed away” and “a new heaven and a new earth” had come forth with their “New Jerusalem” capital. The One “who is and who was and who is to come” (1:4 and 4:8) has now literally “come” to the earth with the New Jerusalem and is dwelling with His people.

These verses undoubtedly have reference to the Father God who is portrayed as doing the fatherly thing—wiping “away every tear from their eyes.” His very comforting presence seems to have completely banished “death,” “sorrow,” “crying,” and “pain.”

Furthermore, it is instructive to compare this scene with that found in 7:17, where the “great multitude” of the redeemed are pictured as before the throne and “the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

What is portrayed here is a telling picture of the close working relationship between the Father and the Son in bringing comfort to the redeemed after their pilgrimage through the kingdom of the Devil and sin. At the very least this is suggestive evidence for the profound “oneness” in purpose of the first two members of the Godhead.

Yet once more in 21:22, 23 is presented a vision of Their profound oneness: referring to the glorious “New Jerusalem,” the revelator “saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.” Here the oneness of the Godhead is portrayed primarily through the cultic imagery of the temple. The OT temple finds its anti-typical significance coming to culmination with the compelling suggestion that all the temple imagery ultimately points to triumphant redemption through the united efforts of the Father and the Son.

Not only are the united Father and Son displacing the temple, but They are also now envisioned as bringing to completion their full triumph over the forces of evil and sin. In the pentecostal coronation scene of chapter five, the vision climaxes with the worship of “every creature” being directed to “Him who sits on the throne (the Father) and to the Lamb” (v. 13).

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Now, however, this theme of the throne reaches its fullest consummation in 22:1–3: the throne is called, for the first time in the book, “the throne of God and of the Lamb.” Now it is explicit: the Father and the Son are full co-regents, both seated on the throne sharing all of the covenant prerogatives which had been secured through their common redemptive efforts (achieved through their vanquishing of the usurping forces of evil and restoring the covenant blessings of the redeemed).¹⁷

This vision of the co-regency of the Father and the Son is the final piece of compelling evidence for Christ’s full deity. Clearly the Son shares all of the royal prerogatives of the eternal Father on the Throne of the universe. Such royal prerogatives and shared rulership of full equality argues coercively for the full deity of the Father being shared with the Son. This is the climactic scene of the entire book and the Father and the Son are one and equal. What is said about the nature and the authority of the One can be said of the Other.

Quite obviously the enthroned Father and Son are in focus in these chapters; but is the Holy Spirit completely absent? Is the Spirit in this scene of glorious triumph? There is suggestive evidence that the Spirit is once again doing the two things in this setting which are very typical of the redemptive functions He has exercised all along:

1) He is drawing lost humanity back into covenant relationship with the Godhead, especially as He works through “the bride,” the church in its gospel mission: “And the Spirit and the bride say ‘Come!’ And let him who hears say ‘Come!’” (22:17).

2) The Spirit works, but He works as He finds currency in proceeding forth from the throne of the Father and the Son. Is it going too far to suggest that the “river of Life” which proceeds from the throne (22:1) is emblematic of the life giving power of the Spirit who bestows the grace of God on a world in desperate need of restoration?

There is both Biblical and Jewish literary evidence for identifying the “river of Life” with the Holy Spirit.¹⁸

Biblical Evidence

Just about every commentator has noted that the “river of Life” imagery of Revelation 22:1 is drawn primarily from Ezekiel 47:1–12 and Zechariah 14:8–11.

¹⁷Stefanovic suggests that until this scene in the book, there is the subordination of Christ to the Father. Now, however, with the full triumph of the Gospel of the true Trinity over the false Gospel of the counterfeit trinity, Christ is no longer subordinated to the Father (suggestions shared in personal conversations, to be published in a forthcoming commentary).

¹⁸The earliest of the major, modern commentators to take this position was H.B. Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John: The Greek Text with Introduction Notes and Indices* (London: MacMillan, 1906), 294, 295. Compare Mounce, 398.

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Ezekiel 47:1–12 records a vision of a flow of water which erupts from the portal of the temple in Jerusalem.¹⁹ Using the interpretive principle of the analogy of scripture, Keil states the case quite succinctly in arguing for a figurative interpretation of the water:

“Water,” which renders the unfruitful land fertile, and supplies refreshing drink to the thirsty, is used in Scripture as a figure denoting blessing and salvation, which had been represented even in Paradise in the form of watering (cf. Gen. xiii.10). In Isa. xii.3, “and with joy ye draw water from the wells of salvation,” the figure is expressly interpreted. And so also in Isa. xlv. 3, “I will pour water upon the thirsty one, and streams upon desert; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring:” where the blessing answers to the water, the Spirit is named as the principal form in which the blessing is manifested, “the foundation of all other salvation for the people of God” (Hengstenberg).²⁰

Furthermore, Ezekiel 36:24–27 speaks of the sprinkling of “clean water,” and this cleansing water is closely identified with the Spirit placed within the stony flesh that creates a “heart of flesh” which is in full conformity with God’s “statutes.”

The vision of the “day of the Lord” in Zechariah 14:8–11 is very similar to Ezekiel 47, with “living waters” flowing from Jerusalem. These waters flow both towards the Dead and the Mediterranean Seas and have a restorative effect on the “land” and the city of Jerusalem. The same principle of analogy that applies to Ezekiel 47 would also apply to this passage.

As for the New Testament evidence for “water” being emblematic of the Spirit, it is interesting that the most persuasive analogous references are from the Johannine literature: “water” is clearly associated with the workings of the Holy Spirit (see John 7:37–39 and compare with 3:5, 4:10–14 and I John 5:8–10). The clearest reference is John 7:37–39: “He who believes on Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’ But this He spoke concerning the Spirit” (vs. 38, 39).

If one concedes the common authorship of the Fourth Gospel and the book of Revelation, the interpretation of the “river of life” as the Holy Spirit which proceeds from the throne becomes even more appealing.

Jewish Literary Evidence

First, from the Dead Sea Scrolls we have the following in 1 QS 4:21:

He will cleanse him of all wicked deeds with the spirit of holiness; like purifying waters He will shed upon him the spirit of truth (to cleanse him) of all abominations and injustice. And he

¹⁹Compare with Joel 3:18: “a spring will go out from the house of the LORD”

²⁰Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentaries on the Old Testament: Ezekiel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952), 2:360.

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shall be plunged into the spirit of purification, that he may instruct the upright in the knowledge of the Most High.²¹

Furthermore, in *Peskita Rabbati* 1, 2, “water from the earthly temple is interpreted as the Holy Spirit . . . Likewise, *Odes Sol.* 6:7-18 portrays a ‘river’ and ‘living water’ that quench the thirst of the people and that are directly associated with the ‘Holy Spirit’.”²²

While the evidence for the interpretation that the “river of Life” pictured in Rev. 22:1, 2 has reference to the Holy Spirit is not coercive, it must be emphasized that this scene is fully congruent with the Trinitarian claims of the church and the thrust of Scripture that the Spirit gladly comes in redemptive procession from the Father and the Son.²³

Conclusion

The evidence for the oneness and the equality of the Father and the Son and the close association of the Spirit with them is quite compelling and strongly suggests that one of the great permeating themes of the Apocalypse is the Triune nature of the Godhead. Certainly the evidence for the divine unity of the Three and the full deity of Christ is more compelling than that given for the Personhood and full deity of the Holy Spirit. But the close association of the Spirit with the Father and the Son in these four major settings (chapters 1—3, 4 and 5, 11—14 and 21 and 22) and the trappings of personhood ascribed to the Spirit (speaking and intelligent, personal eyes) provide credible evidence of the Spirit’s full deity and personality.

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²¹Trans. by Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (New York: Allen Lau/Penguin, 1997), 103. Compare this citation with the following from 1 QSB 1.3–4: “(3) May Adonai bless thee [from his holy dwelling-place]. May He open for thee from the heights of heaven the everlasting spring (4) which shall never run dry.” (Also translated by Vermes, cited in A. Dupont-Sommer, *The Essene Writings from Qumran* [Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1973], 110).

²²Beale, 1105.

²³Beale seems to be somewhat attracted to this interpretation, and his conclusions are appealing: “If the waters symbolize the Spirit, as in the similar portrayal in John 7:37-39, then Rev. 22:1 is an early picture of the later Christian confession that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son . . . As in Ezekiel 47, the living water flows from the temple, though now God and the Lamb are the temple (21:22). Though the Holy Spirit may be in mind, the water metaphor primarily represents the life of eternal fellowship with God and Christ, which is borne out by the way 22:3-5 develops 22:1, 2” (1104).

Ten Keys for Interpreting the Book of Revelation

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The book of Revelation is at once one of the most important books of the Bible for many Christians, yet one of the most difficult books to understand. It holds a unique place in biblical interpretation. We need some keys to unlock its special apocalyptic message. This paper focuses on ten keys which should aid the interpreter of Revelation in coming to terms with its unique nature. The ten keys we will discuss are (1) the genre of the book; (2) the purpose of the book; (3) the structure of the book; (4) the roots of Revelation in Old Testament (OT) theology and prophecy; (5) the essential unity of the book; (6) the ethical dualism of the book, especially in the Great Controversy theme; (7) the important theological themes; (8) the book's sanctuary emphasis; (9) the distinctions between the symbolic and the literal, with particular attention to numerology; and (10) the message of Christ, as opposed to a schematization of history.

The Genre of Revelation

Revelation claims to be a prophecy. In the prologue of the book, a blessing is pronounced upon the one who reads, hears, and takes to heart the words of "this prophecy" (1:3). Again, in the epilogue, we find a similar saying, pronounced by Jesus Himself: "Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy in this book" (22:7).¹ An angel tells John in 22:10, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book." This same angel apparently regards John as among the prophets, because he speaks in v. 9 of "your brothers the prophets." Revelation is called a prophecy twice more in 22:18-19.

¹All Scripture quotations in this paper are from the New International Version unless otherwise noted.

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To say Revelation is a prophecy, however, is to tell only part of the story. Revelation is a very special kind of prophecy. Not only is it the only book of the New Testament (NT) that deals almost exclusively with the future, but it is also the most thoroughgoing example of biblical apocalyptic prophecy. It is the book from which the genre apocalypse takes its name. Though it was not the first apocalyptic work, it is the most characteristic and well known of all apocalyptic works. The very first word of the book is *apokalypsis*, meaning an unveiling, uncovering, or revealing of something previously hidden. From this word we get the name Revelation. Many things that were previously hidden regarding the future are now revealed in this book.

Revelation also has elements of an epistle. Following the preamble in 1:1-3, there is a typical epistolary introduction in vs. 4-5, following a style similar to that of the Pauline epistles. First, the name of the writer is given, followed by the identification of the addressees. Finally, there is a salutation, wishing grace and peace to the recipients from the triune Deity. In the subsequent vision of 1:9-3:22, seven letters are dictated by the glorified Christ to John, to be sent to the seven churches named in 1:11. Each of these letters, in turn, follows a slightly modified epistolary form in which the recipients are named before the author identifies Himself. Instead of a salutation at the beginning, Jesus moves directly to the point: "I know your deeds," but ends with an individual appeal and promise to each church. The book itself also ends with an epistolary close composed of appeals and promises and a final benediction: "The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen."

The genre of Revelation, complex as it may be, nevertheless offers us some keys for its interpretation in harmony with the function of each aspect of the genre. As a prophecy, we can expect it to speak to us prophetically, bringing a message direct from God, not from man. This is the substance of the first three verses of the book, assuring us that the message is from God, sent via His own appointed channels of revelation, and that there is a blessing in properly receiving it. John designates it as "the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ" (v. 2), signifying that it carries the twofold witness that ensures its authority and veracity. We cannot afford to neglect it. Many today prefer not to consider its claims to prophetic authenticity as valid. Yet it has stood the test of time, and we ignore its claims to our own detriment. We will never be able to correctly interpret the book if we begin by denying the claims it makes to speak prophetically.

Secondly, the nature of its prophetic character is explicitly oriented toward the future. Since we will consider this aspect later, when considering the purpose of the book, I will not elaborate here, but the book claims to reveal the future. It represents that aspect of prophecy that looks into the future and reveals things to come. If Revelation is not accepted as actually foretelling the future, one will see only a feeble attempt at *post eventum* prophecy, which makes it a

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book of history that has little relevance for later generations. This is the approach of the preterist school of interpretation.²

Thirdly, as apocalyptic prophecy, we need to recognize that Revelation differs in a number of significant ways from classical prophecy. Its primary purpose is not to deal with local, contemporary issues, but with the sovereignty of God in history and His broad, salvation-historical plan for the redemption of His covenant people and final judgment on their enemies. Apocalyptic is known for its cosmic sweep and eschatological emphasis, among other things.³ This means we should not look for a narrow, local fulfillment of its visions, but should see the broad outlines of history from the time of John until the return of Christ to render judgment on sin and sinners, gather His covenant people, and establish His eternal kingdom. All history is moving toward this end and should be seen from this perspective. The great controversy between Christ and Satan is a major theme of Revelation, and there is a striking ethical dualism apparent that we will discuss later in greater detail. The symbolism is extensive and composite, challenging us to understand it at a figurative level, but one consistent with established biblical criteria and practice.

The epistolary aspects of the genre remind us that, as with the other NT epistles, there is both a theological and a parenetic purpose to the book. The theological elements serve as a foundation for the parenetic elements. The appeal is very personal.

The Purpose of Revelation

The book of Revelation has both an explicit and an implicit purpose. The explicit purpose is clearly stated in the very first verse of the book: “The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place.” According to this verse, God gave to Jesus a revelation to pass along to His servants, for the purpose of showing them what must soon take place. This explicit purpose makes plain the future orientation of the contents of the prophecy of this book. At the same time, it conveys a sense of the immi-

²An example of this way of thinking is found in J. Christian Wilson, “The Problem of the Domitianic Date of Revelation,” *New Testament Studies* 39 (1993): 602: “How do you tell a genuine prophecy from a *vaticinium ex eventu*? Answer: *Vaticinia ex eventu* always come true.” Again, he writes, “*Vaticinia ex eventu* always come true. Genuine prophecies usually do not” (ibid., 603). In a strange twist of logic, he argues that John was a true prophet who was wrong about his predictions regarding Nero in 11:1-2 (as he assumes), so his prophecies must have been written before the actual events or they would not have been proven wrong (ibid., 603-4).

³For a fuller description of the characteristics of apocalyptic, see, for example, Kenneth A. Strand, *Interpreting the Book of Revelation: Hermeneutical Guidelines, with Brief Introductions to Literary Analysis*, 2d ed. (Naples, FL: Ann Arbor Publishers, 1979), 18-20; idem, “Foundational Principles of Interpretation,” in *Symposium on Revelation—Book 1: Introductory and Exegetical Studies (Sympos. 1)*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1992), 6:12-27.

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nence of the coming events, for it states that these events “must soon take place.” Verse three adds that those who read or hear and take to heart the words of this prophecy are blessed, “because the time is near.” This clause, “the time is near,” is expressed again in 22:10.

In 4:1, at the beginning of the section of the book often considered historical in focus, John is invited by Christ, “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.” Again we see the future as a key aspect of the prophecies of the book. The sense of imminence is also conveyed explicitly at different points in the book (3:11, 20; 6:17; 10:6; 11:15, 17-18; 12:10, 12; 14:7, 14-16; 16:15; 19:1-9), keeping expectation alive in the minds of the readers and hearers. At the end of the book, the recipients are told three times by Jesus Himself, “I am coming soon!” (22:7, 12, 20).

Besides this explicit purpose of revealing the future as imminent expectation, there seems to be an implicit purpose that coincides. This is found in the repeated calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the readers and hearers. Apocalyptic prophecy is given to meet the needs of those who are facing adversity. The precise nature of the adversity faced by the readers of Revelation has been debated by scholars, but there is little question that the book seems to have been written especially for those facing difficult times, including persecution. Jesus appeals to believers to hold fast till He comes, even unto death, so they will not lose their crown of life (2:10, 25; 3:11). There are further calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints who face the persecuting Beast in 13:10 and 14:12. Many promises are made to the ones who overcome, despite the obstacles, by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony (2:7, 11, 17, 26-28; 3:5, 12, 21; 12:11; 21:7). This suggests the parenetic purpose of the book, to encourage those facing trials and persecutions to be faithful until the end, in light of God’s sovereignty, the victory of the Lamb, and the promises of coming vindication and reward for the saints and judgment on their enemies.

The Structure of Revelation

There is very little scholarly consensus on the overall structure of Revelation.⁴ Nevertheless, there are a few key structural elements that most will agree upon, and these are important for any careful study of the book.

Probably the most important structural element is the division of the book into two main parts, one emphasizing primarily salvation-historical events and the other emphasizing primarily eschatological events. Most scholars divide the book between chapters 11 and 12, the point which H. B. Swete calls a “great

⁴Adela Yarbro Collins, *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation*, Harvard Dissertations in Religion, no. 9 (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1976), 8; Donald Guthrie, *The Relevance of John’s Apocalypse* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987; Exeter, U.K.: Paternoster, 1987), 20.

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cleavage” in the book of Revelation.⁵ However, a number of Seventh-day Adventist scholars follow Kenneth Strand’s chiastic structure, which places the division between chapters 14 and 15.⁶ Roy Naden’s recent commentary proposes a chiasm which divides the book between 12:10 and 12:11.⁷ In reality, chaps. 12-14 constitute a unit which contains a mix of both historical and eschatological events, making it difficult to assign it exclusively to either section. Chapters 12-14 could be called the Great Controversy vision, a vision that points all the way backward to the beginning of rebellion in heaven and points forward to the glorified redeemed standing victorious with the Lamb on Mt. Zion. In any case, chaps. 1-11 fall in the historical section of the book and chaps. 15-22 fall in the eschatological section of the book. The contents of these sections must be interpreted accordingly. The visions of chaps. 1-11 deal primarily with events that would occur between John’s day and the parousia, while the visions of chaps. 15-22 deal primarily with events that take place at the eschaton and beyond. Since the historical visions generally cover events up to the eschaton, obviously there will be eschatological events found at the end of those visions, in particular, 6:14-8:1 and 11:15-19. It is hazardous for the interpreter to stray from this structural guideline.

A second important structural element is the explicit use of septenaries throughout the book. There are four: seven letters, seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven bowls.⁸ Some authors have attempted to structure the whole book according to septenaries,⁹ but this may be going beyond what is self-evident,

⁵Henry Barclay Swete, *The Apocalypse of St John: The Greek Text with Introduction Notes and Indices*, [3d ed.] ([New York]: Macmillan, [1909]; repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, [1951]), xxxix; see also David L. Barr, “The Apocalypse as a Symbolic Transformation of the World: A Literary Analysis,” *Interpretation* 38 (1984): 44-45; Adela Yarbro Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984), 111-12; Martin Hopkins, “The Historical Perspective of Apocalypse 1-11,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 27 (1965): 43; J. Ramsey Michaels, *Interpreting the Book of Revelation*, Guides to New Testament Exegesis (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 62.

⁶Kenneth A Strand, “The Eight Basic Visions in the Book of Revelation,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies (AUSS)* 25 (1987): 107-21; C. Mervyn Maxwell, *God Cares*, Vol. 2, *The Message of Revelation for You and Your Family* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1985), 55-62; “Issues in Revelation: DARCOM Report,” in *Sympos. 1*, 177.

⁷Roy C. Naden, *The Lamb among the Beasts* (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 1996), 20-21. Cf. Hans K. LaRondelle, *How to Understand the End-Time Prophecies of the Bible* (Sarasota, FL: First Impressions, 1997), 105.

⁸Since the seven thunders are not elaborated, they do not constitute a structural septenary.

⁹Austin Farrer, *A Rebirth of Images: The Making of St John’s Apocalypse* (London: Dacre [A. & C. Black], 1949; repr., Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1970), 36; John Wick Bowman, “The Revelation to John: Its Dramatic Structure and Message,” *Interpretation* 9 (1955): 440-47; R. J. Loenertz, *The Apocalypse of Saint John*, trans. Hilary J. Carpenter (London: Sheed & Ward, 1947), xiii-xviii; Ernst Lohmeyer, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes*, Handbuch zum Neuen Testament, vol. 16 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1926), 1-2, 181-82.

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although evidence for some other septenaries has been frequently adduced.¹⁰ The explicit septenaries form literary units which should be held together. Each of these literary units has an introduction which, except the first, reveals events taking place in the heavenly sanctuary while the events of the respective septenaries are taking place on earth.¹¹ These introductions cover the whole period represented by the respective septenary, not just its beginning.¹² Taken together with their introductions, these explicit septenaries cover most of the book of Revelation, leaving only the prologue, chaps. 12-14, chaps. 17-22, and the epilogue unaccounted for. If chaps. 12-14 constitute a unit, as noted above, then only chaps. 17-22 remain to be structured. Various proposals have been made, none of which is decisive. We cannot solve the problem within the limits of this brief discussion, but we can know that they are eschatological and deal with the judgment on God's enemies and the final reward of the saints.

Other important structural features include the prologue and epilogue, which include an epistolary introduction and conclusion and manifest remarkable similarities; recurring parallel themes and symbols which tie the book together as a unit (to be discussed later); possible chiasms;¹³ and recapitulation of the historical visions, each covering the period from John's day to the parousia, in different ways, for different purposes.

The Relation of Revelation to the Old Testament

No other book of the NT draws on the Old Testament (OT) as heavily as does the book of Revelation. It is steeped in OT theology and prophecy. Unless one understands and appreciates this fact, one cannot fully grasp the meaning of the book. John is heavily indebted to the OT for much of the theology, vocabu-

¹⁰Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, while seeing septenaries as a compositional technique that is decisive for the structuring of the book, and at the same time outlining the book in a seven-part "concentric" pattern, criticizes those who reconstruct the book into seven series of sevens for "their failure to explain why the author clearly marked four series of seven but did not mark the others, even though the existing septets prove that he was quite capable of doing so." Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Book of Revelation: Justice and Judgment* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 167, 174-75. See also Martin Kiddle, assisted by M. K. Ross, *The Revelation of St. John*, Moffatt New Testament Commentary (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1940), xxxii.

¹¹Kenneth Strand identifies introductions to each of the eight basic visions he finds in the book. Strand, 112-18; idem, "The 'Victorious-Introduction' Scenes in the Visions in the Book of Revelation," *AUSS* 25 (1987): 267-88.

¹²Jon Paulien, "Seals and Trumpets: Some Current Discussions," in *Sympos.* 1, 194-95.

¹³This is a controversial area, since chiasms are often forced on the text rather than found to be natural and self-evident in the structure. Literary parallels are sometimes turned into chiasms. For chiasmic studies in Revelation, see Strand, "Eight Basic Visions," 107-21; idem, "Chiastic Structure and Some Motifs in the Book of Revelation," *AUSS* 16 (1978): 401-8; idem, "Two Aspects of Babylon's Judgment Portrayed in Revelation 18," *AUSS* 20 (1982): 53-58; William H. Shea, "Chiasm in Theme and by Form in Revelation 18," *AUSS* 20 (1982): 249-56; idem, "Revelation 5 and 9 As Literary Reciprocals," *AUSS* 22 (1984): 249-57; idem, "The Parallel Literary Structure of Revelation 12 and 20," *AUSS* 23 (1985): 37-54.

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lary, and symbolism of Revelation, although it is always Christologically informed. This is not to suggest that John did not receive his messages in visions, as he claims, but rather to accept the reality that John saw things remarkably similar to those shown to the OT prophets and found it convenient to describe what he had seen by utilizing the language and thought forms of the OT, which were familiar to him and were brought forcibly back to his mind by his own visions. The extent of this indebtedness has been shown well in the recent work by Hans K. LaRondelle, *How to Understand the End-Time Prophecies of the Bible*.¹⁴

John's prophecies are rooted in the OT prophecies, particularly those of the major and apocalyptic prophets. John's theology and salvation-historical perspective are a Christological and ecclesiological extension of that of the OT prophets. To attempt to understand Revelation without a thorough recognition of the OT roots to which John's prophecies continually allude is to program oneself for failure. Revelation cannot be understood apart from its constant allusive reference to the OT. Yet even here one must exercise caution, for John does not merely *transfer* OT concepts to Revelation; he *transforms* them for his own purposes.

Interestingly, there are no direct quotations, or even citations, of the OT in Revelation, only backgrounds to which John seems to point by indirect reference, or allusion. These allusive OT backgrounds can be evaluated fairly objectively following a methodology established by Jon Paulien. He has suggested ways of evaluating the level of certainty with which texts may be deemed to function as allusive backgrounds for understanding the contents of the book of Revelation, based on verbal, thematic, and structural parallels between them.¹⁵ By using such objective tools and methods, we are able to make safer interpretations than with more subjective reference to OT texts as backgrounds to the book.

The Unity of Revelation

In the early twentieth century there were a few proposals for source-critical theories regarding the origin of the book of Revelation that disputed its unity.¹⁶ This is no longer the case. Most scholars today agree on the unity of the

¹⁴Hans K. LaRondelle, *How to Understand the End-Time Prophecies of the Bible* (Sarasota, FL: First Impressions, 1997).

¹⁵Jon Paulien, *Decoding Revelation's Trumpets: Literary Allusions and Interpretations of Revelation 8:7-12*, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series, vol. 11 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1988), 165-94; idem, "Interpreting Revelation's Symbolism," *Sympos. 1*, 83-92.

¹⁶Perhaps the best known of these was that of R. H. Charles, put forward in his commentary, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John*, 2 vols., International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1920), 1:lxv. Such theories were reviewed and rebutted by Isbon T. Beckwith, *The Apocalypse of John: Studies in Introduction with a Critical and Exegetical Commentary* ([New York]: Macmillan, 1919; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1967), 216-39.

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book.¹⁷ The complexity of the structure, interconnected as it is, is one of the compelling arguments for its unity. David Aune writes:

The Apocalypse of John is structurally more complex than any other Jewish or Christian apocalypse, and has yet to be satisfactorily analyzed. Like other apocalypses, it is constructed of a sequence of episodes marked by various literary markers such as the repetition of formulaic phrases (“I saw,” “I heard,” etc.), and by such literary devices as ring composition, intercalations (though never interrupting narrative sequence), the technique of interlocking (the use of transitional texts that conclude one section and introduce another), and various structuring techniques (the use of septets and digressions).¹⁸

One portion of the book of Revelation is frequently interpretable by recourse to another, simply by cross-referencing the imagery or language. For example, the mention of the Beast that comes up from the abyss in 11:7 and the mention of the great city which is spiritually called Sodom and Egypt in v. 8 may seem somewhat obscure in that context until one compares the language with chap. 17, where the great city and the Beast that comes up from the abyss are more fully described and explained. Many similar examples exist throughout the book.¹⁹ Thus, the unity of Revelation permits the book to interpret itself in many areas, supplemented, of course, by OT allusive backgrounds, guided by verbal, thematic, and structural parallels to various OT texts and contexts.

The Ethical Dualism of Revelation

One of the prominent characteristics of Johannine literature is its ethical dualism. This is no less characteristic of Revelation than it is of John’s Gospel or his Epistles. Ethical dualism refers to the clear and essential contrast between good and evil, no matter in what ways it is manifest or characterized. This dualism is especially manifest in Revelation in the Great Controversy motif, which

¹⁷Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, “Revelation,” in *The New Testament and Its Modern Interpreters*, ed. Eldon J. Epp and George W. McRae, The Bible and Its Modern Interpreters (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989; Atlanta: Scholars, 1989), 411; Leonard L. Thompson, *The Book of Revelation: Apocalypse and Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 37-52.

¹⁸David E. Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment*, Library of Early Christianity, vol. 8 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987), 241.

¹⁹For other examples of internal parallels that aid interpretation, cf. 1:1 and 22:6, 10; 1:3 and 22:7, 12, 20; 1:8 and 4:8, with 21:5-6 and 22:13; 1:14-15 and 2:18; 1:16, with 2:16 and 19:15, 21; 1:17-18 and 22:13; 2:7 and 22:2; 2:11 with 20:14 and 21:8; 2:28 and 22:16; 3:3 and 16:15; 3:4-5 and 7:9, 13-14, with 19:8; 3:12 and 21:2, 10; 4:1 and 1:10; 5:5 and 22:16; 5:10 and 20:4, 6; 6:10 and 19:2; 6:17 and 7:9; 7:3-4 with 14:1 and 22:4; 7:17 with 21:4, 6 and 22:1, 17; 8:1 with 17:12 and 18:8, 10, 17, 19; 9:1, 11 with 12:4, 9 and 20:1-3; 9:14 with 16:12 and 17:1, 15; 10:1 and 1:13-16; 11:1-2 and 21:15-17; 11:2-3, with 12:6, 14 and 13:5; 11:16-17 and 19:6; 11:19 and 15:5; 12:3 with 13:1 and 17:3, 9-10, 12; 12:9 and 20:2-3; 12:15 and 17:15; 12:17 with 19:10 and 22:9; 14:8 and 18:2-3; 14:9 with 13:15-17 and 20:4; 14:12 and 12:17; 14:19-20 and 19:15; 16:6 with 17:6 and 18:24; 16:13 with 19:20 and 13:14; 17:1-5 and 21:9-11; 17:14 and 19:16; 19:9 and 21:9.

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is centered in chap. 12. It begins with the war in heaven between Michael and the Dragon, and continues in the struggle on earth between the Dragon-Beast, including his heads and horns (earthly civil powers which accomplish his purposes), and the pure Woman and her offspring, first the Male Child (the messianic Lamb Himself), then the rest of her offspring. The pure Woman is also shown in contrast to a great Harlot, a religio-political power which reigns over the kings of the earth and is held responsible for the blood of all the saints and prophets. The symbol of the pure Woman, in the eschatological age, is transformed into the Bride of the Lamb by whose blood her children have overcome the Dragon. The two women are also depicted as two cities in Revelation: the Harlot is the great city variously characterized as Sodom, Egypt, and Babylon, while the Bride is the Holy City, the new Jerusalem.²⁰ The Dragon, the Beast (from the sea), and the False Prophet (the Beast from the earth) seem to form a triumvirate on earth (16:13) that constitutes a counterpart of the heavenly Trinity (1:4-5).

This ethical dualism is far-reaching in Revelation. There is little room for any middle ground in the book. Most things belong to either one camp or the other. Any rational being, at least, cannot be neutral. One may be temporarily identified with the wrong camp (e.g., 2:2, 9, 13, 20; 3:9; 18:4), but one belongs innately to one or the other. The reader or hearer of the book is enabled to quickly identify which side is the right one to be on and what decisions need to be made to place oneself on that side. Once the two sides are clearly identified, it remains for the reader or hearer to choose which side he or she will be identified with and to be faithful to that decision until the end.

Important Theological Themes in Revelation

The book of Revelation is primarily concerned with a few theological issues. One important issue is the sovereignty of God. Another is the question of the justice of God. A third important issue is the process of salvation. A fourth is the role of Christ in salvation history. A fifth issue is the role of the church in God's salvific plan. A sixth is the role of revelation and prophecy in communicating what is essential for salvation. A seventh issue is the role of personal decision in preparation for the judgment. These issues are closely intertwined in the book.

One cannot truly understand the issue of God's justice independently of His sovereignty. He is sovereign because He is Creator of all things (4:11). He is before all else, greater and more powerful than all else, wiser than all else, and holier than all else (1:8; 4:8; 6:10; 15:3-4). No one can question the infinite wisdom of His judgments, because He sees the end from the beginning and judges righteously. When He has completed His judgments, He is declared just

²⁰For an in-depth study of these contrasting symbols, see Edwin Earl Reynolds, "The Sodom/Egypt/Babylon Motif in the Book of Revelation," Ph.D. diss., Andrews University, 1994; Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1995).

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and true in light of the equity with which He judges (16:5-7; 19:1-4). Then He sets up His eternal kingdom, free from all unrighteousness.

Another reason for the proclamation of His justice, or righteousness, is that He has provided salvation as a free gift to the believer through the blood of Christ, the Lamb (5:8-14; 7:10; 12:10-11). The process of salvation is described at several points in the book, beginning in 1:5-6. It is clear that it centers around the figure of the Lamb, making it Christologically oriented. The Christology of Revelation is extensive, particularly in the variety of titles and functions given to Christ in the book. Besides His function as sacrificial Lamb, Christ also functions variously as the promised Seed of the Woman (12:4-5), as Lord of the Church (1:10-3:22), as Intercessor in the heavenly sanctuary and the One who effects the covenant (5:6-11:19), as Judge of the nations (6:16-17; 14:10; 19:11-15), eventually as returning Son of Man (14:14-16; 22:7, 12, 20) and conquering King of kings and Lord of lords (17:14; 19:16), and finally, as Shepherd of His redeemed people (7:17) and the One who shares with God the worship of the redeemed hosts on the throne of the universe (22:3), among other things.

The people of God, or the Church, also plays a significant role in salvation history. This becomes evident from the very beginning, where the glorified Son of Man is revealed to John as walking in the midst of seven golden candlesticks, which represent the churches, and as holding in His right hand seven stars, which represent the angels, or spiritual leaders, of the churches. The messages which Christ delivers to the churches make their role abundantly clear. The churches, and the spiritual leaders of the churches, are the designated recipients of the message of Christ to His people. It is within the churches that Christ and His Spirit work for the salvation of His elect. That the whole book is addressed to God's people in the context of the church becomes self-evident in 1:4 and 22:16. The pure Woman at the heart of the book represents the corporate people of God in both the old and new dispensations. She is Christ's beloved, who is transformed into the Bride of Christ, represented by the holy city, New Jerusalem, in Rev 19-22.²¹ The Church militant becomes finally the Church triumphant.

The whole book is designated a revelation and a book of prophecy, as well as the word of God and the testimony of Jesus (1:1-3). This is not merely a designation of genre, but a theological assertion regarding the essential connection between communication of objective truth from God and the process of salvation. The expression, "the word of God and the testimony of Jesus," which reappears throughout the book, is rooted in the legal concept of the two-fold witness as essential for establishing truth.²² This is made more graphic in the case of God's Two Witnesses in chap. 11, who prophesy for 1260 prophetic

²¹See LaRondelle, 275, 499.

²²See 1:9; 6:9; 20:4; cf. Deut 17:6; 19:15; Matt 18:16; John 8:16-18; 2 Cor 13:1; 1 Tim 5:19; Heb 10:28.

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days and are martyred for their witness in the Great City. The Two Witnesses represent the word of God and the testimony of Jesus, or the witness of the prophets, Jesus, and the apostles in the Old and New Testaments.²³ All revelation is in harmony. Jesus Himself initiates the prophetic witness to the churches in Revelation. And He is called the Faithful and True Witness (3:14; cf. 1:5; 3:7; 19:11), as well as the Word of God (19:13). The revelation itself is in fact the revelation of Jesus Christ (1:1).²⁴ At the same time, Christ speaks to His churches by His Spirit (2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22), and 5:6 shows the intimate relation that exists between Christ and the Spirit, so that it would be a mistake to overlook the important role of the Holy Spirit in the prophetic revelation of God to His people.²⁵ The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy (19:10).

As the readers and hearers of the book respond to the prophetic witness calling them to salvation and to steadfast faithfulness, they become prepared for the coming judgment. Everything in Revelation is to be understood in light of this impending judgment. The sense of imminence and urgency is everywhere communicated, from the very first verses (1:2-3) to the very last verses (22:6, 7, 10, 12, 20). Appeals to respond are also found repeatedly in the book, from 1:3 to 22:17.²⁶ Blessings and promises are offered as incentives to accept the messages of the book and prepare for an eternal dwelling with God in a recreated heaven and earth, where sin, pain, sorrow, and death are no more. The path may be strewn with hardships, suffering, even death, but the one who overcomes and endures to the end will receive the crown of life. This inheritance is worth every sacrifice. The redeemed will dwell with God and He with them.

The Sanctuary in Revelation

Another of the important keys to understanding the book of Revelation is a realization of the extent to which the sanctuary functions as a framework for the work of Christ in our salvation.²⁷ It does this on several levels. On one level, John repeatedly mentions the temple²⁸ (3:12; 7:15; 11:1,19; 14:15,17; 15:5, 6,

²³See Kenneth A. Strand, "The Two Witnesses of Rev 11:3-12," *AUSS* 19 (1981):131-35.

²⁴The genitive here could be either subjective or objective, making Christ either the Revealer or the Revealed, though the context more clearly suggests the former.

²⁵See 1:4, 10; 4:2, 5; 17:3; 19:10; 21:10; 22:17. See also Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, New Testament Theology (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993), 109-25.

²⁶For example, 2:5, 10, 16, 22, 25; 3:3, 11, 18-20; 13:9-10, 18; 14:6-12; 16:15; 18:4; 22:7.

²⁷For recent discussions of this, see Richard M. Davidson, "Sanctuary Typology," in *Sympos. I*, 99-130; Clifford Goldstein, *Between the Lamb and the Lion: A New View of Jesus in the Book of Revelation, from the Cross to His Coming* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1995); Paulien, "Seals and Trumpets," 187-92; Jan Paulsen, "Sanctuary and Judgment," in *Symposium on Revelation—Book 2: Exegetical and General Studies*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1992), 7:275-94; Strand, "'Victorious Introduction' Scenes," 269-88.

²⁸That he identifies the heavenly temple with the archetypal sanctuary becomes obvious in 15:5, where he calls it "the tabernacle of the Testimony," the same name used in Exod 38:21 and

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8; 16:1, 17; 21:22), as well as various articles of sanctuary furnishings, like seven lamps burning before the throne (4:5), golden bowls full of incense (5:8) and golden censers full of incense (8:3-5), unidentified altars²⁹ (6:9; 11:1; 16:7), the golden altar before the throne (8:3, 5; 9:13), and the ark of the covenant (11:19). There are also individuals who are designated as priests (1:6; 5:10; 20:6), and some who seem to be dressed and function like priests (4:4; 5:8; 7:13-15; 8:2-6; 14:18; 15:6-7). On a second level, John refers to the performance of some of the sanctuary rituals (5:6, 9; 8:3-6).³⁰ The repeated reference to the Lamb and the blood of the Lamb is itself explicit sanctuary imagery. On a third level, careful research has shown that the book of Revelation seems to follow the cycle of annual feasts associated with the Hebrew cultus.³¹

The extent of these references and the interconnections between them make it unreasonable to consider interpreting the book apart from the centrality of the sanctuary theme, particularly the work of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary from the Cross to the Second Coming. Much more attention needs to be given to this aspect of the theology of the book than has generally been done.

Symbolism and Numerology in Revelation

The book of Revelation is replete with symbolism and numerology. Extensive symbolism is one of the characteristics of apocalyptic. Numerology is also frequently used in apocalyptic, because numbers may have symbolic value. The symbolic value of a number does not necessarily mean it has no literal value. Some numbers are purely symbolic, while others seem to have a literal value, though perhaps also carrying some symbolic value. The key is to know when something is to be taken literally and when it is to be taken symbolically. This is no easy task.

Richard M. Davidson has suggested what may be a valuable insight into solving this problem in the book of Revelation, at least with reference to sanctuary imagery, which comprises a significant part of the book. It has to do with the eschatological substructure of New Testament topology. He notes that

in the time of the church the *earthly* antitypes in the spiritual kingdom of grace find a *spiritual* (nonliteral), partial (nonfinal),

Num 1:50, 53, for example, for the wilderness sanctuary which was modeled after the heavenly archetype (Exod 25:8-9; Heb 8:5; 9:11-12). That it contains the ark of the covenant is a further evidence (11:19).

²⁹Paulien argues that the altar in 6:9 is the altar of burnt offerings (*Decoding*, 315-18). The altars in 11:1 and 16:7 probably both refer to the golden altar of incense before the throne.

³⁰I have included here only the most explicit references. For an excellent discussion of many other more inferential references to sanctuary rituals, see Davidson, 112-19, and Paulien, "Seals and Trumpets," 187-90.

³¹See Davidson, 119-26; M. D. Goulder, "The Apocalypse as an Annual Cycle of Prophecies," *New Testament Studies* 27 (1981): 342-67; Paulien, "Seals and Trumpets," 190-92; William H. Shea, "The Cultic Calendar for the Introductory Sanctuary Scenes of Revelation" (in this issue of *JATS*).

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and universal (nongeographical/ethnic) fulfillment, since they are spiritually (but not literally) related to Christ in the heavenlies. Thus, we should expect that when sanctuary/temple imagery in Revelation is applied to an *earthly* setting in the time of the church, there will be a *spiritual* and not literal interpretation, since the temple is a spiritual one here on earth.³²

Conversely, he observes that

during the time of the church, the earthly spiritual kingdom is overarched by the literal rule of Christ in the heavenlies. Consistent with this NT perspective, the sanctuary topology of Revelation, when focused upon the *heavenly sanctuary*, partakes of the same modality as the presence of Christ, that is, a literal antitypical fulfillment.³³

If this hermeneutic is consistently followed, many problems seem to be resolved in trying to decide what should be taken literally and what symbolically. Nonetheless, numbers still may have symbolic value, even in heavenly scenes that would be otherwise literally interpreted according to the above hermeneutic.³⁴ To determine what various numbers stand for requires careful cross-referencing of Scripture. The recent commentary by Roy Naden proposes to unlock the meaning of the numbers of Revelation. He begins by assigning meaning to the numbers 3, 4, 7, 10, and 12,³⁵ then proceeds to assign symbolic value to virtually every number in the book. He carries it too far, without a consistent method or a biblical precedent for much of it. This is very risky. Traditionally, three has often been considered the number of God, or unity, while four has been considered the number of earth, or creation, but this is largely without biblical precedent. The numbers three and four have no clear symbolic meaning in Scripture, though some would suggest that symbolic meanings may be inferred from the emphasis given in various texts.³⁶ John Davis argues that

³²Davidson, 109.

³³Ibid., 110.

³⁴The 144,000 in 7:4 and 14:1, 3, for example, are found in heaven in a temple setting, which should suggest a literal fulfillment, but the number is still to be taken symbolically. In chap. 7, John first hears a symbolic number, describing people on earth from twelve symbolic tribes of Israel, sealed with a symbolic seal in their foreheads. But when he looks, he sees a numberless multitude from every nation, tribe, people, and language standing before the throne and the Lamb. The group in chap. 14 is the same group. It represents the countless hosts of the redeemed. For the 144,000 and the Great Multitude as the same group, see Beatrice S. Neall, "Sealed Saints and the Tribulation," in *Sympos. 1*, 267-72.

³⁵Naden, 39-44. To these five numbers he assigns the following meanings: "3, unity; 4, universality; 7, rest; 10, completeness; and 12, the kingdom." Ibid., 44. I would not agree on all of these, especially on seven as rest. Seven everywhere stands for completeness or perfection in Scripture. See, e.g., Gen 4:24; 33:3; Lev 23:15; 25:8; Num 23:1; Deut 7:1; 28:7; Josh 6:4; Judg 16:7; Ruth 4:15; 1 Kgs 18:43; 2 Kgs 5:10; 2 Chr 29:21; Job 5:19; Ps 12:6; 79:12; 119:64; Prov 26:25; Isa 4:1; 30:26; Ezek 39:14; Dan 3:19; Matt 18:21-22; Mark 16:9; Luke 17:4; Acts 6:3.

³⁶John J. Davis, *Biblical Numerology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1968), 122.

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seven is the only number that can be clearly shown to have a symbolic use in Scripture.³⁷ Seven, the sum of three plus four,³⁸ represents completeness or perfection throughout Scripture,³⁹ and is the most important number in Revelation. Ten is a number used primarily as a factor in multiplication, to create large round numbers. It appears as a unit in Revelation only in the ten horns, with respect to which the number may have more literal than symbolic value. If it has any symbolic value, it is probably as a whole or round number, representing a basic mathematical unit of general nature. Twelve, incidentally the product of three and four, is widely understood to be the kingdom number, though this is inferential only, used as it is for the people of God who make up the kingdom, represented by the twelve tribes in the time of Israel and the twelve apostles in the time of the church.⁴⁰ The numbers one thousand, ten thousand, and multiples thereof are generally used in Revelation to signify very large numbers, not exact figures.

The primary basis for interpreting either symbolism or numerology in Revelation is from within Scripture. Doing a concordance study is very useful, but one should focus particularly on those passages in which the image or number seems to have a symbolic value in the context. One may also learn what certain symbols or numbers represented in extrabiblical literature,⁴¹ but should exercise caution in not permitting such information to outweigh or contravene the biblical evidence. Kenneth Strand has made some very practical suggestions for interpreting the symbolism within Revelation, to which the student of Revelation is referred.⁴²

The Message of Christ in Revelation

I have reserved for last what is probably the most important key to interpreting Revelation. One needs to begin from the right assumptions. What is it that the book is trying to communicate? Some readers of Revelation believe John was writing about events taking place in his own day, as well as events he

³⁷Ibid., 116, 124.

³⁸Some of the septenaries in Revelation seem to be made up of four plus three. The last three seals, trumpets, and bowl plagues are different in some distinctive way from the first four.

³⁹Davis, 119.

⁴⁰It is not surprising, therefore, to find the number twelve appearing in the 144,000 (12,000 from each of twelve tribes of Israel) as well as in the various dimensions of the New Jerusalem, along with its twelve gates (with the names of the twelve tribes) and twelve foundations (with the names of the twelve apostles). Cf. Neall, 262.

⁴¹This is the case, for example, with the number 666 in 13:18, since this number featured in ancient Egyptian and Babylonian religion, giving it some significance in relation to known pagan religions of the day. See R. Allan Anderson, *Unfolding the Revelation*, rev. ed. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1974), 125-28; Maxwell, 414. It should be noted, however, that 666 is used as a literal number, though it serves as an aid in decoding a mysterious name by means of the ancient practice of gematria, in which the numeric value of a name became a code for the name: it is "the number of his name," "a man's number," or the number of a man's name.

⁴²Strand, "Foundational Principles," 26-27.

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expected to take place in the very near future. These preterist interpreters ignore John's own claims about what he is recording and why. They fail to accept John's claim that he received visionary revelations from God that pertain exclusively to the future, especially to the time pertaining to the eschatological judgment and the setting up of Christ's eternal kingdom. They see only the beginning of Christian history, but not the middle or the end. Nor do they see the message of Christ to His people in every age.

Other readers believe John is writing only about eschatology, the final events of history and the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth. They fail to see that John includes much historical activity before he gets to the eschaton: seven churches, six seals, six trumpets, during which events continue on earth. It is only in the days when the seventh trumpet sounds that the mystery of God is finished (10:7). These futurist interpreters see the end of Christian salvation history, but not its beginning or its struggle through the long ages that intervene before the end. Nor do they see the message of Christ for His people in every period.

Still other readers believe John is writing primarily about history, setting forth a detailed schematization of history by which we can reconstruct the past and predict yet future events if we will but decode the symbols correctly. The results are a vast diversity of opinions about the meaning of the many symbols and the resulting reconstructions of history past, present, and future. These historicist interpreters may be correct in seeing a rough outline of history afforded by the prophecies of Revelation, but they are often over-zealous in attempting to define every detail of the symbolism in their schematization of history, resulting in speculative confusion and a tendency to keep changing the interpretation as extended time makes old interpretations invalid. Such a focus on history draws away the reader's attention from the main message of the text, which would have been of spiritual benefit and blessing if applied as intended.

Even those idealist readers who, wrongly, believe Revelation is not about history, either past, present, or future, risk missing the true message of Christ to the reader by losing the perspective of the message, which is rooted in and tied to the progress of Christian salvation history.

Only a balanced approach to the interpretation of the book, keeping in mind the true object of the revelation, will yield satisfactory results. The revelation was given not only for John or for the seven churches in the Roman province of Asia, but for God's servants (1:1) who would live in the interim before the final judgment, to prepare them for the coming events. It was not preserved in the canon of Scripture as a history textbook, but as a message from Christ to His people, with the object of preparing them spiritually for what would lie ahead. Unless one reads the book with the intention of discerning this message from Christ, he or she has missed the most important content of the book. What happened in the past serves only as a witness to the trustworthiness of the revelations concerning the future. What will happen in the future is only a promise,

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dimly understood, of what we may expect, depending on the choices we make in the present. It is to our present choices that the book constantly appeals.

The most meaningful part of the book for our experience is the letters of Christ to the seven churches. Here Christ speaks personally to every individual in every age. The seven churches represent the complete cross-section of the church in every age, as well as the various experiences which any individual Christian may have at any given time. That this is true may be seen from the injunction, repeated seven times, "Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches" (2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22 NRSV). The appeal is individual, and the message to each church is applied to all churches.⁴³

If one takes a similar approach to each of the visions of Revelation, seeking for the personal message from Christ to the reader, understood within the historical context to which the vision pertains and in light of the development of events described in the vision, with a view to personal application and present decision making, the blessing of 1:3 and 22:7 will accrue to the reader. That should be the goal of the study of the book of Revelation. That alone will prepare the reader for what yet lies ahead.

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⁴³Further evidence that the appeal is individual is found in the imperatives, which are all in the second person singular, and in the promises made to each church, which are each addressed to the one who overcomes. Further evidence that the message to each church was intended to be read and applied by all the churches is found in the fact that the letters were bound together in one book and sent to all of the churches, which were located in sequence on a main postal route. That this was not an unusual practice for letters of spiritual counsel to the churches may be shown by Paul's request in Col 4:16 that the letters he had written to Colossae and Laodicea should be exchanged and read in the neighboring church. Manuscript evidence reveals that it was common practice to bind all of Paul's letters together and circulate them to all the churches as a corpus.

“Son of Man” Comes to the Judgment in Daniel 7:13

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Few, if any, of the debates that have roiled the theological waters over the years have been more persistent than the one over the term “Son of Man.” The discussion goes back at least to Theodoret of Cyrhus (393-466), and it shows no sign of abating in our day.

Part of the interest in this subject stems from the fact that there are sixty-two gospel records of occasions when Jesus referred to himself as “the Son of Man.” Furthermore, in several of these He seems to be intentionally identifying himself with the mysterious son-of-man figure who appears in the judgment scene of Daniel 7:13.¹

Like other academic discussions, this one has at times turned on points of secular philosophy that have relatively little spiritual or practical relevance.² Nevertheless, an insight into the role of the “son of man” in the judgment has important implications for our understanding of the plan of salvation.

Here is the crucial passage in which the term “son of man” appears in the book of Daniel:

I kept looking
Until thrones were set up,
And the Ancient of Days took His seat;
His vesture was like white snow
And the hair of His head like pure wool.

¹ Matt 24:30; 26:64; Mark 13:26; 14:62.

² For a discussion of some of the alternative proposals, see G. Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1974), 146-148, or <http://www.cmfellowship.org/back-issues/march-april99/sonofman.htm>. “Son of man” is also an important term to some non-Christian groups such as Jehovah’s Witnesses (see http://www.bible411.com/christian-classics/sits/volume5/v5_study6.htm), theosophists (see, for example, <http://www.spiritweb.org/spirit/esoterism-gomez-01.html>), followers of the New Age as well as to various eastern cults. Branch Davidians hold that the “Son of Man” title applies equally to “Yashua” (Jesus) and to David Koresh (<http://sevensseals.com/clouds.html>). It is not likely that the amount of material on this subject will diminish any time soon.

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His throne was ablaze with flames,
Its wheels were a burning fire.
A river of fire was flowing
And coming out from before Him;
Thousands upon thousands were attending Him,
And myriads upon myriads were standing before Him;
The court sat,
And the books were opened.

Then I kept looking because of the sound of the boastful words which the horn was speaking; I kept looking until the beast was slain, and its body was destroyed and given to the burning fire. As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but an extension of life was granted to them for an appointed period of time.

I kept looking in the night visions,
And behold, with the clouds of heaven
One like a Son of Man was coming,
And He came up to the Ancient of Days
And was presented before Him.
And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom,
That all the peoples, nations and men of every language
Might serve Him.
His dominion is an everlasting dominion
Which will not pass away;
And His kingdom is one
Which will not be destroyed.³

A Study in Contrasts. The first important observation is that the Son of man figure in Daniel 7 is a study in contrasts. There is a contrast between the human figure in this prophecy and the fierce animals that have preceded him. After the struggles of the great carnivores, it is a relief when a human being, a “man-like” figure, appears on the scene.

There is also an important contrast between the human figure and the immediate context of the courtroom scene. In Dan 7:9-14 everything is heavenly: There is the Ancient of Days, the “God of heaven.”⁴ There are myriads of heavenly angels. Even the transport vehicle is called the “clouds of heaven.” Then, seeming almost out of place in this situation, there comes—“a human being.”⁵

A third contrast is between the way the Son of Man comes in to the judgment and the way He goes out. He comes in after the Ancient of Days has taken His place and after the tribunal is seated. And He comes in under escort—He is brought in. The passage says: “They brought him near before him.” Rather than sitting as judge, the Son of Man is brought in to stand before the tribunal. But He does not go out the way He came in. He goes out a King. The sentence of

³ Dan 7:9-14, New American Standard Bible, Copyright 1989-1997, The Lockman Foundation.

⁴ Dan 2:18, 19, 28, 37, 44 etc.

⁵ The first and best-attested meaning of the term “son of man” is simply a human being, as in the parallel lines of Ps 8:4: “What is man that you take thought of him, / and the son of man that you care for him?”

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tribunal is: "And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."⁶

A Jewish Reader in Daniel's Day. If some elements of this judgment scene are puzzling to us, it may be that we are trying to relate it to modern systems of jurisprudence rather than looking for a more immediate model in Daniel's time. A Hebrew reader who attempted to picture the heavenly courtroom would certainly have thought of the sanctuary. In the Israelite mind, the heavenly Judge was Yahweh, who was present in the unapproachable glory of the *Shekinah*.⁷ between the two worshipping cherubim.⁸ His judgment throne was the *kapporeth*, the "atonement cover" over the ark.⁹

Into this supremely holy place, where every symbol represented heavenly things, no human being ever went, except once a year on *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement. There was no doubt in the Hebrew mind that *Yom Kippur* was the judgment day.¹⁰ On this solemn day, the whole nation passed in review before God. But the people did not file through the sanctuary one by one to appear personally before God. Every man, woman and child went in, but they did so in the person of their proxy, their substitute or stand-in. On *Yom Kippur* the high priest entered on behalf of all who had trusted in the provisions of the "daily" or *tamid* ministry for their forgiveness and atonement from guilt.¹¹ But He went in not only for the people, but also as the people.

The high priest did not go in to discuss the cases pending with God. He was not a modern lawyer who reasons and pleads, trying to convince the judge of his cause. He went in having assumed the people's guilt, and standing as a defendant in their stead. But most importantly, He went in having also made

⁶ The exaltation through humiliation theme is echoed in Paul's hymn of praise recorded in Phil 2:5-11.

⁷ Isa 33:14; 1 Tim 6:16. The Aramaic "*Shekinah*" is from the Talmud. It means "presence."

⁸ Exod 25:22; Num 7:89; 1 Sam 4:4; 2 Kgs 19:15; 1 Chron 13:6; Isa 37:16; Ezek 10:1.

⁹ Exod 25:22; later references, such as 2 Sam 6:2, pictured the Lord "enthroned above the cherubim" with the *kapporeth* possibly as His footstool. In any case, it was the place where atonement was made. The term "mercy seat" has no textual basis, except, perhaps, Heb. 4:16. It came to the KJV through Tyndale, derived, apparently, from Luther's German *Bibel*.

¹⁰ In fact, this concept remains unchanged: "*Yom Kippur* is probably the most important holiday of the Jewish year. . . . [There are] "books" in which God inscribes all our names. On *Yom Kippur*, the judgment entered in these books is sealed. This day is, essentially, your last appeal, your last chance to change the judgment, to demonstrate your repentance and make amends" ("Judaism 101" at <http://www.jewfaq.org/holiday4/htm>. Accessed Aug 26, 2000). From ancient times the rabbis understood that the judgment of *yom kippur* was a reflection of what went on in the sanctuary of heaven (Talmud, *Yoma* 7:2; see also, Jacob Milgrom, *The Anchor Bible: Leviticus 1-16* [New York: Doubleday, 1991], 1016, 1017).

¹¹ The priest was required to eat a small portion of each sacrifice for sin except the relatively few whose blood was brought into the sanctuary (Lev 6:26, 30). This ensured his role as a sin bearer. For further corroboration of this idea, see below, on Dan 7: 26, 27.

full atonement for this guilt by blood sacrifice.¹² This accomplished, the outcome of the judgment could no longer be in doubt.

King On the Mountain. This view of Daniel 7 through the lens of the OT cultic motif fills what must otherwise be considered a gap in the scene. Here is the courtroom, here are the thrones, the books are opened, and the tribunal takes its seat. But where are the defendants? True, the boisterous little horn is punished as the judgment is beginning,¹³ but he is not hailed before the court; he is neither accused nor examined nor sentenced. In fact, contrary to what we would naturally expect, none of the beast powers is placed on trial before the heavenly court. The only one brought in is the Son of Man.

But this is an incongruity only if we fail to catch the basic thrust of chapter 7 and the question it is answering. In Daniel 7 the empires are playing the old game of King on the Mountain. Who is king on the mountain? “I am,” says the Lion. “No, I am,” says the bear. “That’s what you think!” says the leopard, and each one in turn topples its predecessor. At the end comes, worst of all, the terrible horn power. In his wild grasp for power, the horn even fancies himself a rival to the “Most High”¹⁴ and makes life bitter for God’s people.¹⁵

Given these antecedents, the focus and outcome of the judgment scene are not at all incongruous with the rest of the chapter. Daniel 7 is about empowerment; it is about dominion. Who is the true King—not of the mountain, but of the universe? The answer resounds in the verdict of the heavenly tribunal: “And there was given [to the Son of Man] dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.”¹⁶

A Victory for God’s People. The horn and the other evil powers are not hailed before the court, but the judgment is the solution to the problem they represent. Once the Son of Man is empowered, He exercises His authority on behalf of His besieged people. Thus His victory is their victory, as well. Jesus referred to this in the parable of a nobleman who “went to a distant country to receive a kingdom for himself, and then return. . . . But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, ‘We do not want this man to reign over us.’ When He returned, after receiving the kingdom, He . . . [said:] “These ene-

¹² Lev 16:5-11; Heb 9:12.

¹³ Dan 7:11; cf. Rev 13:3.

¹⁴ From the parallel figures in Daniel 8:11 and Revelation 13:6, we learn that he expressed this rivalry by attacking the sanctuary and blaspheming against it.

¹⁵ Dan 7:25.

¹⁶ The word “triumphalism” is sometimes heard in theological discussions, and it generally carries a negative connotation. Here is true Biblical triumphalism: It is the triumph of God through the judgment. Cf. Dan 2:44: “And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom, that will never be destroyed: and the kingdom will not be left to other people, but it will break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it will stand for ever.”

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mies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slay them in my presence."¹⁷

Jesus alludes to the empowerment theme of Daniel 7 when He describes the second coming: "And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory."¹⁸ At the conclusion of the judgment, the same cloudy chariot that carried the Son of Man to stand before the judgment bar carries him to earth to claim the fruits of His victory.

Daniel 7:26, 27 also shows the judgment as a victory for God's people. It says: "But the court will sit for judgment, and [the horn's] dominion will be taken away, annihilated and destroyed forever. Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Most High; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him." This declaration of dominion is exactly the same as the one that was passed on the Son of Man according to v. 13! Here is further evidence that the Son of Man, as high priest, is the stand-in or proxy of His people in the judgment, because the sentence that was passed on him is a sentence on His people, as well. His victory is theirs.¹⁹

This is, in fact, the most essential idea of justification by faith, that by taking our place on the cross, Jesus, the Son of Man, earned the right to take our place in the judgment. Jesus referred to this when He said of himself: The Father "has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man."²⁰

In the ancient sanctuary, all who trusted in the provisions of the sanctuary for forgiveness and cleansing were approved in the judgment; none was lost. But those who remained indifferent on that day, who failed to gather at the sanctuary and "afflict" their souls, would be "cut off" from the covenant of peace; they would lose their place among the chosen people.²¹

Now, as then, God's people are not called to file through the sanctuary in person as their cases are reviewed before the heavenly tribunal. But the role of our Substitute, the Son of Man, in the heavenly court can hardly be considered a dusty issue of academic hair splitting. It is of vital interest to all who are waiting in the outer court for our great High Priest to return for His own.

¹⁷ Luke 19:12-27.

¹⁸ Matt 24:30. Cf. Mark 14:61, 62: "The high priest was questioning Him, and saying to Him, 'Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?' And Jesus said, 'I am; and you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.'"

¹⁹ Rev 3:21: "To him that overcomes I will grant to sit with me on my throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with my Father on his throne." Cf. Rev 2:26, 27.

²⁰ John 5:27.

²¹ Lev 23:28-29.

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The Battle Between God and Satan in the Book of Job

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Right after introducing the hero of the drama, the author of the Book of Job takes the readers behind the real curtains and reveals the true source of Job's troubles. Satan is labeled an accuser and depicted as an opposing force to God. In dramatic irony, however, the characters in the story are oblivious to this and appear as blind people stumbling on a stage while the audience looks on. In the dark about Satan, they grapple with the righteousness of Job versus the justice of God and the concept of whether there is any order in the universe.

Order in the Physical and Moral World

Even the casual reader of the book of Job is aware of the numerous references to the creation of the world and the functioning of the universe. The speakers in the drama use "order in nature" to illustrate their arguments on the justice God, or the disorder in nature to illustrate His injustice.

Traditionally, the book of Job has been seen as addressing the question of suffering, and in particular, the suffering of the righteous.¹ Today the problem is seen as whether there is any moral order in the universe.² This is but a different way of saying the same thing. If there is no valid reason for the suffering of the innocent, there is no moral order in the universe.

Psalms and other Wisdom writers also cited order in creation as a backdrop for praise of God's justice. David, in Ps 19, begins with the observable order in the heavens (vs. 1-4), illustrated by the sun (vs. 4-6), which proclaims the perfection of the law of God (7-11). Prov 3:19-26 begins with a call to observe the order in the earth, the heavens, the deep, and the sky (vs. 19-21). Then

¹ Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Book of Job* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 2:1.

² David J. A. Clines, *Job 1-20*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, 1989), xxxix.

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comes the call to respect judgment and justice (vs 22-26). When one observes order in the natural world one is inclined to accept the moral order of what is unseen. “Order in creation buttresses belief in divine justice.”³

Eliphaz, the dominant speaker among the three friends, speaks first and longest, probably because he is the oldest and therefore considered wisest.⁴ His begins with the classic sowing-reaping illustration. Anyone can observe that law of nature. You reap what you sow (4:8). Therefore, Job’s righteousness should be his confidence (4:6). Eliphaz is certain that no one has witnessed the righteous perishing (4:7). He provides a doxology in the next chapter that begins with God’s creating and sustaining in the natural world (5:9, 10), which leads one to observe God’s work in the moral and social sphere (11-15).⁵

Bildad, the most narrow minded of the three,⁶ draws our attention to the papyrus which flourishes in water, but withers without it (11-12). Bildad looks at the withering Job and cannot help but conclude that what Job lacks is the Living Water (8:13). Bildad also describes a well-watered plant that flourishes for a while, but suddenly perishes. There is a reason for this. Its roots were mired in rocks (8:17) rather than in the marsh (8:11). The inference is that Job’s former prosperity was temporary and therefore not an indication of his integrity.

Zophar, obviously the least important of the three,⁷ speaks briefly. He points to the certainty with which day follows night (11:12) and uses it as an illustration of the certainty of security following trouble (11:18), if one would only put away evil (11:13-14). Zophar is aware that the wicked prosper, but he maintains that these are only for a short while (20:5). He views destructive elements of nature such as fire and flood as agents of God to punish the wicked (20:26-28).

The three friends have no doubt that the righteous sometimes suffer, just as they cannot deny that the wicked can be seen prospering, but they firmly believe that all scores will be settled with justice. Though delayed, punishment will come to the wicked and rewards to the righteous.

Job also uses nature to illustrate his arguments. But he asserts the opposite—that there is no order in nature. This view leads him to assume that there is no justice in the earth. Animals, birds, and fish can testify that life is not fair (12:7-9), and Job holds God responsible because he orders the universe (12:9).

³ James L. Crenshaw, “Wisdom in the Old Testament,” *The Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible*, 4:956. See also Roy B. Zuck, “A Theology of the Wisdom Books and the Song of Songs,” *A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament*, ed. Roy Zuck, Eugene Merrill, and Darrell Bock (Chicago: Moody, 1991), 218.

⁴ See 14:10; Eliphaz includes, on their side, the aged and the gray haired—those who are older than Job’s father.

⁵ Clines, 143, 144.

⁶ Bildad has complete confidence in the “faith of our fathers” (8:8). All new light is rejected in favor of the “Old-time religion” because we were born yesterday and cannot know better (8:9).

⁷ Zophar is probably the youngest, for he speaks last among the three and only twice, compared to three times for the others. His arguments are also the weakest, and he tends to repeat the wisdom of the former speakers.

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God is responsible for droughts and floods (12:15). Through his eyes of misery, Job sees only a world of disorder. God is anarchic. Like He plays around with nature, God wantonly makes fools of leaders, making them grope like fools in the dark (12:24-25). Wicked people perpetrate crimes on the innocent, but no one takes action against them (12:1-17).

Who is right, Job or his friends? Is there order in nature or not? The three friends are correct. There is a basic order in creation. It can be observed in the regular orbits of the earth around the sun, of the moon around the earth, and in the rotation of the earth on its axis. We see it in the life cycles of plants and animals. Physicists, chemists and biologists have discovered numerous laws which are followed without fail.

But Job is also correct. It is difficult to maintain that absolute order exists when a rabid dog bites an innocent pup, when a freshly blooming flower is trodden by a heavy foot, and when a baby acquires the HIV virus through no fault of its own. Natural disasters constantly take their toll of innocent lives.

Nature reflected God fully at creation, but since sin, creation has been marred. Humans lost their dominion over the created world and antagonistic forces developed. Animals now prey upon others, and diseases afflict the innocent. Thorns and thistles interfere. This is not the work of God, but, as Jesus says in His parable, "An enemy has done this."⁸

When Yahweh took the stage in the drama of Job, He immediately drew the attention of Job to the order in creation that He is responsible for—the boundaries of the oceans (38:8-11), the path of the rainstorm (vs. 25-30), and the laws of the starry heavens (vs. 31-33). Yahweh assumes responsibility for the activities of all creatures. His care for the goats, donkeys, oxen, ostrich, and horses has a lesson for us (chap. 39).

In chapter 40 Yahweh draws Job's attention to two more animals. The Behemoth is usually understood as nothing more than a hippopotamus, and the Leviathan a crocodile. However, if this is true, coming at the very end of the Yahweh speech, it is a very tame ending for an otherwise powerful drama. If these are mere earthly creatures, nothing will have been added to the lessons drawn from the horse and the lion. Therefore, a few scholars look to ancient mythology for interpretation of these as symbols.⁹

The hippopotamus and crocodile were Egyptian creatures that the readers of the book of Job were acquainted with. In Egypt, both of these represented Set—the god of the underworld and the most dreaded enemy of order and resurrection life.¹⁰ Both are God's creatures, but they are used as symbols of Satan,

⁸ Drawn, somewhat out of context, from Matt 13:28, but this is the context in which Ellen White uses the phrase in *Desire of Ages*, 20, 21.

⁹ John C. L. Gibson, *Job*, The Daily Study Bible (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985), 246-256.

¹⁰ See Frank Knight, "Egyptian Origin of the Book of Job," *Nile and Jordan* (London: James Clarke, 1921), 403, quoted in Edwin and Margaret Thiele, *Job and the Devil*, (Boise: Pacific Press, 1988), 125.

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just as the lion is used sometimes, because they are animals that threaten human beings and terrorize them.¹¹

The Role of Behemoth and Leviathan in Disrupting Order

Yahweh begins by describing the physical aspects of Behemoth. He eats grass and has a powerful body (40:17, 18), but the next sentence, “he ranks first among the works of God,” indicates that it cannot be applied to the hippopotamus anymore. The hippo was neither the first animal to be created (reptiles were earlier), nor has anyone ever suggested that it ranks as the best of God’s creatures.

Prophets often moved from the literal to the metaphorical. Ezekiel turned a description of the king of Tyre (Ezek 28:1-20) into a description of Satan—the “model of perfection,” blameless from the day God created him. (28:13-29). Certain characteristics prevent us from applying the latter attributes to the literal king of Tyre. He was not in Eden (28:13), and he was not a guardian cherub (28:14). Isaiah began an oracle against literal Babylon, but shifted into a metaphorical description of Lucifer, who had “fallen from heaven” (Isa 14:12) and who had attempted to raise himself to God’s level (14:13).

The Leviathan described here has many characteristics in common with the crocodile. It has a tough hide (Job 41:7, 13), incredible strength (41:12, 13), fearsome teeth (41:14), and lives in the water (41:31). But other characteristics prevent us from identifying this animal with the crocodile. It has scales (41:15, 16), its eyes are like the rays of the dawn (41:18), fire and smoke come from its nostrils (41:19, 30), its chest is as hard as rock (41:24), it causes the depths of the sea to churn like a cauldron (41:31), and nothing on earth is its equal (41:33). None of these can be claimed for the crocodile.

The Hebrew *liwyatan* is related to the Ugaritic *Lotan*,¹² which is described as a dragon. The Greek translates *Liwyatan* as *draconta*, from which we get our English word “dragon.” *Draconta*, as used in the New Testament, is usually understood to symbolize “Satan.”

The Old Testament depicts the dragon as Yahweh’s enemy who was defeated at the creation of the earth (Ps 74:14) and who will be punished at the end of time (Isa 27:1). The book of Revelation tells us the dragon was in heaven, but it fought with Michael, lost, and was cast down to earth (12:7-9), sweeping a third of the angels with him (12:4). The dragon is called the “serpent,” “devil,” and “Satan” (12:9; 20:2). Spirits of demons emerge from his mouth (16:3), but in the end he will be destroyed in the lake of fire (20:10).

Job is brought to understand that a powerful Satan is responsible for his sufferings. The dragon cannot be subdued (41:9), terrifies the mighty (41:25), and

¹¹ Gibson, 255.

¹² J. Barton Payne, “*Iwh*,” *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 1:1090.

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is unconquerable by conventional weapons (41:26-29). It rules as king on this earth (41:33, 34). Only God is mightier than the dragon (41:10, 11).

We note that at the end of the Yahweh speeches, Job recants all he has said and submits himself to God. What, we may ask, is the reason for his changed attitude? Several theories have been set forth as to the nature of the solution to Job's problem: (1) The very appearance of God satisfied his wish for an audience; (2) God distracted Job's attention away from his misery to the marvels of the universe; or (3) God somehow showed Job the reason for his suffering and convinced him of a just solution.

Job had already espoused a belief in resurrection and eventual justice (14:14-17; 19:25-29),¹³ but now God reveals to him that suffering in the world is the work of Satan. Job now understands what the readers knew all along. This is a very reasonable conclusion, considering what the author took great pains to reveal to the readers at the beginning of the book.

If, as many believe, the book of Job was the first to be written, then the first thing God can be seen as revealing to humanity—especially to all those who are innocent and suffer—is the fact that it's not His fault, He is not responsible for all the evil in this world. Now Job can take the long view, a view that includes an end to the great conflict between God and the dragon, a judgment that will find Job blameless and lay bare the dragon's perfidy, and the final rewards of all people. There will no longer be any question in anyone's mind about what God has been doing about suffering. The originator of evil will be destroyed, the great controversy will end, and order in the universe will be restored.

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¹³ See C. Hassell Bullock, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Poetic Books* (Chicago: Moody, 1988), 59. See also Gordon Christo, "The Eschatological Judgment in Job 19:21-29: An Exegetical Study" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Andrews University, 1992).

Why God Holds the Winds

Herbert Douglass

We're Adventists, awaiting the advent of our Lord and Saviour! We are looking for the eastern sky to brighten as we have never seen it before. We are listening for trumpets and violins like we have never heard them before—stirring music, with more fidelity than ten thousand Bose radios, the Hallelujah Chorus as only angels can sing it as they truly lift us off our feet. And before we know what is happening, we are at those special places where their ashes now rest or those grassy plots where we buried Mother and Father, or daughter or son, or sweetheart, or wife, or husband, or dear friend. And we see loving eyes again, no longer tired or ill. And we hug again, and play again, and then it begins to sink in—we are home, never again to say “Good Bye.”

Adventists, and many other Christian groups, have been looking toward that eastern sky for a long, long time. Should we be given A for enthusiasm but F for incorrect theology? Does the Bible give us any clue as to *when* Jesus will return?

In Revelation 7 John clearly focuses on the end-times. Naturally, however, the Great Deceiver doesn't want us to focus on where the real action is. That's how he started the Great Controversy in the first place. Satan is the master of diversionary tactics as he tries to muddle the truth (1) about God, (2) about how He plans to save men and women out of this rebel world, and (3) about how we should think about Christ's return..

The Great Deceiver, for example, doesn't care about how many people are talking about the end of the world as long as they keep their eyes off the real issues and away from where the real battles will be fought. He will help manufacture many decoys to keep our eyes turned aside from the main events of the end-time.

Satan's Battle Plan Decoded

Do we have any way to figure out what Satan is trying to do to Seventh-day Adventists in these last days? Of course we do, because God has decoded Satan's battle plans for us. John the Revelator was given the key to decoding

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Satan's plan, even as the Allies were decoding Germany's Enigma machine in the early 1940s. So let's ask John to tell us where the real battle is to be fought in these last days—and why the action has been delayed for at least a century.

Revelation 7 opens: "I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, that no wind might blow on earth or sea or against any tree. Then I saw another angel ascend from the rising of the sun, with the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm earth and sea, saying, 'Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God upon their foreheads'" (Rev. 7:1-3, RSV).

What on earth could John be describing? Why is God holding back these last-day winds of terror and destruction? Why is He telling angels to: "Hold, hold—hold back the north wind of nuclear war? Hold back the south wind of those seven last plagues!" Why? "God's people are not ready! Hold back the east wind of human madness!" Why? "God's people haven't caught on yet as to where the battle is really to be fought. Hold back the west wind of satanic fury until God's people are ready to carry out their last assignment. Hold the winds until God's people are ready to be sealed, Hold the winds until His people are ready for His stamp of approval, Hold the winds until His people are ready for God to use them in His final message to earth's last generation."

"And I heard the number of the sealed, a hundred and forty-four thousand sealed." The number, of course, is symbolic of people in the last days who are totally committed to honoring God. This sealing work is the final work to be accomplished by the gospel. God holds back the winds because His people are not yet sealed. His people are not ready yet to be the creditable witnesses of the everlasting gospel to a world on the edge of time. Can anything be any clearer? One of these days God's people will have caught on as to where the battle is really to be fought and what the final battle is really like!

In the 14th chapter of Revelation, John highlights that last generation he depicted in chapter seven—that impressive group for whom God waits and holds the winds: "Then I looked and lo, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him a hundred and forty-four thousand who had his name and his Father's name on their foreheads."

What will identify God's people in these last days? Their Sabbath-keeping, health-reforming, tithe-paying habits? Yes and No! After all, Sabbath-keeping, health-reforming tithe-payers once crucified God!

The Value of a Seal

John tells us God's people in the end-time will have the Father's name written on their foreheads. They will be sealed with His approval. Many products can't be sold without a certain seal of approval, the seal that tells the world the product has passed all the tests and can be trusted—such as that seal of the Underwriter's Laboratory on the bottom of electrical appliances.

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What's the importance of a seal, or the value of a signature? Ask any world-class violinist as he checks his Stradivarius. Ask your son or daughter when they buy Arnold Palmer golf clubs or Chris Evert tennis rackets. Or those looking for a reliable washing machine (perhaps a Maytag) or lawn mower (maybe a Snapper or Toro). For most products, the name means everything. It means the product carries the endorsement of someone who cares about quality, someone who can be trusted—therefore you, in turn, can trust those Arnie Palmer golf clubs or a Maytag washer. Those names mean quality, and you can trust anything those names are on.

Remember those TV ads for Hanes underclothing! Can't you see that determined female inspector with all of her formidable charm: "*The quality goes in before the name goes on!*"

Down here in the days of the held winds, that is what God is telling the universe when He writes His name in the foreheads of His faithful: "Listen to them," He is saying, "Here are people who have let my Holy Spirit do His work, people who indeed reflect my glory. I am not embarrassed by how they represent Me. You can trust them. I have given them my seal of approval. The quality goes in before the Name goes on."

The Bible calls this the "sealing work." And this is what all heaven is focusing on today. This is where the real battle is being fought today. Satan knows it. God knows it. Do we?

In the 12th chapter of Revelation, John gave us Satan's game plan "The dragon [or Satan] was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest [remnant] of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 12:17, NKJV).

How does Satan make war with us? One way is so obvious—through pain and heartbreak, until one can barely take a deep breath. Satan has a way of beating us down until we feel like driftwood along an unwalked shore. And we wonder if anyone cares, or if there will ever be any relief. The dark hours of the night pass so slowly.

Satan is an expert at these things. But strange as it may seem to him, many Christians have learned how to cope well against these satanic kamikaze raids. They find their hiding place in Jesus. They beat Satan at his own game. I have seen it happen over and over to young and old who discover the truth about God as their Best Friend. They find their Best Friend very close, even during the darkest hours of life.

But when Satan sees that physical troubles and emotional disappointments seem to strengthen God's people, he shifts his attack to something more subtle. He sets up decoys that are very believable: He confuses Bible students about the meaning and purpose of the gospel, especially in these last days during the sealing work. He obscures the meaning of the sealing work whereby God and His people hasten the end of Satan's rule on Planet Earth.

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What Is This Seal?

What is this seal of God that makes Satan angry? “Just as soon as the people of God are sealed in their foreheads—it is not any seal or mark that can be seen, but a settling into the truth, both intellectually and spiritually, so they cannot be moved—just as soon as God’s people are sealed and ready for the shaking, it will come.”¹

Illuminating this Biblical theme, we read that the seal is “the mark of God’s sealing approval . . . the pure mark of truth, wrought in them by the power of the Holy Ghost.”² Those sealed “have on the wedding garment, and are obedient and faithful to all God’s commands.”³ God recognizes those sealed as “worthy representatives of the truth as it is in Jesus.”⁴

God seals those who “are to be distinguished from the world by . . . their words and their works. . . . He does not ask, Do they possess learning and eloquence? Have they ability to command and control and manage? He asks, Will they represent My character? . . . Through them He will represent to the world the ineffaceable characteristics of the divine nature.”⁵

God will not seal a person “if the truth is not rooted in the heart, if the natural traits of character are not transformed by the Holy Spirit.”⁶

The gospel that seals, as described in Revelation 14, is the “everlasting gospel” that prepares a cleansed people to represent their Lord—the time when the angels and all the unfallen universe will judge whether God is fair in His judgments about men and women.

Peter was given a glimpse of that sealed group, those cleansed people who truly experienced the purpose of the gospel: “Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God. . . . Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found in Him in peace, without spot and blameless” (2 Peter 3:11-14, NKJV).

Another messenger of the Lord focused on these end-time people and their message when she wrote: “It is the darkness of misapprehension of God that is enshrouding the world. Men are losing their knowledge of His character. . . . At this time a message from God is to be proclaimed, a message illuminating in its influence and saving in its power. His character is to be made known. Into the darkness of the world is to be shed the light of His glory, the light of His

¹ Ellen G. White, *Last Day Events*, 219; Ms 173, 1902. Note the author’s insightful ellipse of truth: The truth that seals is grasped by both the intellect and the heart commitment. Too often spiritual commitment lacks one or the other, settling for either cold reason or hot feeling. The truth that seals is understood first by the mind, which then generates a heart appreciation of and commitment to the Author of truth.

² _____, *Testimonies*, 3:267.

³ _____, Letter 126; 1898, *SDA Bible Commentary*, EGW Comments on Revelation 7:2, 968.

⁴ _____, Letter 77, 1899; *SDA Bible Commentary*, EGW Comments on Revelation 7:2, 969.

⁵ _____, Letter 270, 1907; *SDA Bible Commentary*, EGW Comments on Revelation 7:2, 269.

⁶ _____, Letter 80, 1898; *SDA Bible Commentary*, EGW Comments, on Revelation 7:2, 269.

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goodness, mercy, and truth. . . . The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is a revelation of His character of love. The children of God are to manifest His glory. In their own life, and character they are to reveal what the grace of God has done for them. The light of the Sun of Righteousness is to shine forth in good works,—in words of truth and deeds of holiness.”⁷

The Everlasting Gospel

The gospel preached and lived by these end-time people is a gospel with New Testament precision, not the limited gospel being preached in Babylon. It is a gospel that proclaims pardon and power—a gospel that beats back all the soft promises of a salvation without self-denial. It is not a limited gospel without the kind of faith that cooperates with grace in overcoming inherited and cultivated tendencies to say No to the light of truth.

What are some of those limited gospels that are Satan’s decoys? Babylon’s gospel promises salvation with at least four options, all aimed at obscuring God’s character and law that Satan is so angry about. He lets you take your pick:

Option #1: “Forget the law—You’re under grace—the law was abolished at the cross.” If the weakness of that argument becomes obvious, Satan becomes more subtle with three other options.

Option #2: Exalt the law as being so high above human attainment, that no man or woman could ever hope to keep it—but don’t worry, the argument goes, “you don’t have to keep the commandments because Jesus kept the law for you.”

Option #3 uses a different approach, also subtle with its half-truths: “You can’t keep the commandments because you were born a sinner, you live in sinful flesh, and you will always be falling short. But don’t worry—as long as you are sorry for your sins, that is all the Lord requires. God looks at Jesus’ record in the judgment and not yours.”

Option #4 is very enticing to some: “You shouldn’t try to keep the commandments, because if you do, you will be a legalist. The main thing is to have a relationship with Jesus.”

Of course, you recognize some half-truths in these attractive deceptions. But careful Bible students will see through them and will keep their eyes on where the real battle is to be fought in these last days. They let the Bible speak plainly to them, such as Paul’s words to Titus: “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from

⁷ _____, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, 415, 416. See also *The Acts of the Apostles*, 599-601: “It is the privilege of every Christian, not only to look for, but to hasten the coming of the Saviour.”

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all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good” (Titus 2:11-15, NIV).

And they remember the admonition: “From the very beginning of the great controversy in heaven it has been Satan's purpose to overthrow the law of God, . . . That to deceive man, and thus lead them to transgress God's law, is the object which he has steadfastly pursued, . . . and that the last great conflict between truth and error is but the final struggle of the long-standing controversy concerning the law of God.” “Satan is constantly seeking to deceive the followers of Christ with his fatal sophistry that it is impossible for them to overcome.”⁸

“To Him Who Overcomes . . .”

And so when we are led to believe that it is either unnecessary or impossible to be overcomers, we should remind ourselves, in so doing, that we are redefining the plan of salvation in order to make up our own sense of security and assurance—all of which is self-deceiving.

Why does Satan hate the law so? Why is he so determined to confuse the issue regarding God's law, especially in these end-times? Because God's way of running the universe is what he once resisted face-to-face when he was the chief of angels, long before He was cast out of heaven (Rev. 12). The law of God reflects the character of God, especially Jesus—whom He resented and then hated when He came to earth to prove Him wrong. And reproducing the character of Jesus is exactly what the purpose of the gospel is all about.

That is why Satan is angry with people in these last days who finally get serious about keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. He is furious with people who are finished with theological word games that allow them to be called Christians while never expecting to be overcomers. He is furious when people see through his false gospel which is truly the new legalism—that men and women can be saved by believing in a legal adjustment of the books of heaven without a character adjustment on earth, and then call that “Righteousness by Faith.”

The gospel that seals is not a rigid, toe-the-line conformity motivated by either fear of God's displeasure or hope of eternal reward. Such concern for the law is pure burden and not the yoke of Jesus; it stands the gospel on its head. It repels young people and generates either gloom or pride in older people. The difference between the joy of grace-supported obedience and the burden of legalism is simply the motivation: Am I watching the edges of the Sabbath, for example, in order to impress God or to honor Him? Real love knows no end of honoring the one loved and the “effort” is hardly burdensome!

The gospel that seals produces people who say with joy, “Great peace have those who love Your law and nothing causes them to stumble” (Ps 119:165,

⁸ _____, *The Great Controversy*, 582, 489.

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NKJV); “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul. . . . more to be desired are they than gold . . . sweeter also than honey, and in keeping them there is great reward” (Ps 19:7-10, NKJV).

We are focusing on the gospel that the apostles preached. It either produced a riot or a revival—never boredom or a ho-hum. It met and solved the same human problems that perplex psychiatrists and social scientists today. Look what happened at Corinth: “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. (1 Cor. 6:9-11, NKJV).

That’s the good news that Jesus promised. From His birth to that awful focus of Calvary, the gospel of Jesus did something for people then and it will do the same for people today—whenever the real gospel is heard.

People who take His words seriously possess the faith of Jesus (Rev. 14:12). This is saving faith, the same kind of faith that saved Jesus from sin. Such faith made Jesus into a powerful, lovable, gracious Person. That is what the faith of Jesus is designed to do for you and for me.

Preparing for the Winds

And all heaven is waiting to seal that kind of person in these last days before the wind blows, before unbelievers tune out forever the pleadings of the Holy Spirit, before this world becomes a madhouse. These are the people who have learned how to endure in tough times— “those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus” (Rev. 14:12).

God can trust His people to endure all the hell that Satan will throw at them in the Seven Last Plagues. They will vindicate His Name, His power, and His judgment about them. These people have knocked down all the lies that Satan has been getting away with for more than 6000 years. After probation closes, they are showing the universe that God’s grace continues to keep them from falling, even during the toughest of times,.

Let us not be distracted as to where the real battle of the gospel is to be fought in these last days. Listen to Jesus whisper: “Limit not the Holy One of Israel.” There is no limit to the creative power of the Holy Spirit that once brought order and beauty out of chaos in the Beginning. He will do the same for us today. Give Him a chance. He has left the front door open for you. His angels are still holding back the winds of human and satanic passion. Jesus will save you from your sins and seal you for great exploits in His Name, if you do not frustrate Him. That is the purpose of the gospel. He is waiting for us to get serious about having His seal so that our witness to others will bear His credentials. Let God get us ready for His seal. Go for it!

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Reimarus and the Return of Christ Revisited: Reflections on Luke 21:24b and Its Phrase “Times of the Gentiles” in Historicist Perspective

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When the trumpet of the Lord shall sound, and time shall be no
more,
And the morning breaks, eternal, bright and fair;
When the saved of earth shall gather over on the other shore,
And the roll is called up yonder, I'll be there.

—J. M. Black

Where is this *Tuba mirabilis*, or wondrous trumpet¹ of the Lord so movingly described in these vibrant lines of faith sung by Christians for so many years? Will it ever sound? Why have nearly 2000 years passed since Christ promised to return quickly? Are we finally destined to join the scoffers of 2 Peter 3:4 with their jeering appeal to uniformitarianism, saying: “Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.” What is going on here? Is our biblical exegesis flawed? Did Jesus teach that He would return in the first century A.D.? Did Jesus, as rationalist scientist Stephen Jay Gould claims, “state clearly that the end shall not be long delayed and shall surely occur *within* the lifetime of some people who heard his words”?² If so, has the passage of time confirmed Gould’s charge that Jesus made an “error of timing” in this respect?³ Should we reinterpret the promise of His coming in some non-literal sense? This would be in harmony with what many evangelicals are doing with the biblical accounts

¹Stephen Jay Gould, *Questioning the Millennium* (New York: Harmony, 1997), 74.

²*Ibid.*, 41.

³*Ibid.*, 43.

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of our origin. Due to the findings of science, many evangelical thought leaders are accommodating the biblical account of creation week to mean something other than six literal, contiguous days. Perhaps in similarly analogous fashion we should accommodate the biblical account of the literal return of Christ to mean something else as well?

For reasons like the ones mentioned above, are we now to stand with Rudolph Bultmann, who, following the lead of Herman Reimarus, says that the parousia of “Christ never took place as the New Testament expected. History did not come to an end, and, as every school boy knows, it will continue to run its course”⁴ Bultmann concludes that Christians “can no longer look for the return of the Son of Man on the clouds of heaven or hope that the faithful will meet him in the air (1 Thess. 4:15ff).”⁵ This conclusion seems to follow if in fact Christ taught that He would return in the first century A.D. If this is the case, should we remove the beautiful gospel song, mentioned above, from our hymnbooks because Christ’s promise has been falsified by the passage of time?

In light of these questions, the purpose of this study is to consider the potentially stinging problem posed particularly by Reimarus regarding what he considers to be the nature of the New Testament expectation of the parousia, and to assess in an initial and provisional fashion the crucial importance which the cryptic notion of the Gentiles treading Jerusalem until the “times of the Gentiles be fulfilled” (Luke 21:24b) may carry in helping to solve the dilemma posed by Reimarus and others.

The Problem Raised By Reimarus Regarding the Second Coming

Bultmann’s claim that the New Testament expected the parousia of Christ in the first century has several important historical antedecedents. I shall briefly notice those made by Matthew Tyndall and Hermann Reimarus.

In his book entitled, *Christianity as Old as Creation*, which became known as the “Bible of all deistic readers,”⁶ the English theologian Matthew Tyndall writes in 1730 that “I think, ‘tis plain, *Paul* himself expected to be alive at the Coming of the Lord, and that he had the Word of God for it. . . . If most of the Apostles, upon what Motives soever, were mistaken in a Matter of this Consequence, how can we be certain, that any One of them may not be mistaken in any other Matter?”⁷ This is a stinging conclusion indeed to evangelical Christians who place complete trust in a literal interpretation of passages such as John 14:1-3. Nevertheless, Herman Samuel Reimarus develops even further

⁴Rudolf Bultmann, “New Testament and Mythology,” In *Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate*, ed. Hans Werner Bartsch (London: S.P.C.K., 1957), 5.

⁵Ibid., 4.

⁶Werner George Kümmel, *The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of Its Problems* (New York: Abingdon), 54.

⁷Quoted in Kümmel, *ibid.*

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some of Tyndall's thoughts that Paul had the teaching of the Lord in support of the idea that Christ would return in the first century.

In 1774 G. E. Lessing began introducing to the scholarly community the writings of the eighteenth-century Hamburg scholar Hermann Samuel Reimarus in a work called the *Fragments by the Unknown of Wolfenbüttel*.⁸ Reimarus was deeply influenced by Tyndall's classic deistic book, to the point of adding his own account of what he perceives to be a major mistake in the teaching of Jesus regarding the time of the second advent. Reimarus observes that "if the apostles would have said at that time that there would still be another seventeen, eighteen, or more centuries before Christ would come again from the clouds of heaven to begin his kingdom, people would only have laughed at them."⁹ Why? The reason is, according to Reimarus, that the people took the words of Jesus in Matthew 24:34 about "this generations shall not pass away until all these things take place" to mean that the individuals "who were at that time standing around Jesus at that place should not all have died before his coming, but some of them would see . . . him coming into his kingdom still before their death."

Above all, Reimarus offers the negative assessment of the speech of Jesus in Matthew 24 as a mistaken prophecy. Regarding this he writes:

Only because Christ, unfortunately, did not come again on the clouds of heaven within that time, in fact not even within so many centuries later [as have elapsed], today people try to come to the assistance of the clear falsity of this promise through a clever but certainly very poor interpretation of the words. The words, *this generation will not pass away* must be distorted and now taken to mean the Jewish people or the Jewish nation. So they say the promise might very well stand.¹⁰

Strikingly, in this quotation Reimarus calls the promise of Christ's return a "clear falsity," meaning that it cannot stand. This claim raises several questions. Does Jesus in fact teach that he would return in the first century A.D.? If so, how shall we address the issue raised by Reimarus of the *prima facie* implications of the phrase "this generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled"? We turn now to a brief discussion of a suggested possible solution to the problem.

**A Historicist Resolution of the Problem Raised by Reimarus
Regarding the Second Coming of Christ**

⁸G. E. Lessing, *Fragments From Reimarus* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1879; reprint ed., Lexington, Kentucky: American Theological Library Association Committee on Reprinting, 1962), 5.

⁹Hermann Samuel Reimarus, *The Goal of Jesus and His Disciples*, trans. George Wesley Buchanan (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970), 106.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 108.

A General Orientation Regarding Luke's Account of the Olivet Discourse. The Olivet Discourse as presented in Matthew 24, in which Jesus outlines the signs of His second coming in some detail, needs to be augmented with crucial information from the parallel account given in Luke 21. An initial important task is to compare the listings of the major signs as presented in each chapter which show, at first reading, an important seeming omission in Luke's list as compared with that given by Matthew and Mark. In Matthew's account, and that of Mark, we find four major distinct, sequential signs preceding the appearing of Jesus: 1. the destruction of earthly Jerusalem (vs. 15-20), 2. a period of tribulation (vs. 21-28), 3. signs in the sun and moon, and 4. the powers of heaven are shaken (v. 29). Then, in both accounts, and also in Luke, the Son of Man (vs. 30-31) appears. All three synoptic gospels give Jesus' explanation that those who see all these signs—including the shaking of the powers of heaven—will not pass, i.e., the individuals comprising that "generation of people" will not pass (die) until Jesus returns in the clouds of heaven (vs. 33-34).

In striking contrast to the four signs listed by Matthew and Mark, Luke apparently presents only three distinct, sequential signs which are to transpire before the appearing of the Son of Man. Luke's listing is as follows: 1. the destruction of earthly Jerusalem (vs. 20-24), and 2. the signs in sun and moon and stars, and 3. the powers of the heavens being shaken (vs. 25-26). The apparent missing sign in Luke's account is the second sign given by Matthew and Mark, namely, the period of tribulation sign.

Is the tribulation sign truly missing in Luke's account? The thesis to be explored in this paper is that the "period of tribulation sign" may not be missing in Luke's account at all, but is present in a cryptic form in Jesus' words regarding a Gentile trampling of Jerusalem until their times are fulfilled. In the first portion of Luke 21:24 the language implies the important point that Jerusalem has already been destroyed because the inhabitants are described as falling before the edge of the sword, and that "they will be led captive into all the nations." This indicates that the first portion of Luke 21:24 presents the description of the destruction of earthly Jerusalem.

However, Jesus immediately continues in the same verse with a seemingly redundant notion that Jerusalem "will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." Why does Jesus add this second destructive activity against Jerusalem in view of the fact that He has just employed language implying that the earthly Jerusalem has already been physically destroyed? Could the answer be that Jesus' use of the terms "trampling," "Jerusalem," and "trampling under foot by the Gentiles" in the second half of Luke 21:24b does not refer to the earthly Jerusalem and to its destruction or "trampling" by Gentile Roman soldiers at all, but rather to another kind of trampling by another kind of power, and upon another kind of Jerusalem? Could it be that Luke 21:24b involves some form of a two phase trampling of two different Je-

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rusalems? If so, the theological implication of this conclusion, when interpreted in a historicist fashion, unlocks the problem articulated by Reimarus.

The Apocalyptic Setting of the Phrase the "Times of the Gentiles."

The Olivet discourse in Luke's Gospel is apocalyptic in nature and contains allusions to concepts and terms presented, for example, in Old Testament apocalyptic literature. Jesus' cryptic words in Luke 12:24b are no exception. At least three terms in this portion of the passage, namely, the terms "Gentiles," "trampling," and "times," are crucial allusions to important concepts in the apocalyptic book of Daniel chapters 7-9, 11, and 12, and to parallel concepts in Revelation 11:2, all of which help to unlock the profound meaning of Jesus' statement in this apocalyptic context. We turn first to a consideration of a possible key link between Luke 21:24b and Revelation 11:2 which is, indeed, the basis for the interpretation of Jerusalem in Luke 21:24b as being something other than simply a reference to the destruction of the earthly Jerusalem.

The book of Revelation is also apocalyptic literature and is filled with allusions to Old Testament literature, including the apocalyptic genre. Revelation 11:2-3 is a special case in point and is crucial for the interpretation of Luke 21:24b. In Revelation chapter 11 John is asked in vision to measure the "temple of God and the altar and those who worship in it" (v. 1). Because at the time John wrote the book of Revelation the earthly temple and the earthly Jerusalem lay in ruins and could not be literally measured, the measuring described in Revelation 11:2 would seem to refer to some spiritual activity regarding the existing temple of God in heaven and the individuals spiritually worshiping God. Regarding this city, John is told that the Gentiles will "tread under foot the holy city for forty-two months" (v.2), which is the same amount of time as the 1,260 days mentioned in the following verse (v.3), the period of time during which the two witnesses would prophesy. Thus, the treading mentioned in Revelation 11:2 must be a "treading" in the sense of some kind of spiritual warfare or treading, rather than referring to some form of a literal destruction by Gentiles of the earthly Jerusalem, which, as noted, already lay in ruins at Gentile hands. This raises the key question considered by this paper, namely, whether the Gentile "treading of the holy city" for 42 months mentioned in Revelation 11:2 is to be identified with the Gentile "treading of Jerusalem" in Luke 21:24b? If this is the case, the answer to Reimarus is close at hand, as the following discussion indicates.

The Prophetic Setting Outlined

The Gentile Treading of "Jerusalem . . . Until the Times of the Gentiles Is Fulfilled" of Luke 21:24b Identified with the Gentile Treading of the Holy City for 42 Months of Revelation 11:2. In his latest book, entitled *How to Understand the End-Time Prophecies of the Bible*, published in 1997, Hans LaRondelle presents a penetrating historicist discussion of Revelation 11:2

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regarding the Gentile trampling of the Holy City for 42 months. We take a two step approach in analyzing LaRondelle's interpretation. The first step is to note key points of his interpretation and additional considerations showing that the Revelation 11:2 "trampling for the 42 months" is the same as the other time periods mentioned in Daniel 7-9, 11, and Revelation 12 and 13, namely the prophetic time periods such as the 42 months, the 1260 days, and the three and one half times. The second step will be to build upon LaRondelle, but to move beyond him by linking the Gentile trampling of Jerusalem mentioned in Luke 21:24b to the trampling activity of Revelation 11:2b, and thus to the same activity mentioned in Daniel 7-9; 11, and Rev. 12 and 13.

Step One: LaRondelle's Identification of the 42 Months of Gentile Trampling of the Holy City of Revelation 11:2b with the Gentile Trampling of Jerusalem and of the Saints of Daniel 7-9, 11, and Revelation 12 and 13. The prediction of the 42 months of Gentile oppression or "trampling" mentioned in Revelation 11:2 combines or unites identical prophetic time and action elements described in Daniel chapters 7, 8, 9, and 11 with the same time and action elements mentioned in Revelation chapters 11, 12, and 13. LaRondelle shows the importance of basing the time units of Revelation 11-13 on parallel prophetic periods mentioned in the book of Daniel as follows:

Only from the perspective of Daniel's sacred chronology can one avoid the pitfall of taking the prophetic time units of Rev. 11-13 as entirely allegorical for some indefinite time of persecution. The "42 months" or "1260 days" are not elastic or temporal. These time units originate from the vision of Daniel 7, where they determine the tract of time for the despotic reign of the "little horn," after the collapse of the Roman Empire (A.D. 476, see Dan. 7:8, 23-25).¹¹

However, before going into further detail about these key prophetic time periods, a historicist hermeneutical assumption operative in this paper needs to be addressed. The biblical self-application of the apocalyptic interpretive principle known as the "day for a year" principle is concretely illustrated in the book of Daniel itself. In Daniel 9:24 the prophet declares that "seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city." Taken literally, this period is not even two calendar years. In this case many exegetes agree that the "day for year" principle is operative within the apocalyptic biblical text itself. Thus, the phrase "70 weeks" calculates into 490 prophetic days, which in turn represent 490 literal consecutive calendar years. This illustrates the "day for year" principle of prophetic interpretation as operative in the book of Daniel itself. This paper interprets the prophetic time periods mentioned in Daniel and Revelation in this light.

¹¹Hans LaRondelle, *How to Understand the End-Time Prophecies of the Bible: The Biblical-Contextual Approach* (Sarasota, FL: First Impressions, 1997), 220.

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Turning to the activity depicted in Revelation 11:2, La Rondelle states that, "The Hebrew source of the 'trampling of the holy city' in Revelation 11 is the trampling of the holy place and its host in Dan. 7-8. Daniel portrays how the temple of God and its true worshipers will be trampled underfoot, not by the Roman Empire but *by a rebellious and idolatrous worship* that causes desolation (see Dan. 7:21, 25; 8:11-13; 11:31-35; 12:11)."¹² Thus, in chapter 7, "Daniel outlined the entire course of salvation history, from his time until the final judgment."¹³ This means that in this chapter, God through Daniel outlines the future shape of worldwide kingdoms on earth, ending with the long standing Imperial Rome. Daniel 7 indicates that subsequent to the fall of this secular power, therefore in the Christian era viewed from our perspective, a spiritually oppressive power arises to taunt God and trouble His people for "a time, times, and a one half time" or 3 1/2 times (v. 25). The same power is said, in Daniel 8:13, to "trample both the holy place and the host," which links Daniel 8 to Revelation 11:2. Moreover, as La Rondelle observes, "This antigod power (the 'little horn') will wear down the saints or 'holy ones' for three-and-a-half prophetic 'times' (or 'years'). This time period equals 42 prophetic months and thus establishes a specific link between *Daniel 7* and *Rev. 11*."¹⁴

Step Two: Linking the Gentile Trampling of Jerusalem "Until the Times of the Gentiles Be Fulfilled," Mentioned in Luke 21:24b, with the Gentile Trampling of the Holy City Mentioned in Revelation 11:2b; and Thus to Revelation 12, 13; and to Daniel 7-9, and 11. Four terms in Luke 21:24b combine to link the Gentile trampling activity specified in this text to the same kind of activity mentioned in Rev. 11:2b and so to the famous identical passages in Daniel 7-9, 11, and in Revelation 12 and 13. These four terms constitute four clear allusions to Old Testament apocalyptic themes. The terms will be considered in couplet fashion. The phrase "the Gentile trampling" forms one couplet comprised of two elements, namely, "gentile" and "trampling". The second couplet is comprised of the following two terms: "Jerusalem" and length of persecution, namely, "until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."

Turning now to the first couplet, several important links can be noted regarding the fact that the power specified is a "Gentile" trampling power (Luke 21:24b). Comparatively, in Daniel 7:25 a similar persecuting power is characterized as a speaking small horn, thus a non-Jewish or Gentile power. Second, this Gentile power of Dan 7:25 engages in a spiritual "trampling" conflict with God and His people by "speaking against the Most High and tearing down the saints of the Highest One" (Dan. 7:25). The description of another little horn of Daniel 8:10-11, 13 is also a non-Jewish power said explicitly to "trample" down some of the stars of heaven (v. 10), to remove the regular sacrifice (v. 11), and to throw down the place of His sanctuary (v. 11), i.e., to trample "both the holy

¹²Ibid., 221.

¹³Ibid., 217-218.

¹⁴Ibid., 218.

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place and the host” (v. 13). This action is consistent with the spiritual meaning of the Gentile “treading” mentioned in Luke 21:24b in light of the spiritual meaning of “Jerusalem” and the “times of the Gentiles” noted below in the discussion of the second couplet.

The trampling of “Jerusalem” mentioned in Luke 21:24b includes of necessity the temple and its worshipers, which is the identical dual object of the trampling activity by both little horns described in Daniel 7:25 and 8:13, and with the activity of the sea beast with a blasphemous mouth which blasphemed God’s name and His tabernacle and who made war with the saints” (Rev. 13:6-7), thus linking the activity just cited in Daniel 7-8 and Revelation 12-13 with the Gentile trampling of “Jerusalem” mentioned in Luke 21:24b.

The interpretation of the length of the period of trampling is of utmost importance. Moreover, a proper understanding of the approximate location of the period of trampling in secular history is a crucial element in linking the period of the Gentile spiritual trampling of Jerusalem indicated in Luke 21:24b to the Gentile trampling mentioned in Revelation 11:2 and 3, and thereby to the trampling activity of both little horn powers of Daniel 7 and 8, and with the serpent of Revelation 12, and with the sea beast of Revelation 13.

In attempting to understand the length of the trampling of Jerusalem by the Gentiles, we note again that Luke 21:24b says that Jerusalem will be trodden under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. The important question is, how long a period is represented by the plural term “times” of the Gentiles (Luke 21:24b)? The answer involves four considerations. First, Revelation 11:2 links a Gentile trampling of the Holy City to a prophetic time period specified as 42 months in length (Rev 11:2). Importantly for our purposes the next verse following Revelation 11:2 mentions a period of time in which God’s two witnesses prophesy for “twelve hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth” (Rev 11:3). Forty-two prophetic months of 30 days yield 1260 days, indicating that the two time periods are identical and should be connected. This means the 42 prophetic months mentioned in Revelation 11:2 are the same as the 1260 prophetic days mentioned in v. 3. This conclusion forms an important connection between the temporal activity of the Gentile trampling of Revelation 11:2 and the serpent activity mentioned in Revelation 12:6, 14. After the male child (Christ) had been “caught up to God,” the woman (representing believers in Christ living after His ascension), was nourished in the wilderness, in hiding from the serpent (red dragon) for “one thousand two hundred and sixty days” (Rev. 12:6). This links the 42 months trampling of Rev. 11:2 with the 1260 days of serpent persecution of the woman (Rev. 12:13-14).

Furthermore, the 1260 prophetic day period mentioned in Revelation 12:6 is described in the same chapter as “a time and times and half a time” (Rev 12:14). This means 42 prophetic months equal 3 1/2 prophetic times, or 3 1/2 prophetic years composed of 360 prophetic days. Because we have just seen that

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42 prophetic months equal 1260 prophetic days, we can now conclude that 1260 prophetic days equal 3 1/2 prophetic times.

Of equal importance is the fact that because the 1260 days of Revelation 12:6 are clearly shown to follow the ascension of Jesus, as noted above, the 1260 prophetic days and the 3 1/2 times are thereby shown to be located in the Christian era, historically speaking. Because these two time periods are the same as the 42 months, the 42 months of Revelation 11:2 are also located in the Christian era.

In addition, the sea beast with a blasphemous mouth characterized in Revelation 13:5-7 is said to spiritually attack God's name, His tabernacle, and to make war with the saints for a period of 42 prophetic months (Rev 13:5-7). Because this activity is associated with a beast that is composed of the world beasts of Daniel 7 and receives its power from the serpent mentioned in Revelation 12, and is said to oppress the saints and God's tabernacle for the same amount of time as the serpent oppression mentioned in Revelation 12:6, 14, the 42 prophetic months of the sea beast persecution is to be equated with the 1260 prophetic days of Revelation 12:6, and thereby is also to be located in history after the ascension of Christ, and hence in the Christian era.

The linking of the "times of the Gentile" trampling in Luke 21:24b with the 3 1/2 times, the 1260 days, and the 42 months of Revelation 11:2, 12-13, leads us to the linking of these same time periods with their original formulations in Daniel 7-9, 11 and 12. The 3 1/2 times of Revelation is an allusion to the 3 1/2 times of the little horn of Dan 7:25. Similarly, the 1260 prophetic days and 3 1/2 prophetic years respectively of Revelation 12:6, 14 represent the identical time period of an entity mentioned in Daniel 8:13, and the wonders occurring during the 3 1/2 times of Daniel 12:7. Thus, these prophetic time periods from a historicist perspective translate into a real historical time period, subsequent to the ascension of Jesus, consisting of nearly thirteen centuries.

A final link between the Gentile trampling in Luke 21:24b is the presence of the plural form of the Greek word "times" (*kairos*). In light of all the other indicators noted above, the plural usage of "times" in Luke 21:24b might be an allusion to the plural usage of "times" in Daniel and Revelation, i.e., to the 3 1/2 times of Daniel 7:25, and to the 3 1/2 times of Revelation 12:14. Thus, as indicated above, when the "times" of Luke 21:24b are linked to the 42 months of Gentile trampling mentioned in Revelation 11:2, the "times" of Luke 21:24b also represent 42 months or 1260 days or the 3 1/2 times (*kairos*) of Revelation 12:14 and Daniel 7:25 and Daniel 12:7.

In sum, these reflections indicate that the "times" of the Gentile trampling mentioned in Luke 21:24b represent 42 prophetic months, or 1260 prophetic days, or 3 1/2 prophetic times which all indicate that nearly thirteen centuries of historical time are to transpire after the literal destruction of the earthly Jerusalem before the second coming of Christ. Thus, the second sign to occur before the return of the Lord, namely, the Gentile trampling of Jerusalem of Luke

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21:24b, equals the “tribulation” sign mentioned by Matthew and Mark, and extends for nearly thirteen centuries, beginning sometime after the collapse of Imperial Rome. How does this lengthy Gentile spiritual trampling of Jerusalem and literal persecution of His saints on earth relate to the fact that Jesus connects the literal destruction of Jerusalem with a fulfilment of the abomination of desolation mentioned by the prophet Daniel?

A Two-Phase Gentile Trampling of Jerusalem

In light of the previous discussions, could it be that the words of Jesus in Luke 21:24 indicate a two phase trampling of Jerusalem and its worshipers? Phase one (Luke 21:24a) would be accomplished by a Gentile force directed against the literal earthly Jerusalem. However, in Luke 21:24b we enter phase two of the trampling of Jerusalem which would now be understood to be conducted by a different form of Gentile force and directed of necessity against a Jerusalem and temple still standing and the relevant worshipers. This reality would appropriately be the complex of the heavenly Jerusalem, the heavenly priestly ministry of Christ, and His earthly worshipers.

This two phase trampling may also be implied in Daniel 9:26-27 in connection with Jesus’ account of the destruction of Jerusalem in Matthew and Mark. Jesus links the destruction of earthly Jerusalem with the abomination of desolation spoken of in Daniel 9:27. However, Daniel 9:26-27 speaks not only of a destruction of the earthly city of Jerusalem and its sanctuary (abomination), but also of a subsequent desolation unto the end (abomination). In fact, Daniel 9:27 describes or covers the destruction of the city and the subsequent desolations mentioned in the previous verse 26 with the significant term abominations, which is, significantly, in the plural form, in order to cover both kinds of abominations. This indicates that according to Daniel 9:27, the destruction of earthly Jerusalem is called abomination, and the subsequent destructions are denoted abomination. This hints at some form of a two phase abomination of desolation. Jesus’ words in Luke 21:24b begin to give shape to the second phase of this two phase abomination of desolation. Daniel 9:27a depicts the first or physical phase of the abomination of desolation which occurred in 70 A.D. Daniel 9:27b characterizes the spiritual or second phase of the abomination of desolation, which is now linked to the Gentile trampling of Luke 21:24b.

If the cryptic language of Jesus recorded in Luke 21:24b indicates a second form of persecution after the destruction of the literal Jerusalem, these words spoken by Jesus would constitute Luke’s way of describing the very same event which Matthew and Mark call the “tribulation,” which transpires in history subsequent to the literal destruction of Jerusalem (Matt 24:21, 29; and Mark 13:19, 24). This would mean that all three synoptic gospels present the same four signs as transpiring before the Lord returns, but that Luke’s description of the second sign provides the answer to the charge by Reimarus that Jesus inaccurately

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taught that He would return in the first century A.D. We turn now to a discussion of the implications of this conclusion.

Theological Conclusions

In view of the detailed discussion presented above, one may now conclude that in giving the special information in Luke 21:24b, Jesus Christ, the Creator, the incarnate second person of the Godhead, the wisdom of God, the originator of the Old Testament apocalyptic prophecies of Daniel, seems to have blended the events of the destruction of the earthly Jerusalem with His second coming. In response to the disciples private question, "When shall these things be, and what shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the world?" (Matt 24:3), Jesus does not separately discuss the destruction of Jerusalem and the second coming. Perhaps in typical, thoughtful consideration, now regarding their incomplete understanding of the nature of the kingdom, Christ mercifully merges his description of the event of the destruction of Jerusalem with his account of the end of the world. Regarding this action, one writer suggests that, "Had [Christ] opened to His disciples future events as He beheld them, they would have been unable to endure the sight."¹⁵ Building upon this understanding, the same expositor states that, "It was in mercy to his disciples that Christ blended these events [the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world], leaving them to study out the meaning for themselves."¹⁶ This would place the disciples under the comforting tutelage of the Spirit who leads into all truth.

The positive effect of such instruction by the Holy Spirit is evident later in the early church, when we hear Paul warning his beloved Thessalonians that even though lawlessness is "already at work" (2 Thess 2:7), the second coming of Christ will not occur before the "man of lawlessness is revealed" (2 Thess 2:3), which event Paul indicates is still future in his day. Thus, in Holy Spirit illumined fashion, Paul points his brethren to what may best be described as the "then far-distant future for the coming of the Lord."¹⁷

In light of the fact that Daniel states that prophetic passages relating to the last days: "are concealed and sealed up until the end time" (Dan 12:9), there is no duplicity or deceit present in Jesus' blending the two events and speaking in cryptic, Old Testament apocalyptic-laden language in Luke 21:24b. Rather, the discourse is a brilliant display of the merciful depths of divine wisdom. No less a divine personage than the risen Lord Himself sent His angel to inspire John the Revelator with the additional apocalyptic visions giving more orientation and precision to the phrase regarding the Gentile trampling mentioned in Luke 21:24b.

¹⁵Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1940), 628.

¹⁶Ellen G. White, "Words of Warning—No.3" *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 75:52 (December 27, 1898): 635.

¹⁷Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911), 356.

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With the passage of time and with the unsealing of the sealed time portions of the apocalyptic book of Daniel at the prophetic time of the end in the religious awakening of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the meaning of the cryptic prophetic time portions of the signs, as presented by Christ in his Olivet discourse and as recorded in the gospel of Luke 21:24b, become clear.

In sum, the present historicist interpretation of the brief phrase in Luke 21:24 regarding the Gentile trampling of Jerusalem until the times of the Gentiles is fulfilled indicates that Jesus clearly did not teach that He would return in the first century. Rather, Luke 21:24b actually indicates that many centuries are to pass before the Son of Man appears in the clouds of heaven. This means Christian believers today have the humble privilege of tracing the fulfillment of nearly all of the signs outlined to occur before the return of Christ, and thus knowing that the passage of many centuries after the destruction of Jerusalem in A. D. 70 has not invalidated the promise of our Lord to return to this earth.

So, Professor Reimarus, His promise still stands. The trumpet of the Lord will soon sound. This means the precious gospel message should continue to be proclaimed with confidence. Therefore, with fervent joy based upon the saving grace of Christ and the faithfulness of His word, let us continue to sing:

On that bright and cloudless morning when the dead in Christ
shall rise,
And the glory of His resurrection share,
When His chosen ones shall gather to their home beyond the
skies,
And the roll is called up yonder, I'll be there.

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Essentials for the New Millennium

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As we look at some of the events which have taken place in the political and religious arena over the last few years and even more recently, there are two essential questions that press upon us with eschatological urgency as we enter the new millennium. The first is the question Jesus asked his disciples, “Who do men say that I am?” And when they answered, “Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” He then asked them, “But who do you say that I am?” (Matt. 16:13-15).¹

This was the question in the great controversy that Lucifer stumbled over. It is the question that every angel in heaven had to individually answer: “Who do you say that I am?” Lucifer and his angels fell from heaven because they refused to acknowledge the rightful authority of the Son of God and accept Him as Lord. “Lucifer was envious of Christ, and gradually assumed command which devolved on Christ alone. . . . [He] rebelled against the authority of the Son. Angels that were loyal and true sought to reconcile this mighty, rebellious angel to the will of his Creator. . . . They clearly set forth that Christ was the Son of God, existing with Him before the angels were created; and that He had ever stood at the right hand of God, and His mild, loving authority had not heretofore been questioned.”² What was Lucifer’s response? “I will be like the Most High” (Isa. 14:12-14).

Every one of us is confronted with the question Christ asked His disciples: “Who do you say that I am?” It is a question that we cannot escape. When Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt. 16:16), he essentially acknowledged Christ’s Lordship. Jesus blessed him and said, “Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven” (v. 17). No one will be in the kingdom who does not accept Jesus Christ as King

¹ All scriptural quotation are from the NKJV.

² Ellen White, *The Story of Redemption* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1947), 13-15.

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and Lord. For it is the Father's will that, "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord" (Phil. 2:11). When Christ returns, He will return as King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:16).

Salvation is a two-step process within the heart. We are invited to accept Jesus Christ not only as Savior but also as Lord. As Savior He offers us forgiveness and as Lord and King He expects trustful obedience. If we accept Him as Savior but not as King, we miss the whole point of the great controversy and forfeit our entrance into God's kingdom. No one will be in heaven who does not accept Christ as King.

The very essence of any religion requires a willingness to recognize and submit to a higher authority. But in our modern democratic age with its emphasis on the importance of the individual this is becoming more difficult. Before the modern era, when submission to kings and masters was the political norm, acceptance of a higher authority in religion did not seem so difficult. But after democracy became the norm, an unwillingness to submit to any authority appears to be the order of the day. In a democratic society authority flows from the individual upward, not from some authority figure downward. This does not mean that Christianity is incompatible with individual freedom and democracy, but God's relationship to us is not democratic. His authority is not up for vote. He is not one among equals. This is what produces a crisis in the heart of democratic man, who has difficulty accepting and submitting to divine authority, for he sees it as being incompatible with individual rights and freedom.³

The Authority of God. While democracy places the locus of political authority in the individual, that does not mean we cannot also grant God ultimate authority in all things religious. But if these two foci are not sharply defined, individual political and social autonomy will be carried over to challenge all religious authority, except what each individual approves for himself. And if we make our personal agenda *a priori* to Scripture, that agenda will shape our theological answer. But in both the Old and New Testaments God is acknowledged as the sole and supreme authority in matters religious, not the individual. Only as God's authority is made *a priori* to the understanding of Scripture can our sinful actions and attitudes come under judgment. Without God as the locus of religious authority the legitimacy of the whole structure of Christianity is called into question.⁴

Scripture begins and ends with God, for in Him is all authority located. There is no authority outside of Him. As Paul says, "For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself" (Heb. 6:13). Biblical authority, then, is rooted in what God Himself is, and what He is is known by His self-disclosure. Therefore, the two, God's

³ Frederick Sontag, *How Philosophy Shapes Theology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 219-221.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 222-224.

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authority and His revelation in Scripture, are two sides of the same reality. It is not possible to reject one without rejecting the other.⁵

Scripture is the truth from God about God. It is about a God of love, about an authority dipped in grace. There is no imperial force in grace. There is no forced obedience. God's authority as seen in Jesus Christ is full of grace and truth (John 1:17; 3:16, 17; 14:8, 9; 17:3). This is what sets Christianity apart from other religions. And it is through God's gracious authority that those who come to Him in faith are set free from all forms of destructive authoritarianism.⁶

We need to be careful not to substitute the authority of man for the authority of God, either through liberalism's subjectivism which massages the Scripture into an image of God acceptable to modern thinking, or through Catholicism's ecclesiastical authoritarianism in which the finite sits in the place of the Infinite. There must be no dilution of God's delegated authority as seen in Scripture. To disobey the utterance or writing of a prophet or an apostle is to disobey God and to deny Him His rightful authority to direct our lives. The Protestant principle "The Bible and the Bible only" recognizes God as the sole authority in matters of religion and that He has spoken to us through Scripture. Therefore, *sola scriptura*, the authority of scripture alone, continues to be our watchword.⁷

The authority of God through Scripture becomes still more critical as we enter the new millennium. Over the years, modernism and the Enlightenment with its emphasis on reason tried to liberate man from a God-ordered universe and promised a new freedom and progress for humanity. While modernism is not dead, a new way of thinking called post-modernism has made its debut, in which no objective truth exists and all religion simply reflects a historically conditioned bias. Consequently, culture is not critiqued and interpreted by Scripture, but Scripture is critiqued and interpreted by culture, especially by each reader's own culture. This allows for as many interpretations of Scripture as there are cultures and the authority of God is set aside for the authority of the individual who essentially says, "I will be like the Most High." While reason and intellectual freedom became the god of modernism, spiritual freedom and the right to interpret Scripture as one sees fit has become the god of post-modern thinking.⁸

Democratic Man. Democratic man continues to speak loudly of political and religious freedom. But unguided and undisciplined religious freedom is not a blessing. To obey is to become free. Without obedience freedom is a curse. Our passion for liberty and individual freedom is not *a priori* to the Kingdom

⁵ H. D. McDonald, "Bible, Authority of," *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1984), 138-140.

⁶ Bernard Ramm, *The Pattern of Authority* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1957), 18-21.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 25-29.

⁸ David S. Dockery (editor), *The Challenge of Postmodernism* (Wheaton, IL: Bridge-Point/Victor, 1995), 35-36, 40-41, 219-224.

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of God, but the first thing is the enthusiasm for obeying the King in His self-revelation. If we push God's revelation aside, we have no protection against plunging into theological error. No church or minister or believer has a right to claim freedom from God's word, but only to be free to uphold the word. But if we speak of spirituality without Scripture and place culture or religious experience above God's word, we have denied God His rightful authority. While God's authority is within experience, it is not identical with the authority of religious experience. Rather, it is His authority experienced.⁹

This was the case with Abraham. He experienced in his life the authority of God by believing what God promised and then modifying his life in harmony with a promise not yet realized (Heb. 11: 8-16; Gal. 3:6). Therefore only those who have the kind of faith that will obey are the sons of Abraham (Gal. 3:6).

Ironically, when God's authority is set aside in favor of freedom, claims to authority increase rather than decrease. A cacophony of voices begin vying for attention. And when everything counts as theology, scarcely anything counts. If we accept Biblical authority only to the extent that it fits our definitions or our limited experience with God and deny the accurate account of Biblical events, our churches will gradually be full of people who are brought up on substitutes, and soon there will be no Christian church but only a social institution.¹⁰

Therefore, it is incumbent on the church never to lose contact with the source from which it derived its authority. The church has no authority within itself. It receives its teaching authority from the word of God. And having received it, the church is held responsible for not losing contact with its source of authority or losing sight of the fact that Scripture repeatedly traces God's rightful authority back to creation. This is why the fourth commandment is so essential. If the church fails to capture and maintain its primitive spirit of submission to the will of God and embraces only contemporary religious references, it will soon lose all vitality in its religious life and its worship and witness will degenerate into form without substance.¹¹

Choosing a King. A frightful example of rejecting God's rightful authority is seen in Israel's demand for a king of their own choosing. "Israel had become tired of pious rulers who kept God's purposes and God's will and God's honor ever before them according to God's instructions. They wanted a reformed religion that they might by external, flattering prosperity be esteemed great in the eyes of the surrounding nations."¹²

As we enter the new millennium, the question of God's authority in the light of the great controversy presses upon us with even greater urgency. "Who do you say that I am?" Not only do we need to respond as Peter did, "You are

⁹ Ibid., 42-45.

¹⁰ Jerry L. Walls, *The Problem of Pluralism: Recovering United Methodist Identity* (Wilmore, KY: Good News, 1986), 77-101.

¹¹ Sontag, 223-236.

¹² Ellen White, Manuscript 40, 1890.

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the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt. 16:16), but more appropriately, as the centurion did when he came to ask Jesus to heal his servant,

“Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes; and to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.” When Jesus heard it, He marveled at the centurion’s recognition and acceptance of His authority, and said to those who followed, “Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!” (Matt. 8:8-10)

We also are people under authority, Christ’s authority. He is our Lord and King. He is the Captain of the Lord’s host. When He says, “Go,” we go; when He says, “Come,” we come; and when He says, “Do this,” we do it, because we love Him. And it is this relationship that gives us identity, a sense of belonging, a sense of dignity. We are the sons and daughters of the King sent on a mission. Jesus said, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on the earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:18,19).

The Spirit of Sacrifice. The second essential question pressing upon us with eschatological urgency as we enter the new millennium is the next question Jesus asked his disciples: “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. . . . For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?” (Matt. 16:24). The answer to this question, like the first one, also determines our destiny. No one will be in the kingdom of God who is not willing sacrifice for the God who sacrificed so much for him. While Christianity is not incompatible with an abundant life, if we ever lose the spirit of sacrifice, we have lost the spirit of the gospel, for the spirit of sacrifice is the heart of the gospel.

This question presses upon democratic man, focused as he too often is on life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, with an increasing eschatological urgency. As the Scripture says, “Our God shall come, and shall not keep silent; . . . He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth: ‘Gather My saints together to Me. Those who have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice’” (Ps. 50:3-5). “When men appreciate the great Salvation, the self-sacrifice seen in Christ’s life will be seen in theirs.”¹³

Just as the question of authority is rooted in the nature of God, so is the spirit of self-giving. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish (John 3:16). He gave Him as a sacrifice for sin to bring a rebellious world back to Him (Isa. 53:10; Rom. 5:8; 2 Cor. 5:18). It is the glory of God to give. This glory is seen in the face of Jesus Christ. In God’s universe everything has been created to serve.

¹³ Ellen White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1898), 273.

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Nothing is to live for itself. From the angels whose joy it is to minister to a fallen race, to the sun that shines to gladden our world, to the oceans and springs and fountains, everything takes to give. Everything, except the sinful heart of man. But above all lesser representations we see in Jesus Christ the actions of a God who cares. As Jesus said, "I seek not Mine own glory, but the glory of Him who sent me" (John 8:50; 7:18). In these words we find the great principle which is the law of life for earth and heaven. No one has a right to life unless the spirit of self-giving is in his heart.¹⁴

Receiving the Spirit of Christ. The spirit of Christ is the spirit of the gospel. Christ received all things from God, but He took to give. To all who believe, Christ will give a new character which is a reproduction of His own spirit.¹⁵ For them, self-giving becomes a natural part of their life. When the Son of Man comes in His glory He will separate those who lived to serve from those who did not. As the King blesses the righteous, they will wonder why the Lord is commending them so. Then the King will say, "In as much as you did it to one of the least of these, you did it unto me. Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you" (See Matt. 25:31-46).

"Christ gave all for us, and those who receive Christ will be ready to sacrifice all for the sake of their Redeemer. The thought of His honor and glory will come before anything else."¹⁶ This was the case with Abraham. When God spoke to him, he obeyed and left his home in Ur of the Chaldeans, came to Canaan and was willing to sacrifice his only son at God's command (Gen. 22:10). God accepted Abraham's willingness to do so and called to him, "Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me" (Gen. 22:12). Abraham loved God more than his own life, more than his own son. Therefore, those who love Christ are "Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:29).

Sacrifice. God also wants to see how much we love Him. Like Abraham, He is asking us to give Him and His service first place in our lives. Whether a person is a minister or a physician, a businessman or a farmer, a professional or a mechanic, it is each one's responsibility to do all he can to advance God's kingdom. Everything we do should be a means to this end. It is the consecration of the life and all its interests for the glory of God that is the call of heaven.¹⁷

The question Jesus asked His disciples: "What profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?" directs the attention of God's

¹⁴Close paraphrase of *The Desire of Ages*, 19-21.

¹⁵ _____, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, [1900] 1948), 6:449.

¹⁶ _____, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1900), 49.

¹⁷ Close paraphrase of Ellen White, *Prophets and Kings* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1900), 221-222.

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remnant not only to the fourth commandment but also to the tenth commandment. While the fourth commandment will test our loyalty externally, the tenth commandment will test the reason for our loyalty. This was the case with Paul who zealously kept God's commandments but did so for his own glory and the glory of Israel, which he mistakenly thought was for the glory of God also. It was on the road to Damascus that Jesus Christ appeared to him and opened to him his heart, exposing his motives. As Paul says, "For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, 'You shall not covet.' But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire. I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good" (Rom. 7:7-12). After his conversion Paul had an entirely different attitude. "I count all things loss," he said, "for the excellence of the knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things" (Phil. 3:8).

Eschatological Importance. The eschatological importance of the tenth commandment as it confronts God's remnant is made frighteningly clear by the following observations: In vision Ellen White saw Satan tell his angels to lay snares for all Christians to take them away from Christ, but especially for those who were looking for Christ's second appearing and keeping all the commandments of God. They may profess what they please, but only make them care more for their own success than for the success of Christ's kingdom and the spread of the truth we hate. The grace of God and the light of truth may melt away their covetousness and selfish feelings for a little while, but if they continue to be wrapped up in themselves, salvation and grace will be pushed into the background and we will have them yet.¹⁸

Therefore, as we enter the new millennium and we see the recent events in their eschatological setting, the question of accepting Christ as our Savior and Lord and being willing to give up life itself for Him as He did for us, takes on an urgency as never before. If we want to remain loyal to the King we need to practice loyalty. If we want to keep the spirit of the gospel alive in our hearts we need to be willing to sacrifice. Many have sacrificed for far less worthy causes. Should we do less for Christ?

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¹⁸ Close paraphrase of Ellen White, *Early Writings* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1892), 266-269.

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Straight-Legged People: Elijah's Message to Revelation's Remnant¹

Ed Christian
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God is looking for straight-legged people. God is also looking for crooked-legged people who are willing to be transformed into straight-legged people. Listen to the message of Malachi 4:

“Surely **the day** is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and that day that is coming will set them on fire,” says the LORD Almighty. ‘Not a root or a branch will be left to **them**. But for **you** who **revere** my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with **healing** in its wings. And you will go out and leap like calves released from the stall. Then you will trample down the wicked; they will be **ashes** under the soles of your feet on the day when I do these things,’ says the LORD Almighty. ‘**Remember the law** of my servant Moses, the decrees and laws I gave him at Horeb for all Israel. See, I will send you the prophet **Elijah** before that great and dreadful **day of the LORD** comes. He will **turn the hearts** of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse.”²

Ellen White writes “Elijah was a *type* of the *saints* who will be living on the earth at the time of the second advent of Christ . . .”³

We are here to study eschatology, “The Day of the Lord,” and there are interesting parallels between the Day of the Lord and the ministry of Elijah which will help us understand what God is asking of us now and in the days to come.

¹ The following was the Sabbath sermon given at the Boston Temple to the Adventist Theological Society and guests at the ATS fall conference, 1999.

² All Scripture citations are from the New International Version, and all emphasis is added.

³ *Prophets and Kings*, 227, emphasis added.

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Elijah's Last Day Message

With the first mention of Elijah in the Bible, we are in the midst of the action, almost as if *his life didn't matter until it mattered for God*, until he was willing to be God's messenger. The story begins, "Now Elijah the Tishbite, from Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, 'As the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, *there will be neither dew nor rain* in the next few years *except at my word*'" (1 Kgs 17:1).

Notice the echoes of this verse in Rev. 11:6, which is about the two witnesses: "*These men have power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain* during the time they are prophesying." In both cases God has given to His prophets the power to stop the rain, according to His will. The echoes suggest that the story of Elijah and the Last Days have something in common.

Jesus told worshipers at the synagogue in Nazareth that for "*three and a half years*" there was no rain in the days of Elijah (Luke 4:25).

Those 3 1/2 years of famine remind us of Revelation 11 and 12. Rev 11:2-3 reads: "But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city for *42 months*. And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy **for 1,260 days**, clothed in sackcloth." Rev. 12:6 also mentions 1,260 days, while v. 14 calls the same time period *3 1/2 times*, indicating 3 1/2 prophetic years. 3 1/2 times, 42 months, 1,260 days: they are all equivalent to the 3 1/2 years of famine in the days of Elijah.

God says to Elijah:

"hide in the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan. You will drink from the brook, and I have ordered the ravens to feed you there." So he did what the LORD had told him. He went to the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan, and stayed there. The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the brook. (1 Kgs 17:3-6)

Compare this with Rev. 12:6: "The woman fled into the *desert to a place prepared for her by God*, where she might *be taken care of* for 1,260 days."

Rev. 12:14 "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* for a time, times and half a time, out of the serpent's reach."

God provides Elijah's food and water during the famine in his day. Likewise, during the 1,260 days, the woman, representing the church, the people of God, is "*taken care of*." Her sustenance and salvation come *from God*, not from her own hand.

Note too where this sustenance is found. God tells Elijah to go to a specific brook in a thirsty land. The text says, "*he did what the LORD had told him*." In Malachi 4, a few sentences before He promises that He will send Elijah, God commands His people to "*Remember the law*," and again "His people" must *do what the LORD tells them*. Like Elijah, God's church is also *sent to a specific*

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place, to “the place prepared for her in the desert,” to “a place prepared for her by God.” It is *here* she receives sustenance. What if she says, though, “I want to do it my way. God will honor His servant wherever she might be, whatever she might believe, however she might obey”? If God says, “I will provide food for you in a rocky cave in the Piedmont of Italy,” and she says, “I will eat in a banqueting hall in Rome,” eat she may, but will the food be provided by God? Will she be the pure woman of Rev. 12, or the fallen woman of Rev. 17?

A Famine for God’s Word

In Amos 8:11 we find these words: “The days are coming,” declares the Sovereign LORD, ‘when I will send a famine through the land—not a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a *famine of hearing the words of the LORD.*”

In Elijah’s day there was “a famine of hearing the words of the LORD” because the prophet was in hiding from a wicked king and a wicked people. There was a time when this “famine of hearing the words of the LORD” was due to the words being kept from the people, kept in a foreign language, and to the people not knowing how to read. I remember Gerhard Hasel telling about how during World War II his family nearly starved, despite having a cupboard full of canned ham, because they refused to eat what was unclean. Today as well there is “a famine of hearing the words of the LORD,” even though the Bread of Life is in the cupboard, on the bookshelf, on the coffee table. It goes untouched, unread, uneaten, undigested, as if it too were unclean. There is “a famine of hearing the Words of the LORD” in our churches, as well, and as a result, many who come seeking the nourishment of the Word of Life leave unfilled. Often in my home church the scripture reading is only one or two verses. A time of tribulation is coming when yet again, even among us, there will be “a famine of hearing the words of the LORD.” Unless, that is, we can say, with the psalmist, “Thy word have I hid *in mine heart*, that I might not sin against thee” (Psalm 119:11).

When it suits God’s purposes, Elijah’s water runs short, and God sends him into the jaws of the enemy, into Sidon, homeland of Jezebel, bastion of Baal worship. How this must have puzzled and astonished Elijah. God sends Elijah to the village of Zarephath, to a starving widow, a woman who has not accepted the God of Israel as her God (1 Kgs 17:12). Jesus says, “I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah’s time, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land. Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon” (Luke 4:25–26).

In the last day tribulation God may rescue us by means of those who seem to have no part with us, and He may use us to rescue those to whom He sends us. Because of our faithfulness, many who do not know God may come to love Him. God may hide us not only in the wilderness, but in the enemy’s own terri-

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tory. In the wilderness we ourselves may draw close to God, but in the cities of the enemy there are others whom we might help to find their Savior.

“If the LORD is God, Follow Him!”

Jon Paulien, writing in the Anchor Bible Dictionary, tells us that the most likely meaning of the word “Armageddon” is “mountain of Megiddo,” referring to the Carmel Range in Israel, which begins a few hundred yards from the city of Megiddo.

Rev. 16:16 echoes the Elijah story when it says, “Then they *gathered the kings together to the place* that in Hebrew is called *Armageddon*.” Elijah said, to Obadiah, “Now *summon the people from all over Israel to meet me on Mount Carmel*” (1 Kgs 18:19). He also called for “the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah” (v. 19).

It was a showdown on Mount Carmel. On one side Yahweh, creator of heaven and earth and personal protector of His faithful ones; on the other side, Baal, the master, the god of the storm and father of fertility. On one side all who were willing to follow Yahweh, whatever the cost. On the other side those seeking a pleasant religion, a popular religion, a religion that tolerates and even condones sin, a religion of ecstatic singing and shouting and dancing, all those who say, as God accuses them of saying, in Mal. 2:17, ““All who do *evil* are *good* in the eyes of the LORD, and he is *pleased* with them.”” This is the primary heresy of apostate Christianity.

The time was at hand. It was time to choose. Elijah shouted out the summons to salvation: “How long will you waver between two opinions? It the *LORD* is God, follow *him*; but it *Baal* is God, follow *him*.” And how did the people of God answer? The Bible says, “But the people said *nothing*” (1 Kgs 18:21).

And that is where we are today. Far too often, for far too long, we have “said nothing.” God says “Decide now.” We say nothing. God says, in 2 Tim 2:19, ““Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must *turn away* from wickedness.”” We say nothing. God says, in Rev 18:4, “*Come out* of her my people, lest *you* share in *her* sins.” We say nothing. Rev 13:13 says of the beast from the sea whose deadly wound is healed, “And he performed great and miraculous signs, *even causing fire to come down from heaven* to earth in full view of men.” In Elijah’s day only God sent fire from heaven, but in the days to come the priest of Ba’al will call fire from heaven in yet another “showdown on Mount Carmel.” What will we say? Will we again say nothing?

But Elijah had decided. Elijah stood for God. And because Elijah stood absolutely straight and true for God, risking death or disappointment or utter disgrace if God let him down, God was able to do great things. Elijah’s *faithfulness* freed God to work *miracles*.

CHRISTIAN: STRAIGHT-LEGGED PEOPLE

Turning Their Hearts

You know the story, but I want you to notice Elijah's prayer in 1 Kgs 18:36–38: “O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that *you* are God in Israel and that I am your *servant* and have done all these things at *your command*. Answer me, O LORD, answer me, so these people will *know* that *you*, O LORD, are God, and *that you are turning their hearts back again*.”

“*Turning their hearts back again*.” What does God say about the *return* of Elijah in Malachi 4:6? “He will *turn the hearts* of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse.” The turning of hearts connects Elijah with the Elijah message of Malachi, just as the word “Armageddon” connects the showdown on Mount Carmel with eschatology and the Last Days.

And what of those whose hearts are turned? God says, in Mal. 3:17, “I will *spare them*, just as in compassion a man *spar*es his son who *serv*es him.” There is a parallel process here. If our hearts are not turned to our fathers and our children in compassion and in seeking their salvation, our hearts are not truly turned to God. If our hearts are not truly turned to God by His Holy Spirit, our hearts cannot be truly and effectively turned to our fathers and our children. And bear in mind that “fathers” and “children” here refers to all God's chosen ones who are older or younger than we are. That means just about everyone.

Elijah Ran Away!

Who, having witnessed such a wonderful miracle, having seen the LORD's deliverance, could ever doubt God again? Yet Elijah *doubted*. 1 Kgs 19:3 tells us that when Jezebel threatened Elijah with death, “Elijah was afraid and ran for his life.” He despaired. He pleaded with God to take his life. Elijah was *unfaithful*! After receiving an overwhelmingly powerful sign that God was who Elijah thought He was, Elijah was *unfaithful*!

Excuse me if I say that I'm so *glad* that Elijah was unfaithful. Because I have *also* received sure proof of God's love and mercy, yet I too have been unfaithful at times. I too have run away at times when I should have stood firm and seen the deliverance of the LORD (Exod 14:13). By running away Elijah may have kept God from delivering him from Jezebel in a powerful way. Perhaps I too, by running away, have kept God from a demonstration of deliverance that would have brought many to serve Him.

When Elijah finally reaches the Mountain of God, Mount Horeb, he actually *whines* to God. 1 Kgs 19:10 says, “He replied, ‘I *have* been *very* zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the *only one left*, and now they are trying to kill me too.’”

Are you ever tempted to think you are the only one left? Are you ever tempted to think Seventh-day Adventists are the only ones left? Are you ever

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tempted to think members of the Adventist Theological Society are the only ones left who are still faithful? Think again!

Listen to God's answer to Elijah, in v. 18: "Yet I reserve *seven thousand* in *Israel*—*all* whose knees have *not bowed down to Baal* and all whose mouths have *not* kissed him."

Straight-Legged People

Elijah says "One!" God says "Seven thousand!" Seven, the number of holiness, times a thousand, the number of multitudes. A multitude of holy people who have not bowed the knee to Baal!

Straight-legged people! People whose knees do not bend to false gods. God is looking for straight-legged people, "people who cannot be bought or sold, people who are as true to duty as the needle is to the pole, people who will stand for the right though the heavens fall."⁴

God is looking for straight-legged people like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, people who will say, "If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. *But even if he does not*, we want you to know, O king, that *we will not* serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up" (Dan 3:17–18). God is looking for people who say, "We are going to be so faithful to your Word, Lord, that we will free you and force you to prove Yourself faithful to us, that all the world might know that you are indeed God."

God is looking for straight-legged people like Job, who says, "Though he *slay me*, yet will I trust in him" (Job 13:15), who says, "I *know* that my Redeemer *lives*, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet *in my flesh I will see God*; I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart *yearns* within me!" (Job 19:25–27).

God is looking for straight-legged people who will not worship false gods, who will not "bow down themselves to them nor serve them" (Exod 20:5), whether those false gods be Baal or Molech, Krishna or the Buddha, new cars, new furniture, new wives, new jobs, new computers, Monday Night Football, the World Series, or the Oprah Winfrey Show.

God is looking for straight-legged people who will "follow the Lamb wherever He goes" (Rev. 14:4), who will open the Word of God, and say, with the Israelites in Exod 24:3, "Everything the LORD has said, *we will do*."

The LORD says, in Malachi 3:5, "So I will come near to you for judgment. I will be quick to testify against sorcerers, adulterers and perjurers, against those who defraud laborers of their wages, who oppress the widows and the fatherless, and deprive aliens of justice." Straight-legged people say, "We will obey."

⁴ Ellen G. White, *Education*, 57.

CHRISTIAN: STRAIGHT-LEGGED PEOPLE

Paul writes, in Galatians 5:19–21, “The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that *those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.*” There may be some of us here right now who at the least are guilty of, say, jealousy, or ambition, or dissension, or factions, or envy. But straight-legged people, those who want to inherit the kingdom, will give up these sins, even if it means praying with and for some theological “enemy” who is not “sound” on this or that doctrine.

Jesus says to John, in Rev. 22:15, that outside the gates of the city are “those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.” Straight-legged people say, “By God’s grace we will *not* be among *that* number.”

It is straight-legged people who “keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Rev. 12:17).

Rev. 14:12 says of the time of trouble that “This calls for *patient endurance* on the part of the saints who obey God’s commandments and remain faithful to Jesus.” This calls for straight-legged people, for those who will not bow the knee to Baal. Rev. 12:11 says, describing straight-legged people, “they did *not* love their lives so much as to *shrink from death.*”

God is looking for straight-legged people like Stephen, who died rather than betray his Lord. Straight-legged people like Deborah, who stand firm, then proclaim the Lord’s deliverance. Straight-legged people like the virgin Mary, who saw her plans and reputation destroyed before her eyes, yet said, “I am the Lord’s servant” (Luke 1:38).

The Great Physician Straightens Legs

Have you bowed the knee to Baal? Of course you have. Perhaps you have bowed the knee to Baal through one of the sins mentioned above. Perhaps you have bowed the knee to Baal by following interpretations of the Bible which steal God’s glory from Him. Perhaps you have bowed the knee to Baal by trying to hold “dual citizenship,” by trying to be a citizen of both this world and the kingdom of God. Perhaps you have bowed the knee to Baal by devoting yourself to earning your daily bread rather than to the Bread of Life. Perhaps you have bowed the knee to Baal by practicing theology rather than by seeking God with all your heart and devoting your life to spreading the Gospel to your students and to the world.

The good news is that by the blood of Christ God forgives, wipes away, and restores.⁵ If you have bowed the knee to Baal, then repent, turn away from

⁵ “God saves man through the blood of Christ alone, and man’s belief in, and allegiance to, Christ is salvation. It is no marvel to angels that the infinite sacrifice made by the Son of God was ample enough to bring salvation to a fallen race, but that this atoning sacrifice should have been made is a wonder to the universe. . . . The image of Christ will be perfected in every soul who

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the world and turn back to God, and “He will abundantly pardon” and will straighten out your crooked, crippled legs.

Of course, after the Great Physician does the wonderful spiritual surgery that straightens your legs, He may want you to go through a bit of physical therapy so your now-straight legs will grow strong, so you can stand ever firmer against the evils that surround us.

Physical Therapy for Straightened Legs

How can you do that? What exercises can you do that will help you be the straight-legged person you want to be, the straight-legged person God wants you to be?

If you want to be a straight-legged person, ask God to create in you a longing to commune with Him in prayer, to share with Him throughout the day and night whatever you are thinking, and to think only what you aren't ashamed to share with Him.

If you want to be a straight-legged person, turn off the television and open your Bible. Make a covenant with God that every day you will spend at least one hour reading His love-letters to you. Make a covenant with God that for every hour you spend watching or reading something secular, you will spend two hours in the Word.

If you want to be a straight-legged person, determine that you will not only be a faithful church member, but you will learn as much about the Bible as possible, so you will be always ready to give a reason for your hope and your obedience.

If you want to be a straight-legged person, go to the person you have hurt or the person who has hurt you and be reconciled.

If you want to be a straight-legged person, break off that relationship you know displeases the Lord, whether it be a relationship with a man or a woman in the flesh or in your mind or one you meet on the internet in a chat room, whether it be a relationship with your car or your computer, whether it be a relationship with gnostic ideas or the Jesus Seminar.

If you want to be a straight-legged person, revolt against the pride and elitism that turn theologians into Pharisees, put your mission ahead of your career, and be a Bible scholar who writes and says what the saint in the pew and the student in the classroom need to hear and can understand.

If you want to be a straight-legged person, pray this prayer every morning: “Lord, if there is anyone nearby who needs to hear from You, send that person to me and give me the words to say.” Ask God to give you the courage and wisdom to share the Good News with those around you.

accepts the gift of his grace, and those who are perfected through his grace, will stand before God equal in elevation, in power and purity, to the angels, and will be honored with them before the eternal throne.” Ellen G. White, “What Was Secured by the Death of Christ,” *Signs of the Times*, 30 December 1889.

CHRISTIAN: STRAIGHT-LEGGED PEOPLE

Who Can Stand?

Malachi 3:2 asks, "But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears?" *We can*, by God's grace!

Elijah ran away, but God straightened his legs again, then sent a fiery chariot to carry him to heaven. In Rev 11:12, the two witnesses are resurrected and called up to heaven in a cloud. Soon our Savior will be coming in the clouds to take us to heaven, too, and many of you listening to these words, I believe, will if you are willing be translated and glorified like Elijah, without tasting death.

I stand before you by God's grace to say that I want to be, now and forever, whatever the cost, a straight-legged man, completely faithful, completely dedicated to doing God's will.

If it is your desire to commit yourselves completely and irrevocably to being straight-legged people who refuse to do the will of Baal, completely surrendered to our Lord Jesus Christ, completely devoted to doing His will, and *only* His will, I invite you to stand with me now as we pray.

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